

**Disclosing new worlds? Strategic management, styles and meaning**

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## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Acknowledgments .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Preface: A Question of Personal Strategy Practice .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1. Iteration and Adaptation in the Fast Company .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>2. Methodology: Reading for Difference .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>3. Heidegger's Argument for a Better Way of Life .....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>4. Two Orthodox Styles of Strategic Management .....</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>5. Post-Agile Strategic Management .....</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>6. Disclosing Disclosing New Worlds .....</b>	<b>176</b>
<b>7. Paradigmatic Cases of Agile and Adaptive Practice .....</b>	<b>214</b>
<b>8. Discussion and Conclusion: On Adaptive Strategy .....</b>	<b>252</b>
<b>Postscript: The Role of the Strategy Consultant .....</b>	<b>295</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>299</b>
<b>Notes .....</b>	<b>332</b>

## Abstract

The philosopher Martin Heidegger argued that the truthful life was at risk of being lost in Western technological culture in the name of increasing control, efficiency, and agility. As the risk is actualised, so the human essence as truth maker is obscured and life itself feels poorer. This thesis draws on Heideggerian philosophy to demonstrate the loss in two dominant styles of contemporary strategic management: the world-picturing and, more recent, agile style. It builds a theory of post-agile strategic practice, which I call adaptive, to address this loss. Consistent with Heideggerian philosophy, I utilise a transformative disclosure methodology and a literary, paradigmatic case reading method to address the questions: Why is agile strategic management so unsatisfying? How do Heideggerian scholars shed light on this dissatisfaction? How do Heideggerians understand the emerging style and what strategic management practices can I propose for the future? After introducing agile strategic management and the impoverishment of life that it fosters, I set out how Heidegger's philosophy of truth, thinking, and the sacred both sheds light on the problem and suggests a remedy for it. I closely read paradigmatic texts of the world-picturing and agile strategic management styles to demonstrate how business strategy theorisation lines up with extraordinary closeness to Heidegger's philosophical assessment. I then analyse three Heideggerian prototypes for an adaptive style of strategy practice, concentrating on one paradigmatic text to identify their principal weakness: the omission of the sacred. I illustrate and contrast paradigmatic cases of both the agile and adaptive styles drawn from the beer industry and draw on the adaptive case to construct a theory of adaptive strategy practice, which addresses the problem of the loss of truth, suggesting pedagogical and strategic management

practices. I conclude by summarising its findings and contributions, noting some limitations and connections to other studies and suggesting further lines of research.

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## Preface: A Question of Personal Strategy Practice

I experienced first-hand strategy's historical transformations from analysis to agility over a ten-year period. In 1993, my employer, the UK leader in logistics services, employed strategy consultancy McKinsey & Co. to support a group-wide corporate strategy exercise. As a junior member of the team, I gathered market and performance data to complete McKinsey's strategic tools and templates while the consultants facilitated the process and its major discussions. As a recent graduate in the human and life sciences, this was my first experience working with management science tools and techniques. I detested gathering data in the world of business. Compared to my scientific training, the facts seemed so unstable and the decision to accept one interpretation over another so arbitrary, but I loved completing the tools and the feeling of the power that access to their answers gave me over my peers. Clarity and certainty were powerful, and the power was exciting. The feeling that one was changing the direction of a company was undeniably thrilling. Even though the relation was thin, the recognition that came from announcing to my peers that I was working with McKinsey & Co. was seductive. I started to dress a little like the McKinsey consultant working with my business – preppy sweaters, chinos, floppy fringe, Ralph Lauren suits, the look of Ted the Harvard-educated professional from the movies *The Last Days of Disco* and *Barcelona*. I was struck by the consultants' irascibility, certainty and scepticism and adopted them as my own. We mapped sector market channels, assessed customer supply chain performance with very simple measures of volumes, inventory turns and truck fill rates, mapped our own business units on the McKinsey portfolio matrix, guided strategic decisions according to the matrix positions, and constructed action plans and resource requirement assessments. In each sector, we strove to maintain and build our business's strategic leadership position.

However, upon completing the exercise we began again. It seemed that the effect of segmental mapping and planning was simply too blunt to reflect the reality of individualised purchasing that characterised our markets. We lost grip on what was happening with real customers' operations. Far from being criticised for their broad-brush tools, McKinsey were re-hired, this time to work at a more granular level and construct and implement a key account planning process that conducted similarly detailed analyses but this time of single customers to propose strategies to dominate supply chains with our services. The process led to my employer winning the largest logistics deal ever signed in the UK to create a shared-use distribution network for the small-consignment drinks industry and this success was sufficient to cement the idea of a granular strategic process. At the end of the key account management exercise, the segmental strategic planning was integrated with the key account planning to make a single customer-oriented planning system that worked up from single clients to inform the corporate strategy, which, in turn, was reduced to the light-touch context setting of defining corporate mission, vision and values.

But this move, from broad brush to granular, was not simply a shift in degree but in kind. We were on the way out of analysis and planning and towards something different – a kind of continual creative reinvention of whatever state of affairs prevailed and eventually, even this continual creative overcoming was left behind in favour of pure agility, the reconfiguration of logistics systems for no other reason than the possibility of further reconfiguration. Whatever logistics solution we recommended and instituted in one cycle we would tear it up and propose a different solution when it was time for the contract to be renewed. In this context, our next move was to engage another firm of consultants, Ernst & Young, but this time to refresh our ability to innovate in each of the key accounts. Senior executives' concern was that we were



losing our reputation for innovation and ever-greater levels of added-value. While the McKinsey approach was clever, was it really thinking? The new consultancy firm mobilised a team of thirty consultants based in the UK and US and I was asked to be one of two UK strategy executives on the team. This consultancy had a quite different approach to McKinsey. Instead of detached, scientific, “quants”, the new group were playful, artsy and informal. We formed a sixty-strong team, bonding over days of team building, training and preparation. The centrepiece of the work was the consultancy’s proprietary playful Group Decision-Making workshop – the Accelerated Solutions Environment or ASE<sup>i</sup> (Pergamit & Peterson, 1997; Humphreys & Jones, 2006, 2008). After six weeks of preparatory research, more than one hundred senior executives and consultants gathered in Chicago for an immersive, collaborative, creative workshop. The team played with LEGO, Plasticine, and found objects like twigs and strips of fabric. They mixed up hierarchical reporting relationships, played music in the background to set the tone of the different sessions, and self-organised as they worked in mimicry of non-linear dynamic systems. They made three-dimensional models, read diverse texts and used them as metaphors with which to invent new business. They staged theatrical plays, declared their freedom from the “historical baggage” of their personal identities, and eventually re-conceived of the business not as a set of ballistic offerings fired to land in a projection of a stable, future outside world but as a fluid process-led company that experimented and learned from its commitments with individual clients. The linear processes developed by McKinsey were curved around into loops that continually adapted to the client as the client changed to overcome old habits and assumptions in the pursuit of constant creativity. It was notable that, whereas McKinsey foregrounded the supply chain mapping tools that helped strategists develop the coverage and productivity of one’s warehouse network, the fuel efficiency, fill rates

and reliability of one's fleet of trucks, and the skilfulness and courtesy of one's delivery drivers, in the new world those tools were pushed to the background and were replaced by commitment loops to assess, orientate, decide and act with individual clients. Whereas in the previous world, one took pride in being the best trucking strategist by designing the optimal approach to running a trucking operation at a point in time and plotting a course to excel at it. In the new world, the virtue of trucking excellence is replaced as the source of meaningfulness simply by the ability to adapt and control. In this new agile style, the trucking firm's core activity was simplified, deconstructed, standardised, and directed at thematised objectives of shareholder value and thinned out to ensure reliability or even dispersed and replaced by any other activity to which the value in a broad domain of activity has migrated even if only loosely connected to trucking (Gadiesh & Gilbert, 1998). It didn't matter much where the profit came from, as long as it came. If the firm and its people needed to reinvent ourselves wholesale, we would do just that. We found ourselves managing handfuls of KPIs rather than a richly experienced trucking operation, doing food processing, tray-washing, car-part sequencing and line-side delivery, truck scheduling, parcel tracking, and even providing finance for managing inventory, supplying temporary electricity generators, washing and recycling retail delivery trays, or processing food, or sequencing car parts. Were we a logistics company or a bank? The most meaningful life for such an agile strategist was one in which she had prepared herself to live with no attachments and to make herself a reliable coordinator of action between nodes in a shifting network producing successful simplified performances in any contingency (Ford & Ford, 2008). At first, I loved the authenticity we were asked to make manifest. Gruff truckers declared their secret love of Kylie Minogue, women on the team were listened to, effeminate men took leadership roles, and creative, artistic skills were in demand

everywhere. I dropped my preppy look and arrogant air, began to dress more casually and showed more of my personal interests, New Age upbringing and intellectual interests. For a time, it felt like a mini-Utopia but, gradually, I became disillusioned with the transformation programme. From my perspective, my senior management and the consultancy team colluded to neutralise a certain kind of original thinker on the project. Anyone who questioned the drive for shareholder value through flexible optimisation or argued for keeping hold of trucking and warehousing as a central practice, was marginalised as “not getting it”. The consultants and senior executives were selecting people to attend show-piece events who best fitted in and that didn’t rock the boat with pesky questions about meaningfulness or true quality of the service. It was the same old, same old of arrogant but testy senior male executives, mimicking creativity but always challenging others to question their assumptions, while leaving their own unquestioned. Over and over again, they side-lined the marginal and difficult people from both sides of the team. I was advised to learn how to fit in.

In 1999, I left and began working with a small UK-based consultancy (UKC) that licensed an approach to strategic change from US-based Transformational Technologies called “commitment-based management” (Goss, Pascale & Athos, 1993; Goss, 1996). Their approach developed the idea of transformative iteration to encompass not just the transformation or “reinvention” of the business but also, necessarily, of its executives. For the first time in my experience, I was working with a strategic management approach that professed not to leave out of its bounds the assumptions and worldviews of strategic managers. It was my first encounter with the fully-formed new style of agility.

The consultants that I met were very different to the many McKinsey, Bain, BCG, Accenture, CGE&Y, KPMG and OC&C consultants that I had met or worked

with on various occasions over the previous ten years. They did not have starred double first degrees from Oxbridge, they hadn't graduated *magna cum laude* from the Ivy League universities and weren't "double cuffed young Turks" brandishing MBAs from HBS, LBS or INSEAD. They didn't play the game by focusing on the "brightness and rightness" of their analyses, indeed they often appeared to do almost no analysis at all. They behaved in an idiosyncratic manner, clapping into the corners of rooms to clear the bad spirits, aggressively confronting and almost insulting clients, and leaving client social events early or even not attending at all because they weren't interested in "schmoozing". They talked a strange language of possibilities, declarations, stands, spaces, promises, and requests. For them, people, events, features and things weren't just there, they "showed up"; people might be sitting in front of each other but they still asked them "where are you right now?" They frequently appeared cross with me and my partner for being "stuck", for having "no possibility", a reason that, as allegedly creative individuals with a combined three decades of successful consulting, we found incomprehensible. They frequently told me that I just didn't "get" what they were doing. They appeared to inspire something akin to devotion from certain of their clients who seemed to see their services as deeper and their relationship as more valuable than a simple exchange of money in return for consulting services. They could point to books written by world-renowned philosophers and articles published in key management journals that suggested that they were "on to something".

These consultants were my first experience of a consulting approach that exhibited the agility that I sought, yet I felt uncomfortable with them. Why? They could, at least on the face of it, demonstrate their intellectual groundings. In fact, they regularly referenced key texts<sup>ii</sup> drawing management insights from some of the greatest figures of twentieth century philosophy, including Heidegger, Gadamer, Wittgenstein

and Searle. The approach itself drew on writings of the Google founders' PhD supervisor Terry Winograd and his colleague Fernando Flores, and on Flores' other work with philosophers, Charles Spinoza and Hubert Dreyfus. Its commitment-based approach, which denied ultimate foundations for strategies and yet also downplayed the place for autonomous, all-knowing leaders, was advocated as emblematic of our fluid postmodern times (Thrift, 2005). However, something about their consulting approach seemed off to me. UKC displayed a profoundly illiberal streak in their consulting. They were aggressive in their advocacy of a client's chosen commitment. They wanted clients to abandon their history and do the impossible. But sometimes, it seemed as if nothing was sacred to them. Nothing had authority to justify or ground their actions and choices outside of commercial success. Their commitment seemed total and unquestioned to anything – whatever it was. If one was going to commit and re-commit, an additional question emerged for me, when nothing, in itself, was sacred, and hence nothing could serve as an ultimate foundation for action, how could one distinguish something that was worth committing yourself to wholeheartedly from a commitment to something financially valuable but that depleted the sense of what mattered most to them as people? In other words, when did one know that one was pursuing the real thing or an absurdity? This, they could not answer. Their consulting practice was rigid and almost completely determined by texts treated as sacred, predominantly the key texts referred to above and their licensed training manuals. However, they had little direct contact with the authors of these texts despite the obvious fact that many of these authors were still alive and active. The texts themselves appeared to have ossified into a totalising dogma. Stray from the manual and the whole edifice could crumble. The work that they were doing with clients was profound. They were not simply intervening to challenge the superficial beliefs and models of the way

an industry or business worked but were profound interventions in the ways in which their clients understood themselves as humans and the world in which they lived. Yet the consultants themselves appeared to have had a rather narrow education. Most were under the age of thirty so one could assume that they had had limited opportunities to develop the kind of practical wisdom necessary to know the right thing to do in uncertain situations with different viable choices. Some had no degree-level education and most appeared to have only a superficial knowledge of the broader human sciences; of anthropology, psychology and sociology, of history, politics and economics, and of religion, philosophy and ethics. This appeared to me to seriously weaken their consulting effectiveness and ethics. I felt that their charismatic influence on clients as individuals encouraged *Tartuffe*-like dependence and could be potentially self-contradictory to their profession of freedom. Ultimately, they drove even harder and faster for productivity and seemed to close down even further a feeling of freedom and of meaningfulness.

They had given me my first experience of commitment-based agility and of the anomaly that lies at its heart and that shapes my research. Following Spinoza, Flores and Dreyfus's modified use of Thomas Kuhn's work on paradigm-shifting science to history-making in the more general worlds of social and economic life, I use the word *anomaly* to refer to a disharmony between one's actions and one's understanding of one's own actions. This anomaly, when held on to and inquired into, is seen by an actor as pervasive in general life, affecting many actors in multiple situations, and which, to be resolved, requires that the conventional common sense governing what it makes sense to do must be revised (Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, p.193n.25). *History-making*, a transformation from one holistic style to another, begins when an actor notices and holds on to such an anomaly. The commitment-based approach to strategic

management promised the possibility of existentially meaningful work and radical freedom yet, at the same time, necessitated the abandonment of anything that mattered other than the pursuit of agile efficiency. I understood my consulting work as liberating and yet in actuality it seemed only to constrain me and my clients even more perfectly. I was intrigued and shaped my consulting work and my research from this point to investigate, understand and resolve this anomaly. I contacted Hubert Dreyfus at Berkeley who kindly introduced me to Charles Spinosa with whom I conducted a correspondence for several years and eventually began working together. During our time working together, we helped a major UK fossil fuel energy company re-orientate towards renewable energy, an insurance company to transform its notion of exchange with its customers in the direction of mutuality, and a workforce solutions company towards sustainable flexible working practices. In each case, the anomaly that I had already identified was pervasive, the atmosphere and promise of meaningful work and freedom pertained but was whipped away and replaced by a tighter constraint of financial productivity in existing investor management forms. It is this anomaly that sits at the centre of my thesis.

## 1. Iteration and Adaptation in the Fast Company

It can hardly have escaped you that in my later writings I no longer employ the term ‘hermeneutics’.

(Heidegger, 1971, p.12).

### Introduction: Sensing the Limits of Technology

In this thesis, I analyse and resolve an anomaly in contemporary strategic management: the diminishment of existential meaning and freedom in the pursuit of ever-greater financial productivity and flexibility. I draw on Heideggerian philosophy to illustrate and resolve this anomaly by revising common-sense notions of what we are doing when we are making strategy<sup>iii</sup>. Chapters 3 through 6 provide the theoretical account of the anomaly and its transformation. Chapter 7 deepens and illustrates these accounts by inquiring into the paradigmatic cases of the global brewing industry’s largest brewer and one of its principal craft beer competitors. I show how the rhetoric of the brewing industry leader promotes the freedom of dreams but its management practice diminishes both freedom and meaningfulness. I also show how the leading craft brewer is successfully tackling this anomaly and how its success suggests more general lessons for strategy makers. I articulate these general lessons in Chapter 8. But before getting to these cases, I must more formally introduce my research domain and questions and set out how I propose to answer those questions.

I analyse the communicative practice of making and keeping commitments that exemplifies contemporary commerce’s agile style. This agile management style, first and most clearly articulated by a group of postmodern philosophers in the 1980s and converted into an influential management consulting approach in the 1990s, is itself exemplary of a broader technological style in Western culture. I use the term “technological” with the sense Heidegger had in his later writings (Heidegger, 1962,



1968, 1993, 2012a, 2012b). For Heidegger, "technology" is not a description of the equipment human beings use but rather of a general cultural ethos or historical style that is becoming the hallmark of contemporary Western life. Technology leads people, and hence managers, to see all entities, whether stock, production and distribution capacity, themselves, their employees, customers, and partners, and occasions, events and even time itself, as controllable but flexible resources whose possibilities can be either optimised, if fleeting opportunities are addressed fast, or wasted, if they are missed. For Heidegger, the technological style is one of agility. Hence, for Heidegger agile management would have exemplified the contemporary age<sup>iv</sup>.

The agile style has been defeating the more deliberative scientific style that prevailed among managers. That scientific style had managers picturing how more and more stable elements of a product's network of sales and production activities worked together to influence their capacity to sell that product, predicting how those relationships would change in the future, and then repositioning the firm to benefit from those interactions and dominate their sector's sales profitably and sustainably. Agility is beating scientific management by volatilising elements previously considered stable. Every entity is being broken into reconfigurable options, one or other option posited as valuable, the world reconfigured by managers to make the claim of value true, and then circling around and beginning again, in an endless iterative cycle of productivity. This volatilisation and co-optation of productive resources and its components includes the strategist herself. Now though, despite the agile market leaders' success, they are beginning to lose and have accepted that they will continue to lose market share in their mature markets. Agile businesses are faltering because they can no longer maintain a role as, what I call, a sacred institution, one that gathers and focuses its followers' understanding of life at its best and that provides those followers with the materials and

activities to participate in this most worthy, meaningful life (Dreyfus & Kelly, 2011, p.18). This sense of the sacred neither implies nor rejects any supernatural divine beings, it simply describes the moments of wonder or awe felt when participating in an activity that preserves a sense of relation to an authority beyond human control and thereby makes a good life into the worthiest life<sup>v</sup>. For instance, as I will return to in the discussion in Chapter 8, in this important sense, beer and beer drinking is sacred to certain beer drinkers in much the same way that using iPads, iPhones and iMacs is sacred to Apple aficionados. Craft or real ale beer drinkers, when drinking and talking of quality beer, feel among themselves a moment of participation in a larger field of meaningfulness that is beyond their comprehension and control. In this case, this larger field of meaning is held open by the drinkers' convivial connectedness to one another and to the brewers; to the beer's ingredients, and the physical locality of the brewery; and to the feel of connection with a historically and geographically distant world, a connectedness that is the mark of a worthy life (Taylor, 2007). This sacredness appears most clearly when it is lost or threatened. Bemoaning Beck's beer's loss of quality after its brewing was moved from Bremen to St. Louis, a former Beck's drinker wrote on the web page of its corporate owner AB-InBev, "I'm pretty bummed. I've been drinking this beer religiously for over 20 years<sup>vi</sup>." These words did not mean only that he had been drinking Beck's for years out of habit but rather that, for him, drinking Beck's gave him an experience that stood out from the rest of his life and showed him what, beyond his control, mattered to him such as the meaningfulness held open by historic brewing practices, a community of belonging, and the provenance of ingredients and brewing. This experience had been desecrated by AB-InBev's agility, which accumulates power to the single cause of efficient optimisation<sup>vii</sup>. However, while practitioner-oriented strategy books continue to tell stories of how, in sector after

sector, newer agile firms like AB-InBev defeat rule-bound, bureaucratic incumbents, these agile firms are increasingly vulnerable to businesses whose style preserves the sense of the sacred denied by the agile firms. Despite AB-InBev's communicative speed and precision, its vigorous branding, product and packaging ingenuity, and its scale and process efficiency, it is losing to a mysterious commitment to craft beer, a commitment to acknowledging, participating in, being grateful for, indeed worshipping a power and a reality that vastly exceeds human control. Such a commitment to the beyond is most closely associated with the religious<sup>viii</sup>. Over a ten-year period to 2014, craft brewers grew their share of the U.S. market by 173.6%, while AB-InBev's share fell from 49.4% to 44.7%. AB-InBev is now having to learn whether its agile style, while believing itself to be infinitely flexible, can sit alongside and work with the religious craft beer style of the breweries it has begun to bring in by acquisition.

AB-InBev's example shows how, by co-opting every entity into a volatile productivity network, agility itself undermines both meaningful products and work and intensifies feelings of despair at this loss among customers and workers. The impoverishment of meaningfulness leaves both products and processes uncompetitive. Although Heidegger only hinted at a remedy for agility's impoverishment, contemporary commercial culture is developing specific practices that preserve meaningfulness. Purely agile businesses, which minimise or even hide people's participatory role as makers of meaningful lives, are being surpassed by businesses that retain and elaborate the general capacity for the sacred that sustains meaningful products and workplaces (Dreyfus & Taylor, 2015, p.161). My work explores why and how agility arose and the remedy that is emerging.

Thus, I have four research questions:

1. Why is agile, strategic management so dissatisfying?
2. What lies at the root of this dissatisfaction?
3. How do today's Heideggerians, who witness the changes in today's commercial culture, understand the emerging meaningfulness?
4. What strategic management practices can I propose for the future?

My argument has four parts and draws on Heidegger's thinking from across his career<sup>ix</sup>. I begin with the basic account of selfhood and practical meaningfulness that I take from Heidegger's early philosophy of the 1920s.

Heidegger claims *contra* Descartes that, instead of isolated, autonomous minds separate from the world and its objects, human selves or *Dasein* are first and foremost practical beings embedded in the world and coping with it skilfully in their everyday activities. A generalized human way of being emerges first as an infant self is socialised into the practices of a culture. These social practices provide a background understanding or, to use Heidegger's specialised term, *clearing*, in terms of which one's self, others, things, and actions are familiar and make sense. Propositional claims to truth, make sense only against the background of this practical clearing.

The practices that make up the clearing are not rigid. Instead, they are volatile and can be *appropriated*, brought together by *Dasein*, differently within the free space of the clearing<sup>x</sup> configuring its own way of being and sense of selfhood. Thus, *Dasein*, takes a meaningful stand on its way of being from the intimation that its entire way of being could become meaningless. In short, it could die. And, as a flipside, life is meaningful to the extent that one commits wholly to own and express one's way of being in the face of its inevitable annihilation. A self's way of being comprises a three-

fold structure of care. In this structure, selves are thrown ahead of themselves, into a contextual network of practical possibilities, an *understanding*, that renders everything encountered as meaningful. These practical contexts comprise teleological chains of equipment in tasks that serve as means to ends, ranging from the proximal—inscribing a sheet of paper with elaborate marks—to the ultimate—to be an evangelist creating a non-Latin Bible for the sake of proclaiming the word of God to mediaeval peasants (Sheehan, 2015, p.147). Humans are always already engaged in these contexts in some way or other. While things may be practically meaningful for tasks, the way in which things matter is disposed by *mood*, “The mood has already disclosed, in every case, Being-in-the-world as a whole, and makes it possible first to direct oneself towards something” (Heidegger, 1962, p.167). Thus, an evangelist would fervently translate and transcribe a Latin Bible thrown by a mood of pious zeal. Finally, while things matter and are practically meaningful, one turns back to make sense of the current situation using the language or *discourse* at one’s disposal in the shared culture.

Second, while propositional claims to truth make sense only against the background clearing of practices, that background is not historically constant. In his later thinking of the 1930s to the mid-1950s. Heidegger described a hidden history of being in the West that traced holistic transformations in the prevailing *style* of the clearing. A style is the way general practices for dealing with selves, others, things, institutions, actions, and so forth, come in to their own, adapt to each other, and hang together as a meaningful whole. In new epochal styles, the meaning of older ways of being and living would be transformed. A Greek heroine such as Helen would appear an unfaithful sinner to a mediaeval Christian but a mediæval saint would, in turn, be woefully non-autonomous in the Enlightenment. Heidegger named the gathering or hanging together of a style, *Ereignis*.

Consistent with his earlier work, Heidegger sees that style works most basically to determine the truth of being through mood rather than through propositional thinking. One can experience how mood attunes one to the situation if one imagines walking in to a boardroom (other than Facebook's boardroom) in jeans and a sweatshirt. In the absence of propositional statements, perhaps even in the absence of comment, one would quickly feel out of step with the entire situation. Following his interpretations of pre-Socratic philosophical and poetic texts, Heidegger came to see the moods as the divinities, messengers of the gods, that counter human wilfulness and point toward the clearing, a sacred authority beyond human control, which attunes their meaningful lives. Historically, the gods inspire humans to live lives in accordance with the ethos of the community. The history of Western thinking is thus the history of different gods that order different ways of thinking (Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011, p.163). Each new epoch is instigated by a new god who deranges the prevailing style and points towards a new arrangement. The style of each epoch was attuned by a mood carried by a divinity in the guise of sacred monuments or the works of thinkers considered sacred. Such sacred monuments and thinkers attuned selves to a style and brought "the God closer" (Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011, p.169). Such figures included the temples for the classical Greeks, cathedrals for mediaeval and Descartes' *Meditations* for modern subjects. In Heideggerian terms, all three of these epochal styles belong to a mega-epoch that he characterised as *Machenschaft*, or the epoch of planning, which arose out of the Platonic Greeks' experience of the chaos Homeric world (Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011, p.175; Lefkowitz, 2005, p.239). Philosophical thinking, subsequently, has been concerned with dealing with the Homeric world's anomaly of instability. Thus, in the age of planning, everything becomes calculable and reliable, whether the Platonic ideas, God's designs, or Descartes and Kant's representations, and everyone is

disposed towards calculative control (Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011, p.175). The epoch of planning culminates in the technological or agile style. The agile style represents the “greatest danger” to our human essence because, uniquely, it has come about, not from a direct experience of countering by a god, but from an inward turning away from the gods and towards the self. It marks the beginning of a time when God neither plays a role of ultimate authority arranging or deranging human affairs, the so-called “death of God” (Nietzsche, 2001). In the absence of such a countering god, wilful, fluid selves in Western economies (Thrift, 2005; Sennett, 2006) are oblivious to their distinctively agile style. This turning away from the gods eventually dissolves any authority, even of the self, as a stable determinant of truth and meaningfulness. In the technological age, there is no god to counter its nihilism, only a series of technical challenges to accomplish greater flexibility. Heidegger argued that we should not, indeed cannot, reject the agile understanding of being but he did argue that we can develop a free relation to it by recognising it, simply, as a style (Heidegger, 1977, pp.3-49).

If Western selves were to experience how the current agile style is always already working as a background clearing positioning everything as an option for productivity, then they might glimpse its danger for meaningfulness and freedom. Heidegger speculated about this disruptive glimpse of the technological clearing as a background that enables truth but that must conceal itself to work, as an experience of the *last god* (Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011; Polt, 2013, pp.203-213; Sheehan, 2015, p.268). He considers the experience of the last god as throwing open the possibility of a free and meaningful relation to technology, indeed any style, by means of a new way of being towards things that he calls *dwelling* (Heidegger, 2012a, pp. 3-73).

Third, I draw on those Heideggerians working from Heidegger's last thinking (Borgmann, 1987; Dreyfus & Kelly, 2011; Dreyfus & Spinoza, 1997; Spinoza, 1992, 2000, 2001; Spinoza, Flores, & Dreyfus, 1997; Wrathall, 2011a, 2011b, 2013).

Heidegger argues that while developing a free relationship to agility is a worthier life than being trapped in it, the worthiest life is organised around some sacred cultural thing or thinker. In my interpretation, in order for such things to gain traction as something other than a resource, one must have experience of the last god that frees one's relation to agility, so as to be sensitive to the workings of agility as a background but one must also discover a so-called *focal thing* and focal practice from which a self can derive her sense of who she is and commit her life to that thing and the practices that bring it into its own (Borgmann, 1987, pp. 196-210; Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011, p. 178). Focal things have sacred worth, a religious authority beyond the autonomous practitioner's will, that authorizes what counts as meaningful and ties back (*re-ligare*) the practitioners to one another, to the thing and to the world that sustains them (Polt, 2013, p.208). In Chapter 3, I explore Heidegger's account of dwelling in the fourfold, to see how focal things express traces of the divine lying beyond them. Though they may seem like a waste of time or in need of enhancement, we can discover and take up humble or marginal practices, like playing music or devoting oneself to craft beer, and sense their difference from lives where we constantly select among options to enhance the world and ourselves. Such focal things allow us to glimpse how, even in agility, some things already matter more than other things (Dreyfus & Spinoza, 1997; Spinoza, Flores, & Dreyfus, 1997). They use the term *making history* for the bringing of marginal practices from the past, the present and the emerging future to the centre of one's life. If Western agile selves experience the history-making practice non-technologically, non-optionally, then it will bring with it an authority that exceeds their



personal powers as self-willing agents. When we are involved with the practice, we feel it telling us that it is worth doing and we experience that authority as *spiritual*, personally addressed but out of reach of our will. However, the spiritual authority of Spinoza, Flores and Dreyfus's history-making is itself diminished to the extent that it lacks the substantive attributes of gods from our traditions and completely omits an account of the last god as the experience of meaning in the already existing background agile clearing at work. I address these omissions.

Fourth, Heidegger asked the question of how to cultivate Western selves to resist technological agility's nihilism. For Heidegger, the principal issue of the contemporary age was to educate people in an "austere thinking" disposed to be open to mystery and thus to accept agility's power but refuse its dominance (Wrathall, 2011b).

When a domain is governed by a paradigm or style, education brings our discriminations, dispositions, and taste into accord with the spirit of that paradigm. It is a spiritual education. For successful initial education, the teacher reproduces his own way of responding (or spirit) in the student. It is a way for the student to "grasp the prevailing paradigm" (Wrathall, 2011b, p.5). Given the pervasiveness of calculative thinking to Western life, education becomes the cultivation of the calculative spirit – it is an education in calculative thinking.

Rather than an education in calculative thinking, Heidegger proposes another way called an "education in austere thinking". In this education, the student comes into accord with the essential human condition – homelessness – the existential fact that there is no "true me" for myself or the world to be, rather we are open to different ways of being in the world. Thus, Heidegger argues that there is a way out of agile thinking to the extent that all, and we can begin with enough of this generation, "receive an

education in thinking”, directly or indirectly and become sensible of the style as a style (Wrathall, 2011b, p.2).

To cash out this argument, I see businesses today doing exactly what Heideggerians describe to free their relation to agility and innovate their styles towards meaningfulness in a time of meaningless agility. The craft beer movement, which I discuss in this thesis, is one instance of a meaningful yet still innovative kind of austere thinking, which I will call, consistent with the adaptational sense of *Ereignis*, *adaptive thinking*. This transformation in thinking has three elements.

a. Adaptive strategic moves come from selves who are deeply involved and skilled in the core practice of their companies as a sacred, focal thing, whether brewing beer, turning planes around at the gate, getting trucks loaded and on the road quickly, or managing flexible workforces. Strategists must be practitioners or work closely with practitioners. While conceptual discussion and data analysis may play a part, strategists must have skills for doing the business’s core work in the currently prevalent style to such high levels of expertise that they can do the right thing in novel situations without thinking and the style of the practice becomes apparent as a style, which they honour but to which they are not bound as if it itself were sacred.

b. Such leaders who are practitioners or close to the front-line focal practitioner of the business must also have the capacity to identify anomalous configurations of behaviour. These anomalies, missed by non-experts, reveal the limits of the style of the existing clearing and prompt actions, quite different from their ordinary activities, to preserve and express some aspect that matters profoundly, even if they lack the words for it. Such configurations could be precursors of the death of the business’ current style or of its renewal. This adaptive strategic leader does not finesse away such configurations but explores them both conceptually and practically.

c. The adaptive strategist then finds a way to join this new aspect and its unusual calling with the sacred focal thing and the dominant style of practice to give it the authority and power to gain a foothold in the market and even transform that market. For instance, I will show how ex-consultant turned brewer, Jim Koch re-discovered his family's history of brewing beer and, through beer, discovered that complex, rich tasting craft beer mattered more to him than his consulting career even though it could not be produced as efficiently or reinvented as ingeniously as the mass-produced beers that his consulting skills fostered (Koch, 2016). Koch joined venerable family beer recipes with outsourced beer production to create a craft beer that masses of people could afford and yet that still carried the sense of sacred worth conveyed by poet Nikki Giovanni writing about Jim Koch's Utopia beer:

And now that I've found Utopia, I am at peace.  
I have Utopia, and if I were Egyptian I would be buried with it.  
I use it to start conversations and make friends.  
It is not for mortals. Or Americans. Utopia is for the gods.

(Giovanni, 2013, p.3)

However, following early suggestions by Spinoza, Flores and Dreyfus and specific advice by Wrathall, the task remaining for the Heideggerian ambition in the world of business is not simply to describe and celebrate the work of adaptive strategists such as Koch but to train a generation of managers to create strategies adaptively (Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, pp. 172-3; Wrathall, 2011b). In accord with Spinoza et al., I will show how Heidegger's understanding of the history of being makes sense of the change of management style that has underpinned the success of agile companies like mass brewer AB-InBev. It also, more importantly, makes sense of the change taking place at present and of the meaningful future that is unfolding in

the case of craft beers. However, I also argue that the omission of the capacity for the sacred from Spinoza *et al.*'s account leaves them inadequately equipped to enact this future and I put right this omission.

## Domain: Situating Agility and its Limits in the Wider Field of Study

For now, another consideration weighs more heavily. When we say: The abyss of thinking is the essence of language. Its essence is the saying. The saying is the realm of the hinting-showing reaching. The realm *is* as the location of the belonging together of thinking and being—when we say this, it appears as though we only followed a chain of utterances. What so appears and can even be taken exclusively in this way every time is nevertheless simultaneously a hint into a saying that encircles itself and thereby directly remains open, just like a ring, which as a ring is indeed closed, but precisely as closed preserves all around a light and free space wherein perhaps something unsaid might make an address without showing itself.

(Heidegger, 2012, p.165-166).

Having introduced the topic of agility and its limit, I now situate agility in the wider field of the commitment-based approach to strategic management and explore how its secularity imposes a limit on the viability of agile strategic management. After outlining the research opportunity, I will set out my research strategy, contributions, and the structure of the thesis.

Since the early 1990s, time has become a prominent issue in the notion of strategic management (Porter, 1991; Goodman, Lawrence, Ancona & Tushman, 2001; Hernes, Simpson, & Soderlund, 2013; Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013; Vesa & Franck, 2013; Hernes, 2014, Spinosa, Hancocks & Glennon, forthcoming). Taking time seriously has led to a transformation in strategic management practice advice away from the search for timeless success factors and towards dynamism in the form of the iterative coordination of commitments in which one commitment becomes the starting condition of the next (Ghemawat, 1991, 1999; Liedtka, 2003; Stacey, 2007, 2010; Sull, 2008; Tsoukas, 2010a, 2010b). This emphasis on *iterability*, when considered not as repetition without change but as the constant change of repeated charged differences in different contexts (Spinosa, 2005, p. 495), brings out an inescapable interplay or, more specifically, “intertemporal binding” of past, present and future actions that commit an

organisation and its actors (Sull, 2003, p.170). Actions taken today are made possible by actions taken in the past and constrain those actions that can be taken in the future. Today, many of the largest and most profitable firms, including AB-InBev, have enshrined this iterability in their everyday management practices to adopt a so-called agile style of management that promises the freedom to succeed reliably in an unpredictable turbulent world (Sull, 2009; Zook & Allen, 2012; McGrath, 2013). The reliability of these firms is borne on a highly controlled communicative practice to coordinate commitments to respond to events by founding, strengthening and transforming the firm and its products (e.g., (Ghemawat, 1991, 1999; Haeckel, 1999; Saloner, Shepard & Podolny, 2001; Sull, 2003, 2009; Zook & Allen, 2012).

My understanding of this transformation of strategic management rests upon three major moves: from timelessness to temporality; from lumpiness to emergence; from ratiocination to thinking. First, largely reflecting contributions from late twentieth century economics, the notion of strategic decision-making as a search for timeless strategic success factors was challenged. Since Chester Barnard's early work to define executive roles and function in the late 1930s, strategy had been seen to involve a search for *success factors*, a few underlying drivers of performance such as market share or production experience which, if identified and managed well with *algorithms* or managerial routines, would lead to the success of the firm (Barnard, 1938, cited in Ghemawat, 1991). The most influential critique of Barnard's approach came from Pankaj Ghemawat's dynamic theory of the firm which criticised reliance on success factors for four reasons (Ghemawat, 1991). In practice, success factors proved hard to find amid the plethora of candidate drivers of performance. When success factors were settled upon it proved fatal to assume one had a competitive edge, indeed the same success factors were generally recognised as such by competitors. Even if factors were

settled upon, concrete causal mechanisms, upon which algorithms could be based, proved elusive. Finally, by ignoring time, the way historical actions constrained current practices and future success factors, Barnard's approach tacitly endorsed myopic management and pushed aside contingency. Indeed, Barnard, explicitly stated that, although contingent uncertainties were an important part of ordinary management, the skill of business management "consists in avoiding so far as possible positions of uncertainty" (Barnard, 1968, p.10). If the past had no effect on one's options, if a strategist was free to choose any future path, then there was no reason to think through actions. The success-factors approach shot in the foot the whole image of a strategist thinking things through in order to make a decision, and yet the alternative image of a strategist who did not peer in to the future to plot a course stretched practical credibility. In order to address this temporal oversight, the notion of dynamic commitments as actions that influence the future was introduced. Emphasising commitments as actions, Ghemawat's dynamic theory of the firm defined commitments as:

A few lumpy decisions involving large changes in resource endowments – such as acquiring another company, developing and launching a 'breakthrough' product, engaging in a major capacity expansion, and so on – that have significant, lasting effects on firms' future menus of opportunities or choices.

(Ghemawat, 1999, p.121)

Ghemawat's approach to dynamic commitment making emphasised the irreversible "bet-the-company" nature of strategic decisions and explicitly criticised the, at the time, dominant success factor approach to strategy for its failure to,

Explain why organizations need to think things through in considerable depth ... commitment, in contrast, explicitly suggests a need for looking before leaping: for trying to peer into the future before it becomes present.

(Ghemawat, 1991, p.29).

Writing ten years later in a series of books and papers outlining an iterative approach to strategy, Donald Sull accepted Ghemawat's argument for the tendency

towards the irreversibility of commitments but criticised his emphasis on conscious rationality and “a few lumpy decisions”. Echoing foundational work on emergent strategy (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985; Pascale, 1984), Sull’s research demonstrated that Ghemawat neglected the kinds of incremental, non-financial choices and non-conscious decisions that accumulate over time into a pattern of regular competitive behaviour. On Sull’s account of iterative strategy, “managers commit their organizations to future actions all the time, sometimes without even recognizing that they have done so” (Sull, 2003, p.3; 2008). So, in addition to major financial decisions to take up a new technology or close a plant, the scope of objects requiring decision was expanded, the nature of strategy making became iterative, and the practice of commitment making was identified as essentially conversational. First, Sull extends what he calls “managerial commitments” to include “any actions that an entrepreneur or manager takes that bind the organization to specific behaviors in the future” (Sull, 2003, p.2). More precisely, Sull defines a managerial commitment as,

An action taken by an agent in a time period that increases the probability that the agent’s organization will behave in a specified way in subsequent time periods by increasing the future costs of deviating from the specified behavior, up to the limit of excluding altogether the possibility of alternative courses of action.

(Sull, 2003, pp.169-170).

Secondly, building on structuration theory, Sull describes how an entrepreneur sets up a common understanding of the events and actions deemed meaningful by making so-called *defining* and *reinforcing* commitments that gather a coherent background understanding. This background understanding, Sull names it a *success formula* or, more colloquially, a *groove*, shapes in turn what is meaningful for all those actors involved in the domain and hence creates iterative loops as earlier actions shape future actions. The success formula gathers as managers and other employees make



cumulative commitments to a mental map of the world that shapes how they see their world. As the map develops and becomes widely shared, more and more of a firm's people share a common understanding of the business the company is in, its way of creating value, and most important measures of success, its key customers, allies and competitors, and who and what they can ignore. The success formula gathers and stabilises as managers and employees reinforce this map with commitments to values, resources, processes and relationships that support it. The success formula in a firm unifies the interpretations and actions deemed relevant (and irrelevant) by customers, investors, employees, suppliers, competitors, regulators, and other actors and, hence, enables those actors to make propositional true-false claims of the creation of value. When incumbent managers experience environmental anomalies or jolts that throw into question these background understandings, in Sull's language when "grooves become ruts", unsuccessful managers continue making more of the same reinforcing managerial commitments and, even though they are active, they become increasingly badly adapted for the world, in Sull's language they get stuck in *active inertia*. However, some managers are able to deal with such jolts by making *transforming* commitments that disperse and reconfigures the existing background understanding of the business instituting a new success formula of what it now makes sense to do (Sull, 2003, 2009).

Thirdly, Sull argues that managerial commitments, whether gathering or dispersive, are made in loops of conversations comprising speech acts (Sull, 2008; Sull & Spinosa, 2007). Typical speech acts in business including *declarations* such as hiring, firing and promotion of personnel, *promises* such as public promises for profits to Wall Street or for guaranteed service quality to customers, and *assertions*, for instance, about relevant market conditions, competitive factors, new outcomes and

behaviours to be assessed. Thus, in Sull's view, agile managers replace linear, top-down managerial activities to make such commitments with iterative loops comprising four conversations to observe outcomes of actions already taken, make sense of the resultant situation, make choices of how to compete, take new actions, after which actors return again to observe and assess the outcomes of these actions and begin the cycle again (Sull, 2008). These iterative loops, which, in Sull's words following Wittgenstein, bear a *family resemblance* to Weick's sense-making (Sull, 2008), are commonly referred to in the management literature as OODA loops, in deference to the agile combat loop of Observe, Orient, Decide, Act developed by fighter pilots in the Korean War. Sull's major contribution was to see how, in business, the OODA loop is primarily conversational in nature. The essential feature of these loops is that more and more factors that can affect the productivity of a business model, instead of being seen as stable objects and effectively bracketing contingency, are now seen as essentially volatile resources that can be drawn in to the iterative loop. These loops proliferate into extended networks of loops in order, ultimately, for an organisation to be able to respond to all surprises and assure the longevity of the organisation. In business, these cycles may begin with the basic workflow to satisfy a customer request for service but extend eventually to complex strategic and mission-setting workflows of individual businesses and multi-business corporations (Flores, 1993; Sull, 2003, 2009; Denning and Dunham, 2010; Zook & Allen, 2012; Casadesus-Masanell & Ricart, 2011). The logical culmination of the agile style would be a network of OODA loops stretching across sufficient micro and macro scales of time and space to create an organisation that can reinvent itself to create value in response to real-time events such as unique individual customer requests (Flores, 1993), industry-level catastrophes such as the disruption of the competitive game (Christensen & Bower, 1995) and even to

historical-cultural shifts such as the emergence in the twentieth century of disposability as a general cultural value and way of life (Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997; Denning & Dunham, 2010, Chapter 13).

In the third move away from the search for timeless strategic success factors, the nature of *strategic thinking* has been brought into question by certain practice-based strategy scholars (Tsoukas, 2010a, 2010b; Chia & Holt, 2009). Sull recognises emergence and non-conscious choice and throws into question Ghemawat's emphasis on rationality, intentional, conscious calculation and wilful enactment of a few lumpy decisions. However, Sull's iterative account fails to provide a satisfying account of how strategic thinking enables not only the freedom to radically transform but also to preserve meaningfulness while transforming. Sull's iteration of propositional true-false claims succeeds in demonstrating how to make instrumental, pragmatic commitments but not why or how those commitments matter or don't matter. In particular, Sull does not develop a satisfactory account of how thinking adapts to volatility while preserving and transforming the meaningfulness of the set of ontological truth commitments as to what is real and existentially important to a way of life. Sull privileges instrumental, propositional truth over existential, ontological truth. Ultimately, as I will show, a satisfactory account of such adaptive strategic thinking must enable not just the iteration of true-false claims in a productive cycle but the adaptive gathering and transformation of the holistic space of existential truth or meaningfulness in which truth claims can be made at all. This adaptive, rather than iterative, thinking will depend upon showing how strategic thinking based on propositional truth is first conditioned by a prevailing meaningful context of truth called a *clearing*, and how thinking works with the sacred to gather and transform the clearing, and hence the prevailing kind of thinking. Demonstrating this sacred aspect will be the key contribution of this thesis. I

must show that the problem of agility lies in its marginalisation of the sacred, understood as an authority, beyond the prevailing convention or the actors themselves, that authorizes what counts as meaningful and that itself resists co-optation<sup>xi</sup>.

In its failure to recognise the sacred, agility is weakened for two reasons. Firstly, as a style of thinking that eliminates the sacred, agile thinking as optionalisation lacks a satisfactory explanation for the tenacity with which agile actors cling to it. If agile thinking was merely one option among others, then agility itself, were it to prove itself impractical or suboptimal, could be turned away from by agile practitioners in favour of, say, long-term visionary commitments to a strategic position. However, that does not reflect common experience (Spinosa, 1992, 2001). Rather, agile thinking, whether called agility, technological scientific rationalisation, cybernetics, or systems thinking is clung to by its practitioners in a manner that suggests it carries at least a thin sense of a religious commitment to something sacred. Namely, agility. This sense of agility as sacred, a thin sacred though it may be, nevertheless still serves to demonstrate that there is an authority, of which one is not the author, that is to be revered and preserved (Dreyfus & Spinosa, 1997) and hence as the soil for a remedy from its own secularity. Secondly, the very success of agile thinking conceals that other styles, each with its own kind of thinking, are possible. This has two implications. The concealment of other thinkings that have prevailed in earlier times, each with their own sacred authority whether Homeric gods, the Platonic Idea, Christian God, or Cartesian *cogito*, reveals the possibility that other lives were more meaningful and carried a thicker sense of worth than lives lived in an agile age where anything is rendered in to an option (Dreyfus & Kelly, 2011). This recognition can open up the search for things that bring a sense of existential meaning to one's own life to which agility can contribute but not co-opt. Such things can produce a thicker sense of the sacred and dispose a thinking

that preserves and transforms one's meaningful practice. Agile management is certainly successful in dealing with threatening surprises, at least at the levels of shocks to competitive and corporate business models, and it does bestow a freedom from caprice on its practitioners, inasmuch as they are prepared for disaster, accept it with confidence, and respond with serenity. However, ultimately, the very absence of distress with which the agile strategist prepares herself to receive surprises, comes, at least for some, at the heavy cost of the loss of the sacred<sup>xiii</sup>. While critical organisational theorists have noted the meaninglessness of agile businesses from call centres to management consultancies (e.g., Fleming, 2009), mainstream business writers too, those who support it as a human achievement, have identified how agility – the capacity to turn surprises into profitable advantage – is not in itself sufficient to support worthy economic institutions. Beyond the ability to make profitable meaning out of nasty surprises, responses must also matter in ways that touch the deepest intuitions of the community of producers and consumers as to what constitutes a life well lived (Sull & Houlder, 2005; Christensen, Allworth & Dillon, 2012; Hamel, 2012). This concealing of the sacred and of the possibility of radical difference between styles diminishes the sense of the human being as receptive to religious events that bring meaningfulness and the possibility of the situated freedom to transform a way of life and open up a new style.

In order to see a hint of how the sacred and thinking preserve and transform existential meaningfulness as well as instrumental meaning, we will turn to the work of a group of Heideggerian practice-based scholars and practitioners and their writings on strategy (Chia & Holt 2006, 2009; Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997; Tsoukas, 2010a, 2010b). Extending Sull's work into non-conscious strategic commitments, all three sets of writers displace the central role of deliberative thinking by arguing that,

far from being the norm, conscious, rational strategic decisions are in fact rare and that practical coping coordinated by an existing style is more basic to strategic action. While all three sets of writers emphasise the coordination of commitments by the implicit, somewhat mysterious style of practices lying outside of human control, in their descriptions of the practices to enact such a life all three neglect the interplay of the sacred, in the guise of mood, with the communicative aspects of strategic thinking.

In common with the agile practitioners, Heideggerian philosophers accept the volatility of the world but they maintain that accepting an interplay between humans and divinities beyond human control is essential to making sense of volatility in ways that amount to living a human life at its best (Dreyfus, 2005b; Sheehan, 2015). Heidegger understands divinities, acting through shared moods, as attuning humans to what matters most in a shared situation. In other words, for Heidegger, moods, rather than being the private emotions we typically understand them as in the West, are divinities, messengers from gods, beyond any human control, who condition humans to what matters most, to who they are, to what exists, to the right actions to take, and to the rightness of the execution of actions. In essence, sacred moods condition both instrumental, propositional truth and existential, ontological meaningfulness (Heidegger, 1998; 2012b). However, to date this Heideggerian interplay between moods, the sacred, and humans has been neglected by Heideggerian strategic practice scholars. Tsoukas, drawing on Heidegger, refers to the role of background practices in shaping emergent strategy (2010a, 2010b) and of emotions as “evaluative judgments” shaping action (Shotter & Tsoukas, 2014). However, he does not elaborate on how moods shape background practices and does not refer at all to Heidegger’s account of the sacred aspect of moods as messengers from non-human, divine authority. While Chia and Holt (2009) name “obliquity” as the “very atmosphere of doing strategy”

(Chia & Holt, 2009, p.197) and “blandness” as essential for an alternative to “spectacular strategic intervention”, neither they nor Spinoza, Flores and Dreyfus have reflected the more comprehensive late Heideggerian account of sacred moods.

The revelation of the concealed style of one’s background practices itself, normally experienced as an insight into the mystery and existential importance of one’s own basic assumptions, is considered by Heidegger to be an experience of composed openness to the most fundamental sacred, called simply *mystery*. Openness to mystery itself disposes the most basic kind of austere thinking that I have described as opening up and transforming current styles (Heidegger, 1966, pp.54-55). This contrast between agile thinking, other historical kinds of thinking, and a more basic, austere thinking and their connections to the spiritual is the focus of this thesis. According to Heidegger, the question of what matters is opened up, not by human will or any objective feature of the world such as a need for productivity or financialisation, but by a calling to think, which interrupts or counters the unmindful, common sense way of living (Heidegger, 2004). At this call, sedimented ways of being are volatilised, austere thinking begins, and the stakes involved in expressing different selves and alternative ways of making meaning in a situation are made apparent. In effect there is either a gathering loop that preserves and deepens a clearing or a dispersive loop of transforming or twisting free and, in order to twist free, one must be countered by a call from a divinity:

The call sets our nature free, so decisively that only the calling which calls on us to think establishes the free scope of freedom in which free human nature may abide. The originary nature of freedom keeps itself concealed in the calling by which it is given to mortal man to think what is most thought-provoking. Freedom, therefore, is never something merely human, nor merely divine; still less is freedom the mere reflection of their belonging together.

(Heidegger, 2004: p.132-3)

Thus strategic thinking is our domain and these callings, as deranging and unifying events that dispose human actors to take up their role as freely thinking disclosers of worlds, are the focus of our questions (Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, p.178; Dreyfus & Taylor, 2015). I contend that an adaptive strategic management that takes account of the sacred would have the freedom to think through anomalies that put its own prevailing common sense in to question while preserving meaningfulness. An adaptive strategy would not be dogmatic or inflexible but would receive and respond to the sacred as the ground for what really matters and for the meaningful transformation of what matters. A worthier agile strategic management would be concerned, not only with jolting events that affect its competitive business model, but also with those anomalies that reveal that there is a fundamental agile style at work making the firm's activities and identities sensible and worthwhile.

## Contributions

I make four principal contributions in my study: conceptual, analytical, methodological and practical.

Conceptually, I elaborate the basic distinction between nonconscious and conscious strategic thinking set out by the Heideggerian strategy scholars into *disciplinary* thinking of various styles and *austere* thinking. Disciplinary thinking refers to the particular styles of embodied, enacted logic or thinking in action that enable and condition particular kinds of truthful action. Austere thinking surfaces the logic of any style in order to meaningfully preserve and transform it. I introduce a Heideggerian framework of the key terms that together enable the characterisation of a particular style of disciplinary strategic thinking. These styles are ways of thinking that enable particular ways of life and carry their own particular deficiencies. Conceptually,



I also outline a theory of an austere kind of strategic thinking, which I call adaptive, that enables both the preservation of existential meaningfulness and its radical change. In the course of developing this adaptive strategy I develop conceptual resources drawn from Heideggerian thinking of the role of moods, the sacred and focal things in the preservation and transformation of any particular style and the truth that the style conditions. Analytically, I draw on this initial conceptual framework to analyse and illustrate the basic styles of strategic thinking at play in particular strategic management texts. I demonstrate two kinds of disciplinary strategic thinking, the modern and the agile, and an adaptive strategic thinking based on a focal thing. I illustrate the latter two with paradigmatic cases of strategic practice. This analytical contribution can serve as a start point to be elaborated on in further textual research into management texts, and as an empirical framework for the analysis and change of actual strategic management work practices. Methodologically, I propose a transformative disclosure strategy based on paradigmatic cases and affective literary reading method that further develops a style of research proposed as most appropriate to the human sciences. Finally, the purpose of the foregoing is to improve a field of human practice with which I am directly concerned, and so, based upon the theory of adaptive strategy that I outline, I propose ontological skills for strategists and pedagogical practices for their development in support of the practice of adaptive strategic management.

This introduction to the lack of worthiness in agility and the life of the agile strategist begins to raise the question of a suitable access point to research our questions. I have introduced several concepts so far: *being* as a term for the intelligibility of things and situations, *style* as the background organisation of an intelligible world, the *sacred* as the external authority of the meaningfulness of a world,

the *free relation* as the human life best lived by owning one's role as a finite maker of meaning, and the *history of being* as the history of different styles of intelligibility.

As we saw, a Heideggerian history is not an account of who did what and what resulted. Instead, Heideggerians think of *historicity* as the basic feature of human being as a temporally shifting style. A Heideggerian history is a history of different regimes of “what counts as a thing, what counts as true/false, and what it makes sense to do” (Dreyfus, 1996, p.4). Building on his earlier genealogical history of management (Cummings, 1999, 2002; Cummings & Daellenbach, 2009), Cummings makes an overview of the historical transformation of the epistemic regimes of the strategic management field since the 1960s (2008). Cummings identifies twelve analytic categories to characterise each of two epistemic regimes and, after plotting the differences between the categories, identifies twelve movements that collectively move the field from a modernist style that resembles closely what I will call, the world-picturing style of correctness and control, to a postmodern form, that resembles what I call the technological or agile style (Cummings, 2008; see also Cummings & Daellenbach, 2009).

Strategy	Was About...	Will also be about...
<i>Practice</i>		
<b>1. Strategy is about...</b>	long-term plans and objectives	intent and agility, orientation and animation
<b>2. Strategy comes from...</b>	rational analysis and top-down	emergent activities and micro-planning practices from anywhere
<b>3. Strategic choice is...</b>	generic, either/or, e.g., cost or individual paradox resolutions, differentiation, global or local	“both/and” thinking
<b>4. Margins enhanced by...</b>	“best-practice” benchmarking developing organisational specific	“next practice”
<i>Processes</i>		
<b>5. Organization should be...</b>	hierarchical, generic, depicted by distinctive, individualised standard organisation charts	depicted by unique “organigraphs”

Strategy	Was About...	Will also be about...
6. Value-added depicted...	through generic value chain	through fluid and flexible value webs
7. Underlying assumption is...	increasing efficiency	promoting knowledge, which requires slack
8. Vision and values are...	about creating the future	about remembering and utilising the past
<i>People</i>		
9. Key personnel are...	senior execs and consultant advisors	a broader band including people at all levels
10. Strategy makers are...	increasingly professional	increasingly amateur
11. Employees/managers/students ...	consume strategy	produce strategy
12. Strategy research is...	increasingly empirical	increasingly idealist or intuitive

**Source:** Cummings, 2008, p. 185.

Cummings' work is suggestive and his framework offers good face value. It opens the question of how basic styles of management thinking differ, of the fundamental limitations of current ways of thinking, and of how to preserve what is best and transform what is limiting in the future. However, Cummings' framework begs several questions. For instance, one wonders how to justify the necessity and completeness of the twelve categories of Cummings' framework. Why are there twelve categories? Are they the right ones? Are they all necessary? What work does each do to explain truth? In his history of being, Heidegger develops several ontotheological framework to set out the style of different epochs. Each style comprises an ontological *essence* that defines *what* an entity is, a theological *existential* whole of actual features in causal relation that structures how entities interact to determine *that* an entity is what it is, a paradigmatic entity and its signature mood that gathers and disposes the thinking, and a transformation in what counts as truth and the proper attitude for attaining truth in each regime (Wrathall, 2011a; 2013; Wrathall & Lambeth 2011). Similarly, the process and source of transformation from one regime to another is not discussed by

Cummings, whereas, as described above, Heidegger names *Ereignis*, as a gathering of volatile chaos into different temporally stable networks or epochs of meaning. Heidegger also describes the transformational process of truth reconfiguring itself, as the transformation of one regime of truth and meaning to another, each precipitated by a shift in grounding-mood. Thus, the analysis of mood will be central to the methodology of this thesis.

Strategy scholars have been periodically interested in the phenomenon of mood and recognise well its fundamental role in setting meaningfulness in a situation. Brundin and Liu review research on the related topic of emotions in strategising (Brundin & Liu, 2015). However, their work concentrates on emotions as intentional states directed at objects rather than the Heideggerian thought of moods as that which “makes it possible first of all to direct oneself toward something” (Heidegger, 1962, p.167). A search on the term “mood” in leading strategy journal *Long Range Planning* returns 92 articles mentioning mood of which most mention it only once and then in telling ways. For instance, mood is seen as fundamental to the failure to respond to signs of failing strategy (Wissema, 2002), a change in a board’s support for a CEO (Roberts, 2002), the ascendancy of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative party in the UK (Rigg & Leach, 1990), prospects for firms’ profitable growth in particular industrial sectors (Darling, 1983; Delmas & Pekovic, 2015), intuitive management (Elbana, Child & Dayan, 2013) and a business’s innovatory capacities (Keegan & Turner, 2002). Following the spate of publications exploring behavioural economics in the wake of examination of the stock market bubbles and crashes of the last two decades, the idea that moods affect thinking has entered common parlance (Shiller, 2010). Yet to date, and with only a few exceptions (Hancocks, 2013; Holt & Cornelissen, 2014; Shotter & Tsoukas, 2014; Spinoso, Davis & Glennon, 2014), mood has received little attention

for its role in unifying or dispersing the meaningfulness or otherwise of a situation. Despite its essential role in philosophical accounts of how situations are meaningful to humans (e.g., Dreyfus, 1996, Spinoza, 2000), mood has been little conceptualised as a serious topic for strategising. Agile strategists are disposed by the kinds of moods in which the questions asked always have a similar technological kind of answer to do what is most productive. They are bound by the moods of agile business strategy, those moods of composed inventiveness and flexibility. They are never befuddled, desultory, or dilettante-ish, and they are never lost for an answer. In my experience of my own working moods and those of consulting colleagues and clients, agile strategists are generally cocksure, self-congratulatory, wilful, unblinking, and undismayed in the face of shocks; they may occasionally be playful, zany, curious, and excitable, always time pressured and obsessed with productivity. Every minute must be well used and every encounter must have a pay-off. Agile strategists are rarely startled, lost, or bewildered, and never grateful, restrained or awe-struck. The style of agile management never brings the strategists to the fundamental moods argued by Heidegger to bring awareness of one's thrown-openness and open possible new pathways to thinking (Capobianco, 2010; Sheehan, 2015). The agile manager's understanding is always already disposed by a mood in which she is simply unable to observe the style of the world in which her business makes sense and is prevented thus from participating in history-making change. Her mood closes off the possibility. If agility emerged in response to the anomalies of instability and turbulence, the agile style itself is throwing up its own anomaly – its fundamental moods close off the most radical agility, that mood that first opens and makes sense of the currently lived-in world and that might open a new world.

## Structure of the Thesis

So far, I have introduced the problem of the loss of freely owned meaningfulness in agile strategic management and briefly set out a methodology for a disclosive “critique from the inside,” intended to contribute to an agile strategic management practice that is more freely historical, on its own terms. The remainder of the thesis proceeds as follows.

Not including the Preface and Postscript, the thesis is composed of eight substantive chapters. The current Chapter 1 introduces agile strategic management as the object of this study and sets out the thesis’s research questions. Chapter 2 defends the methodology by which these questions can best be studied and lays out the thesis’s detailed method. It describes a textual reading method comprising two sub-methods. The first sub-method articulates the historical understanding of being discernible in influential strategic management texts, and the second sub-method returns to the text to pinpoint an *anomaly* left implicit or unthought in it. This unthought is held onto and named, elaborated and worked up into a new style of strategic management and strategic management practices that incorporate a free relation to essential spiritual practices.

Chapter 3 sets out Heidegger’s distinction between *propositional* and *ontological* truth and its connection to freedom, meaningfulness and the spiritual. It goes on to set out the relevance of these relations for a worthy life in an age whose technological understanding of being puts everything, including human beings, on stand-by as options to be called on and driven on “to the maximum yield at the minimum expense” (Heidegger, 1993, p.321). This drive for productivity demands agility, not as a means to an end, but for its own sake, “everywhere everything is

ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering" (*ibid*, p.322). The chapter describes how this agile understanding depletes the possibility for *existential* as opposed to merely *instrumental* worth and Heidegger's approach for developing a free relation to technology as a way to have both. The chapter concludes by laying out Heidegger's history of being as a matrix<sup>xiii</sup> of different historical understandings of truth. This matrix is then used to analyse strategic management texts and demonstrate the understanding of truth at work in canonical texts influential among practising managers<sup>xiv</sup>.

Chapter 4 demonstrates how business strategy theorisation lines up with extraordinary closeness to Heidegger's history of being. It describes the broad sweep of strategic management styles in the light of Heidegger's historical styles and describes in detail how contemporary strategy making theory manifests two particular epochs in Heidegger's history: the modern, world-picturing age at work in Michael Porter and Jeanne Liedtka's accounts of strategy making, and the agile age that is manifest in game theorists' Pankaj Ghemawat and Don Sull's dynamic or agile commitment-based strategic management.

Chapter 5 reviews the attempts of those of a handful of theorists, both business and philosophical, who drew on Heidegger's thinking of technology and have begun to theorise strategy in a new way. The chapter describes three Heideggerian prototypes for a post-agile strategic management, two prototypes put forward by business theorists Robert Chia, Robin Holt and Haridimos Tsoukas, and the Heideggerian commitment-based management prototype of philosophical theorists Fernando Flores and Charles Spinosa. Chapter 6 then closely reads the Heideggerian text that influenced these writers, *Disclosing New Worlds* (Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997). The chapter reveals the spiritual as the unthought of the text and shows that both sets of prototypes fail

because they either fail to get Heidegger's spirituality right, they think of spirits primarily as attuners, as opposed also to derangers, of truth and meaning, or because they do not get the spiritual appeal in today's marketplace right or even at all.

Chapter 7 returns to the beer industry to present and discuss the contrasting paradigmatic cases of AB-InBev and The Boston Beer Company. I show how the adaptive strategy of Jim Koch, Boston Beer's founder, thinks in just the way Heidegger described, by blending contemporary agility with other meaningful practices marginalised by the agility that is exemplified by AB-InBev. Koch's adaptive strategizing centred itself on a sacred focal thing, namely his family's brewing heritage, connected it with the agile techniques learned as a consultant, and developed a sustainable advantage over the purely agile market leader AB-InBev, which explicitly concealed the sacred. As such, Koch's is a company at which this study advocates strategic theorists should look, not to imitate its formulae for business success but to observe and develop its founder's adaptive strategic thinking.

Chapter 8 elaborates the suggestions of the Boston Beer Case to set out an adaptive strategic thinking practice that addresses the problem of the loss of freedom and meaningfulness and hence truth, and to suggest how to develop the strategic management skills and practices for which it calls. It concludes the thesis by summarising its argument and findings, capturing its contributions to the field, and noting its limitations and connections to other studies, with a view to suggesting further lines of research.

Having thus introduced my overall research methodology and set out the structure of the thesis, in the following chapter I turn to a description and defence of my detailed methodology. I first distinguish the transformative disclosure method from its principal critical competitors and justify its viability as a form of critique. I further



distinguish transformative disclosure from two prominent alternative reading methodologies, those of deconstructive and cultural studies, before setting out and illustrating my reading techniques and ethics and quality principles.

## 2. Methodology: Reading for Difference

The essence of language as saying is the realm. [...] It names something singular, that wherein all things and beings extend to one another, reach over, and thus reach one another, and redound to the benefit and detriment of each other, fulfil and satisfy one another.

This realm alone is likewise home to the unattainable. The realm, now to be experienced as the essence of language, is the dominion of play, wherein all relationships of things and beings playfully solicit each other and mirror each other [...] The realm is the location in which thinking and being belong together.

(Heidegger, 2012: p.158)

I will use what I am beginning to see as my philosophical method (I did not know I had one): look to Heidegger's and Merleau-Ponty's distinctions for a clue to the phenomena in question and then to those phenomena to test and further develop Heidegger's and Merleau-Ponty's distinctions.

(Dreyfus, 2000, p.314)

### Introduction: Transformative Disclosure and Its Principal Competitors

Chapter 2 introduces and defends the Heideggerian historicising methodology by which my research questions can best be studied and lays out the thesis's detailed method. It describes a textual reading method of three movements. The first movement articulates the historical understanding of being discernible in influential strategic management texts, and the second movement returns to the text to pinpoint an enigma left implicit or unthought in it. This unthought is then treated as an anomaly, the origin of a possible new truth. If held on to, put into words or named, and worked up into meaningful new practices, an anomaly can eventually transform the agile strategy-making field itself and establish a new understanding of being and new strategic management practices.

If mood is central to setting the style of a way of doing things in the world, it makes sense to look at the mood set by the strategists. Future studies could inquire into the moods of actual strategists working in their businesses, but I begin by studying the moods disposing theoretical writings teaching strategic practitioners different ways of

doing strategy. Accordingly, I conduct a literary reading for the mood of strategic management texts. This takes us to the question of a suitable method to study the mood of writings. Recall the primary role of mood in our earlier condensed account for setting the way that things make sense. This is as true of language as it is of any other aspect of our existence and consequently, we shall seek an affective discourse analysis.

### **Paradigmatic Case Study**

I utilise a paradigmatic case methodology as a form of scientific explanation, understanding and prediction relevant to specific human actors in their local contexts (Dreyfus, 1986; Flyvbjerg, 2001, 2006; Kompridis, 2000, 2006; Flyvbjerg, Landman & Schram, 2012). My impetus for embarking on this project came from my practice as a strategic management consultant with over twenty years' experience of both the dominant *world-picturing* and emerging *agile* styles of strategic management. As a strategy officer in a global logistics firm, I had had exposure early in my career to the world-picturing style when working as a junior client-side member of a McKinsey-led strategy team, and deepened my experience of this analytical, planning style as a senior consultant in a strategic operations consultancy. I had my first exposure to the agile style as a full-time member of a mixed client and consultant team led by Ernst & Young's complexity science-informed business transformation practice. After setting up and running my own agile strategy consulting business, I encountered one firm of consultants who practised a well-known form of agile management called commitment or promise-based management, and subsequently worked closely over a period of more than ten years with another firm closely related to the inventor of the commitment-based approach. These experiences first sensitised me to the loss of freedom and meaning of both planning and agile styles of strategic management as an anomaly of both styles that pointed to their unsatisfactory nature. This experience opened up the

questions that focus this study. The anomaly of meaninglessness and consequent loss of authenticity showed up everywhere to me but I could find no advice on how to address it within the literature or among my own and my colleagues' practice. We were clever but our cleverness manifested as supremely quick inventive calculation. It didn't much matter. Our work had major impacts but it was administered vigorously but somehow carelessly. All that seemed really to matter was to be productive.

What methodology would lend itself to such contingent, situated inquiry and be credible both to myself and to my fellow philosophy-educated practitioners? It seems to me that, to be relevant to our community, the methodology must stay very close to its key practices and it must research those practices in a way that is consistent with the thinking inherent in them. I take the stance that, as a participant of a community whose practice takes its cue from this later Heideggerian focus on the phenomena of disclosure, my research methodology itself must be disclosive if it is to carry weight with my own community of practice. It must disclose and transform the kind of disclosure that is at work in the world of the strategy-making practice. Thus, I propose a transformative disclosure, or *disclosive* for short, research strategy for describing the thinking of agile strategic management practice and for identifying and addressing its shortcomings. In particular, I adopt a so-called *paradigmatic* approach (Dreyfus, 1986). Dreyfus argues that the study of human being can never achieve the ideal of scientific theoretical predictability attained by the natural sciences because such a study will never be able to explicate the background understanding that pertains in social and historical practices and that is required of its researchers for expert performance. While simple rules may play a role in introducing and orienting novices to a domain of practice such as chess playing, those rules play no role in expert performance and there are no serious candidates for superseding expert rules that explain research

performance better than background practices. In the absence of a suitably expert-relevant approach, research appears naive and of low credibility to practitioners (Dreyfus, 1986; Flyvbjerg, 2001). However, despite the impenetrability of the background practices, one way that a systematic account of human action is possible is by studying prototypes (Dreyfus, 1986, p.20). Dreyfus advocates that social science follow the examples of Geertz and Foucault, to set out thick descriptions of prototypes of everyday action which can serve as *paradigmatic* examples to organise more specific and diverse activities within a domain (*ibid.*). A prototype or, as I will henceforth refer to it, paradigmatic case, is a clear or perspicuous case of a style that serves to exemplify that style from within and can be drawn upon to improve that style in ways that are deemed relevant by its practitioners (Dreyfus, 1986; Borgmann, 1987, p.4; Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, p.31; Flyvbjerg, 2001; Topper, 2005). Since Dreyfus' call for a paradigmatic case-based study, several scholars have proposed human science methodologies that aim for predictability within a situated context (Flyvbjerg, 2001, 2006; Kompridis, 2000, 2006; Flyvbjerg, Landman & Schram, 2012; Topper 2005; Glynos & Howarth, 2007). These methodologies construct case studies that can serve, not only as a way of understanding phenomena more deeply or for generating hypothetical explanations, but also for wider predictive generalisation relevant to specific communities in specific contexts. Consistent with my research goal to make a contribution to the agile strategic management community's own development of its practices, the purpose of realist social science is described as "contributing to society's practical rationality in elucidating where we are, where we want to go, and what is desirable according to diverse sets of values and interests" (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p.167). The goal is described as "contributing to society's capacity for value-rational deliberation and action" (*ibid.*).

Thus, the paradigmatic transformative disclosure methodology works as follows. Through my consulting experience, I have uncovered a persistent problem: the most successful forms of strategic business management also significantly deprive at least some of the lives of its practitioners of a feeling of exemplary lives of worth. Indeed, I will show how the lives of leading agile practitioners are, in fact, derided. Strategic thinking on its own does not have an effective way to take this weakness into account since winning in the market is the primary goal of strategy, and the loss of meaningfulness is seen, at best, as a secondary goal. Therefore, rather than look primarily to the strategic management literature for methodological guidance, I have approached the problem in the following way. I identify Heideggerian philosophers as the leading philosophical thinkers who have explored most thoroughly the loss of meaning in the world today, have worked out an account of why it is so hard to recover meaning, and have not embraced the loss of meaning as a new kind of positive good but, instead, have proposed remedies to recover it. I then draw on these Heideggerians' key concepts to develop an interpretation that illuminates the way today's most successful forms of strategic management fail to account for, and may even preclude, the possibility of an authentic life for its practitioners. This part of the work deploys a classic hermeneutic methodology of revealing the way of making sense at play in a particular domain of human action. The proof of the value of this methodology will lie in the strategic management community's own evaluation of the method's success in describing the important details of contemporary strategy formation and execution, including its loss of meaningfulness and authenticity. Next, I draw on Heidegger's, and Heidegger's followers' including my own, attempts to re-establish a free relation to meaningfulness. I describe how these practitioners work and what they achieve. Here the method is pragmatic hermeneutics. Do these more

authentic approaches to agile strategic management succeed commercially and also provide their practitioners with a renewed sense of the worthiness of their lives? And does the interpretation of the formation and deployment of the strategy take account of the critical details that reveal how the practitioner's life showed renewed authenticity?

I describe different paradigmatic cases of theoretical strategic management advice to elucidate their *style* or way of thinking, that which serves to “ground the meaning” of various more specific cases (Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, p.20). In this methodology, I first introduce Heidegger’s history of being as an array of various incommensurable styles that have held sway in different epochs over the course of 2,500 years of Western thinking. I set out these styles and their regimes of meaningfulness, their understandings of what things and people are and what it makes sense to do, and demonstrate how each style, in its own way, is oblivious to the forgetting of the style as source of meaningfulness. Drawing on this history, I turn to strategic management practice and set out the “thought” styles of different forms of world-picturing and agile strategic management. I show the basic presuppositions of these strategic management styles, and demonstrate how each remains oblivious of the “unthought” forgetting of the appropriated clearing as the disclosure of meaning through humans, and hence does not recognise its own loss of freedom, or offer advice for freely historicising strategic management. Finally, I set out the “thought” style of a paradigmatic case of post-agile, proto-adaptive strategic management and read closely the mood and language of its foundational text *Disclosing New Worlds* (Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997). This reading first sets out the *thought* of the text. I define the thought as that which is made explicit about what it is trying to do, how it is doing it and which language, in turn, enables the teaching and assessment of practical excellence. The first reading sets up a second reading for the text’s *unthought*, that which they were unable

to make explicit but which, nevertheless, is “in the text” and that enables me to go further and loosen the text’s authority, to locate how the existing style fails to fully support authentic agile strategic management, open up its style for new possible ways of making sense, new styles, and, eventually, to propose remedies for this omission.

Having described and justified my paradigmatic case study methodology, I turn now briefly to distinguish my disclosive approach from broader critical theory. I do this to provide theoretical background for the detailed description of my disclosive reading method that I describe in the following chapter.

### **Disclosure then Critique**

If my intention is to contribute to the agile strategic management community’s own development, and if my research question implies a critical project anchored as it is in a sense of something missing or broken in an ongoing agile management practice, then what form of critique would be credible to the agile practitioners themselves? For many of these practitioners, their own background is philosophically sophisticated. The articulators of our paradigmatic case, for instance, Charles Spinosa, Fernando Flores and Hubert Dreyfus are all experts in existential, hermeneutic, phenomenological and performative language philosophy. In Dreyfus’ case he is widely recognised as one of the world’s leading exponents of such philosophies. For them, to be human is to be a discloser of worlds—in their everyday practical coping, humans disclose inherently meaningful worlds of equipment, purposes and identities. To recapitulate, these worlds are meaningful by virtue of their being coordinated by a style—a way in which they hang together and make sense holistically. In order to understand and contribute to the world of the agile practitioners in ways that matter to those practitioners themselves, one must be a historical participant in it. And any critique, if it is to be deemed relevant,



must thus be an *immanent* critique, one that works from and makes sense from within the styled disclosure of that world of practice. From this disclosive self-understanding of the agile practitioners, the idea of an external, detached position from which to survey, assess and critique a field is inconsistent (Kompridis, pp.125-132). The style of a world only reveals itself to those in tune with it and, for those practitioners, the attempt to view the world, as it were, from the outside would appear banal and its insights paltry. Consequently, a critical methodology appropriate to such thinking must begin from within, that is, as a self-transformative disclosure of the style of the agile world by one of its own practitioners. As an account of the way the style makes only certain meanings apparent to (and conceals others from) those practitioners, the critical anomalies discovered thus make sense and matter to its practitioners as breakdowns in their smooth practical coping in that world.

As described above, this transformative disclosure comprises two analytical movements. The first is an articulation of the *thought* of a style, those parts of its practical understanding that are made present by being thematised and expressed in language. The second movement is an articulation of the style's *unthought*, those aspects of its understanding that are unexpressed in language but which, as attunements, still dispose its authors' writings and which, if thematised or made explicitly present, open new possibilities for the style. In *Seeing Things in Merleau-Ponty*, Kelly describes his methodology for reading a text's unthought,

It proposes a risky interpretive principle. The main feature of this principle is that the seminal aspects of a thinker's work are so close to him that he is incapable of articulating them himself. Nevertheless, these aspects pervade the work; give it its style, its sense and its direction; and therefore belong to it essentially.

(Kelly, 2005, p.74)

Kelly goes on to argue that the main works of both philosophers and artists are identifiable as examples of their own familiar style. One can think of Charles Dickens'

or Jane Austen's novels, Turner's, Pollock's or Klee's paintings, Henry Moore's sculptures, and Heidegger's poetic or Alain Badiou's thetic writings. The style is clear to those who witness their works but is not thematised or made explicit in a rule or single feature. Instead, a style withdraws into the background and pervades the work exceeding its linguistically articulated meaning. Moreover, it is the author or artist who is least likely to recognise their own style. Often, it is the careful reader of a text who is best able to show an author what he or she is doing as she writes. My goal in this chapter is to bring out the unthought of the authentic post-agile, proto-adaptive style of *Disclosing New Worlds*, that truth which guided its authors' efforts but which they fail to get right in their book. If the unthought of a prototypical style is its unarticulated issue, that which, if it were to be thought or made explicit, would raise the prospect of the death of that prototype as a general style or understanding of being. The acknowledgement of the possible death of a style would, if accepted, put the reader in the position of choice about how next to move, which way to go. It is an existential moment of disclosing that one is a discloser and that is claimed as an experience of life at its best (Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, pp.28-31).

From my two part reading, I will contend that early articulators of the prototypical freely historicising agile style developed a largely *communicative* linguistic account of how reliably to flex and innovate practices to satisfy customers in a groundless and turbulent world, but that they completely missed the religious nature of *revelatory* language essential to history-making (Flores and Winograd, 1988; Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, p.206n2; see in particular, Wrathall, 2011a, Chapter 7 for the distinction between communicative and revelatory views of language). Wrathall (2011a, pp.164-169) argues that Heidegger distinguishes communicative from revelatory views of language and that assenting to one or other relation to

language is transformative of one's conduct in the world. Communicative language is in the game of coordinating action within a given meaningful world and for making assertions to give reasons to justify the actions that one takes. Assenting to the communicative view commits one to a life of finding proofs for the reason of one's actions. But, drawing on Heidegger's analysis described earlier of how the clearing, that which provides the space of meaning for such propositional claims, always seems to stay in the background and eludes the finality of indubitable, explicit reasons, one can always find reasons to cast doubt on the reasons given for an action. One meets the problem of infinite regress (Dreyfus, 1994, pp.55-66). However, assertions in revelatory or, simply, poetic language are in the game of naming new phenomena of interest, showing how they matter, and disposing our actions to thus disclose a new world or background.

Language speaks by pointing, reaching out to every region of presencing, letting what is present in each case appear in such regions or vanish from them.

(Heidegger, 2002, p.411)

Thus, the poetic word names something new and makes that phenomenon present as an authority that can dispose action. Such a naming is, in Wrathall's argument, a sacred act that does not lay itself open to being rationally justified but serves instead as an event that gathers and sets in train the disclosing of a new world, a world disclosed to the extent that one has faith (Wrathall, p.167). The naming can be either religiously observed, witnessed and dedicated to, in which case a new world is disclosed, or denied, in which case the new world collapses. In this respect, names are articles of faith and the willingness and courage to name new phenomena is intensely political, as it transforms relations of power, and transformationally disclosive. Naming is a special kind of assertion, one which authorises the realness of a phenomenon and

invites the listener to make further assertions as to its propositional truth. It also invites other speech acts, particularly requests and promises, that construct a new world and set up a new space of possibilities for propositional truth.

The communicative view of language pervades the various later agile management texts that utilise the so-called OODA loops of speech acts. However, I also argue that although the authors identified the dangers inherent to a life of agility, that nothing in it mattered but that itself it was only one historical style, and recognition of this contingency could transform our experience of its meaninglessness. Failing to provide such a practical account of these dangers in business they inevitably also failed to address those shortcomings, by focusing on communicative and not revelatory language. If anything, their failed attempt made the problem worse. My methodology of reading for the thought and then unthought of this key text allows me to show how more effective remedies than those proposed were available to the founding authors, but that they were so “close” to (at least) some of the authors’ thinking that they were not able to articulate them. Their insights remained, so to speak, unthought. However, those remedies can nevertheless be sensed if one attends to the text’s unthought mood, that which remains to be articulated in language. As we shall see, the fundamental mood of these foundational texts is quite different to many of the later texts that it inspired or informed, which were disposed by the general productively moods of the agile age, but not in wonder at those moods and their effects to dispose sense making.

For my transformative disclosure, I develop an affective literary method to *read the mood and language* of a foundational text of this paradigmatic case of post-technological, proto-adaptive management, in order first to set out or disclose the *style* of adaptive strategic management, then to identify and make more explicit its

unthought, and propose remedies for the tensions and shortcomings that stem from its omission.

My project intends to make a critical and constructive contribution to my own and my community's strategic management practice. In this section, I argue for Kompridis' account of transformative disclosure as the method that lends itself best to a project of "self-correction, self-reform and self-education" among a group of Heideggerian business theorists (Kompridis, 2000, 2006). I situate Kompridis' transformative disclosure within the broader, historical context of critical theory and distinguish it more clearly from the dominant form of contemporary critique that has arisen: the so-called *ironist* form of *unmasking* critique. I begin by describing the original Cartesian form of sceptical critique and its problem of *self-reference*. The problem of self-reference stems from the impossibility of any *view from nowhere*, a value-neutral place from which a critic can launch a rational critique, which leaves scepticism weakened with respect to its own claims to rationality. Next, I show how critical theorists, working under a generalised "hermeneutics of suspicion", dealt with the problem of self-reference by developing a refined version of unmasking critique, a perpetual auto-critique of the place and person of the critic him or herself. I show how ironist critical theory opened up a new problem of *self-reassurance*, a radical doubt and lack of confidence in one's own ideals and agency, which crippled utopian or even ameliorative projects. I demonstrate how ironizing critique's lack of any foundational meaningfulness undermines its own calls to action and renders it ineffective as a form of practical critique. Finally, I present and defend transformative disclosure as a credible method for self-correction, self-reform and self-education among Heideggerian philosophers.

### Cartesian Scepticism

Since at least the time of the classical Greeks, when Plato re-told Socrates' accounts of the connections between the Good and Truth, truth has been essential to human lives lived well. Yet, the emergence of the Modern age in the West saw a transformation in the ideal attitude appropriate for living a life of truth. A transformation can be traced through the thinking of first Luther's "good conscience", then Descartes' "right reasoning", and finally Kant's "critique of pure reason" out of the mediaeval Christian ideal of "being fit to receive God's ideas" to the modern ideal of "ascertaining in advance the interactions that entities could have with each other" (Wrathall, 2011a, pp.220-221). The Kantian critical ideal renders open to rational improvement, any claim, practice or tradition that is considered contestable by community. In so doing, the individual's claim, practice or tradition is rendered worthy of respect, at least to the kind of post-Kantian community that prevails in Western culture. However, as we shall see, the practice of critique opened up by this modernist transformation becomes itself contestable and this contestation has led to transformations in the form of critique considered valid, reliable and credible to post-Kantian thinkers.

The first practice of critique that emerged from the Luther-Descartes-Kant transformation is the classic, so-called Cartesian *scepticism*. On this account, one gained the indubitable truth of a thing or situation by detaching oneself from one's emotions and from the ethical call of the situation in order to become a detached observer un-involved in the focal field of critique.

For instance, in the strategic management literature, a well-known case of such sceptical critique would be the exchange between Porter and Rumelt over the importance to company profitability of industry structure (Rumelt, 1991; McGahan and

Porter, 1997). Rumelt criticises Porter for not recognising the importance of business model strategic design in explaining company profitability. For his part, Porter criticises Rumelt for under-playing the limitations placed on company profitability by the broader industry structure. In the exchange, both parties doubt the veracity and completeness of the other's microeconomic view of strategy but neither questions the stand taken by each author on the situation or the different concerns that matter to each. They neglect to consider the self-referential perspective from which they are looking, assume the other author is writing from the same perspective in pursuit of the same goals, and also assume a neutrality and stability on their own part as observers.

However, critics influenced by so-called postmodern streams of thought point out one is always already involved in a field of study and always has an existing intelligibility of that field that remains implicated throughout the observation and critique. Taking the position of a detached sceptic wholly external to the situation is not possible for reasons of self-reference. An infinite regress of questions immediately appears. Who gets to critique the observer? And who critiques the observer of the observer, and so on?

### **Unmasking**

Taking up these questions, various forms of so-called *unmasking* critique emerged that recognise the problem of self-reference and became dominant in the field of critical theory (Kompridis, 2000). Kompridis defines the unmasking style as taking the form 'phenomenon X is really explained by hidden or repressed underlying factor Y'. Kompridis goes on to illustrate how various forms of this unmasking style emerged in the twentieth century in the work of Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Foucault, Freud, Lacan and many others. For instance, Heidegger and Wittgenstein demonstrated how our truth conditions and future possibilities (phenomena X) are shaped by language (factor Y)

which is what speaks and thereby “really” determines in advance those conditions and possibilities. Foucault and Adorno showed how different configurations of history and power (Y) shape, in advance of our reason, what we see to be true and right (X). Nietzsche, Freud and Lacan respectively showed how the unconscious, desire and drives (Y) shape in advance our rationality and practices (X). In each case, to properly understand X, we must unmask and critique Y.

Unmasking critique abounds in the strategy literature, for example, in the many inquiries into the ways that hidden identity and power structures shape its discourse. For instance, this unmasking stance is demonstrated by Carter et al.’s critique of the uncritical, conservative nature of the Strategy-as-Practice school (Carter, Clegg & Kornberger, 2008). Unmasking the efficient and managerial stance of the researchers, they write,

Most publications in the strategy as practice area start from premises that share a more managerial perspective. For instance, Johnson et al. (2003: 12) argue that ‘the challenge for an activity based view will be to transform descriptive contributions into more helpful models of managing’.

(Carter, Clegg & Kornberger, 2008, p.87)

Valuable and insightful though such unmaskings are, they ultimately lead to a pervasive cynicism that suspects, and always finds, ulterior motives to all actions. This cynicism destroys the self-confidence necessary to act because it can always and does always doubt its own motives. The exemplary unmasker will always find another Y to unmask the real driver behind X and, in so doing, cripples the confidence to act. Unmasking risks disabling positive action. For instance, one can ask whether one is only engaging in altruistic acts for selfish reasons in order to build one’s social standing and for the sake of edifying one’s own self-esteem and ensuring the preservation of one’s genes in future generations (Kompridis, 2000). Such generalised unmasking eventually cripples action.



While valuing the gains of the sceptical and unmasking critique, it is clear how they are inadequate to the task of a relevant, credible and effective critique of practice to practitioners themselves. Scepticism's detachment does not stand up to the charge of self-reference and unmasking's fatal lack of self-confidence finds nowhere stable to stand from which one can act. The transformative disclosure practitioners remain suspicious of their sense of a detached observer, assumed to stand outside of a situation, and identifying ultimate ontological causal properties that they, from a privileged position, unmask (for philosophical overviews of *critique* see Kompridis, 2000, Livingston, 2012; for reviews of *critique* in business studies see especially Weiskopf & Steyaert, 2009).

### **Transformative Disclosure**

As we have seen, the consequences of the disclosive understanding of being sketched in the previous chapter for the commitment-based practitioners' reception and re-conception of critique are profound. What are the goals of critique if not to create greater certainty about what is real and can be relied upon as a foundation for launching improvements? In the absence of certainty, the goal of transformative disclosure is to provide individuals and society with greater capacity for deliberation and action in the context of its own background understanding of what matters and what things mean, including the transformation of those understandings. Following Kompridis (2000, 2006), I propose transformative disclosure as an alternative ethical, as much as, methodological orientation to sceptical and unmasking forms of critique. Transformative disclosure responds to the problems of critical theory by re-disclosing the style or understanding of being at work in a situation. Transformative disclosure un-conceals the text's unthought style, its basic assumptions that, when thought through or articulated, reveal "new or previously unnoticed possibilities, possibilities

in the light of which agents can change their self-understanding and their practices, and change their orientation to the future and the past” (Kompridis, 2005). Transformative disclosure’s particular methods can be eclectic, but what these methods share is the disclosive stance and ethos from which those methods are put in to effect. The disclosive stance recognises the self-referential and self-reassurance hazards of the critical stances identified above, accepts them, and still finds a way to go on. It does so by adopting as a stance, the reflective disclosure of the style of a world and the researcher’s entry into and preservation and transformation of that style.

Building on Kompridis’ insights, I propose a method of transformative disclosure that (i) declares the proper matter for thinking as style, (ii) delivers the shapes of the thinking at work in different historical styles of strategy-making theory i.e., their different regimes of meaning, their self-understandings, and their particular anomalies, (iii) helps the community of theorists to form a relationship to the shape of their contemporary style of strategy-making theory by (iv) finding the strongest place for contemporary thinkers’ resistance to seeing its shapes, (v) designing a thought experiment that makes captivating the thinking of the current epoch’s anomaly, and then (vi) helping thinkers to re-designate the past and re-design their current practice, on the basis of the newly emerging thinking that deals with the contemporary anomaly.

Transformative disclosure assumes the sensibleness of the style of its theoretical world and discovers how it makes sense to its theoreticians before discovering, on its own terms, what the current style, overlooks and from which incompleteness it itself suffers. In this way, the disclosive logic of the strategy-making theory, the way it hangs together and works, is transformed from within its own logic. As I have already alluded to, transformative disclosure accomplishes this self-transformation by means of an ethical rather than a particular methodical reorientation

and with the end of establishing “a practical critical dialogue that aims to preserve and renew trust and to facilitate commitment to ongoing processes of cooperative problem solving” (Kompridis, 2005, p.340).

## A Method for Transformative Disclosure

In the following section, I first make the case for the transformatively disclosive reading method that I adopt and then set out the particular reading techniques that I will use.

I describe a single paradigmatic case for each of several historical styles of strategic management. Each case reveals the thought and unthought of a particular generic historical style of Western thinking. Each case reveals the basic structure of each strategic thinker's thought and puts this revealed structure in a coherent form that helps the community of strategic practitioners to form a free relation to it. This textual analysis allows the community of strategic practitioners, as fellow dwellers in the world of strategic management, to orient to the shapes of their own thinking when practising it. These shapes are always there but are usually implicit and need pointing out and recognising if strategic thinkers are to form a free relationship to them. By free relationship to these forms of thought, I mean begin to form a personal stance towards and answers to normative questions such as how they work, what actions they make possible, and the nature of their limitations. It is language then that serves to point to the shapes. This language does not seek to describe those shapes exhaustively, only to point to them so that fellow strategic practitioners can see them and then, individually and as a community, do something about what they see. In Chapter 3, I show how Western historical styles since the time of Plato, have been oriented to a single, though differently manifested, *telos* namely, the *Machenschaft* of controlling worldly events and eliminating surprises. In Chapter 4, drawing on the conceptual toolkit set out in Chapter 3, I briefly analyse the modern era's *world-picturing* style of strategic management before describing in more detail the postmodern *agile* strategic

management style. I select a practically influential, theoretical text that acts to gather, orientate, and express each style's thought and then, briefly, lay out its unthought. These texts describe paradigmatic cases of world-picturing and agile strategic management. I set out each style's thought in terms of a conceptual and affective framework. A style's thought comprises two material aspects, two attitudinal aspects, and a paradigmatic activity that together characterise what a thing is most truly. The material aspects are: (a) an *ontology*, the understanding of what is most basic and general to all entities in that style, and (b) a *theology*, the beingest being as an ultimate goal towards which all relationships between entities are organised. The two attitudinal aspects adopted by a self to apprehend the truth of a thing are: (c) a *calling* to an ideal of a life lived well and a corresponding (d) *mood* to which one is attuned. Finally, (e) a *paradigmatic activity* is what it makes sense to do to grasp the truth (Thomson, 2005; Wrathall, 2011; Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011, p.164). Having set out the basic kinds of strategic thinking at work in the world-picturing and agile styles, I move to demonstrate their shared unthought limitation in their oblivion to some aspect of the appropriated clearing as the source of meaning that is necessary to a worthy life.

For each analysis, I use a materialist literary "reading for style" to analyse the mood and language of each thought and demonstrate how together they disclose a certain set of meanings and way of being – the style. Having laid out the thought of agile strategy-making theory, I identify its unthought limitations and explore the emergence of two early examples of a post-agile, proto-adaptive strategy-making in Chapter 5.

In Chapter 6, I analyse the post-agile, proto-adaptive style through a detailed stylistic reading of its foundational text *Disclosing New Worlds* (Spinosa, Flores &

Dreyfus, 1997), which was intended to correct the limitations of the agile style that was emerging at the time it was written (Spinosa, personal communication).

### **Materialist Methods for Disclosive Reading**

As has been explained in Chapter 1, in contrast to rationalistic ideas of humans as detached observers of external worlds, the Heideggerian disclosive understanding sees human being as a relationship of mutual opening of both a way of life and a world. If one is thoroughly absorbed in the game of football, one feels oneself being called and pushed by shifting forces or callings to pass, to move, to shoot. As these networks of forces shift, one's identity is also re-shaped, for example, from a defender to an attacker. At any one time, the human and the world are a particular styled disclosure of a way of being in a world – a disclosure of being-there or *Dasein*. As described in Chapter 1, this stylised disclosure comprises three fundamental aspects – a practical *understanding* of the meaning of anything one comes across that makes sense as relevant (or irrelevant) to one's particular practical engagements and projects, an attunement, disposition or *mood*, and a *language*. At the same time, as this disclosure is revealing or un-concealing a particular world and possible human existence, it is also always simultaneously concealing other styles and ways of being-in-the-world. It is the sensitivity of the practically-engaged, insider researcher to such intimations of the simultaneous un-concealing and concealing of meanings that allows this disclosive reading to be considered an immanent critique. Alternative ways of construing situations and their meaningful opportunities for action can only be glimpsed with respect to an existing style. In order to see new and relevant possibilities from within the current disclosive space, the reader must be familiar with and fluent in the meanings of the current space. In order to conduct a reading for the disclosure of being at work

in a text, I have developed a materialist literary form of reading for style through mood<sup>xv</sup> and language<sup>xvi</sup> that together comprise a disclosive textual analysis.

In their interaction with the reader, these two aspects of mood and language together evoke a particular style or understanding of being for that reader. My first reading for the thought of a text reveals what the book is doing to gather readers into the style of the historical context in which it was written. The reading for the thought of a text thus comprises three individual sub-analyses – the reading for mood, the reading for charmed distinctions, and the synthetic disclosive reading of the style's thought. My second reading for the unthought explains why the book exceeds its stylistic context and hints at something about how we think about strategic management, business and so forth today.

In the reading for the mood, I read the text for clues to the particular way in which the authors are disposed in the world – how the world matters to them. In the reading for charmed distinctions sub-analysis, I identify what Heideggerian philosopher Charles Spinoza, following Richard Rorty's term *charmed words* (Spinoza, personal communication), calls *charged distinctions*, those terms that carry heavy significance in the text and that disclose what entities appear at all to the authors, and how those entities appear to them as significant for action and hence mutually gather a style in the reciprocal "reader response-author writing" interaction. Charged distinctions resonate strongly with the speaker and listener by pointing out phenomena that matter and gathering selves into certain ways of seeing things (Spinoza, personal communication).

In the synthetic *disclosive* analysis I draw on the first two readings to articulate the thought of the style at work in the text. Only after articulating its disclosive structure, do I speculate as to the text's unthought.

These reading methods set out how the material of a text discloses meaning in an un-mediated, direct way. Reading the materials of a writer, her words, grammar, structure, fonts and print, all of which work immediately upon the body of a reader, one hopes to apprehend the meanings the writer disposes, un-mediated by conscious thought. I select these literary methods over more common deconstructive and discourse analytic methods for similar reasons: both these latter methods deny, or are obscure about one's access to, the real of matter. The reading for mood provides a bridge between the world of language and the reality outside of language. As explained earlier, a disclosive understanding of style accepts that it is things that attune style by way of setting a mood. Thus, by apprehending some intimation of a mood, one uncovers some insight into the basic understanding being disposed by the writer. In contrast, deconstructive methods inspired by Derrida, deny the possibility of access to any reality outside of language. In its starkest form, there is nothing outside of the text and everything is a text, thus "all modes of encountering texts, as 'allegories of reading', demonstrate how language does not refer to the world at all, ever" (Gumbrecht, 2012, p.2). Similarly, discourse analytic methods even in their latest versions (e.g., Fairclough, 2014), inspired to the extent that they are influenced by Foucault, deny the possibility of accessing truth beyond a social and historical discourse and, indeed, view the attempt to access such truths as symptoms of the social-historical discourse that seeks transcendental truth rather than encounters with a reality outside of a discourse (Gumbrecht, 1998).

In a reading for mood, one is first reading to attune oneself to another, to experience the text and its material affects, and to attempt to disclose in writing some of the truths hinted at in this attunement. It is an inverted non-technical form of reading that initially reads a text in the way that a non-technical reader would (Gumbrecht,



1998). Reflecting upon my own reading experiences and reactions to a text, it is obvious to me as a non-technical reader of literature that, at an early stage, either, I “get it” and am swept up in the book, or I am “left cold” by it and stop reading. And this response, irrespective of its subject matter, is primarily a matter of successfully or unsuccessfully tuning in to the book. Indeed, “getting it” is a colloquial way to express the reader’s successful attunement to the feel of the book. Similarly, when I consider why I like certain writers and return to their writing no matter how frequently or radically they switch subject matter, I reflect that it is a question of tone, atmosphere or style of their writing. Finally, as is often the case when watching a movie, one arrives at the end of the movie with a strong feel for what the movie was about but are left to figure out how the text and plot of the movie supported that conclusion. For instance, if one considers the films of Terrence Malick such as *The Tree of Life* or *To the Wonder* where plot-lines, narrative and dialogue are so thin as to be near to non-existent and yet the sense of a meaning is strong and one is left figuring out how Malick transported the viewer to this meaning. Reading for mood attends to the way the arrangements of the material elements of a text – its syntax and structure, its rhythm, rhyme, and its imagistic metaphors – work directly on a body, that is without meaningful mediation, to call forth certain attunements and open certain worlds of truth for a body, much more so than do their representation of an actual or desired external reality (Morton, 2007).

As Gumbrecht writes,

Consider Thomas Mann’s *Death in Venice*, I cannot imagine a reader familiar with this text who was at all surprised that Aschenbach and Tadzio never became a couple, or that Aschenbach’s existence-at the latest, from the time he reaches Venice-is a being-unto-death. Rather it is the evocation of a certain fin-de-siècle decadence in all its complexity – all the nuances, smells, colors, sounds, and, above all, dramatic changes of weather – that has made this work so celebrated.

(Gumbrecht, 2012, p.6)

In the reading for mood of a text, I read the text for clues to the attunement or disposition that is at work in the authors' text. I unpack this attunement by examining the text's material form, shape and syntax; its sounds and texture; and its imagery, metaphors and metonymic chains. At this stage, I set out these observable inscriptions and signifiers and minimise the explicit interpretation that they are given. As Gumbrecht writes on the methodology of readings for mood,

It is set in motion by 'hunches.' Often, we are alerted to a potential mood in a text by the irritation and fascination provoked by a single word or small detail – the hint of a different tone or rhythm.

(Gumbrecht, 2012, p.17)

If the first sub-analysis discloses the attuning moods of the text, the second addresses the question of the extent to which, for its readers, there is a signifying attuning structure at work at all to attune and disclose a material space of meaning. For an attuning signifying structure to work, a charmed distinction must act as a touchstone of meaningfulness shared between author and reader. The reader must catch the association that the writing is evoking with their use of the term. If the reader does not catch this association, then a shared signifying structure or discourse is not established at all. In part, my analysis of the success or failure of a text to gather and articulate a truth for its readers, is dependent upon the text's charged distinctions being shared by its readership and recognised as articulating important elements of that truth. To the extent that this is not the case and those charged distinctions are unshared objects, fail to charm and are over-looked by its readers, the text is unable to do its work of articulating a truth. I identify those key words that signal the disclosure of how life can be lived at its best in a modern or postmodern world. By re-composing the signifying structure of these charmed distinctions<sup>xvii</sup>, I extract what strikes me, as their involved reader, as its meaning: the expression and operationalisation of a stylised strategic life

at its best, whether world-picturing, agility, or post-agile adaptiveness. The question arises then from this analysis of the shared signifying structure, to what extent do the readers, especially those practising managers and consultants, of these strategic texts, particularly of the foundational text of proto-adaptive management *Disclosing New Worlds*, share with its authors the understanding that they are engaged in a subtle exercise of establishing the truth of a style?

Taken together, this analysis of the thought of a text make explicit the already existing, implicit understanding of being or style of the text being read, that is of the paradigmatic texts of the planning, agile and post-agile strategic theorists.

Having laid out the understanding of the being at work in each text, I move to consider their unthought. This sub-method is much more intuitive and driven by a hunch about the interaction between the mood of the text and its language. What is hinted at by the mood but does not get transformed into language and thereby is left unthought? We shall see that the pervasive mood of the world-picturing and agile approaches is one or other variant of a mood of control and the elimination of surprise. These moods are made explicit in the goal of eliminating surprise but the existence of a background meaningfulness is left hidden. However, the basic mood of the paradigmatic post-agile text *Disclosing New Worlds* is a radically open and receptive mood of wonder, whose pervasiveness and truth is left unnamed and unthought upon and hence is not available to be worked with by practitioners.

## **Ethics and Quality of Research**

As briefly described above, in contrast to the detached and uncommitted observer of others that marks out respectively the sceptical and unmasking forms of

critique, a transformative disclosure researcher adopts the sense-making stance and ethical norms of an involved and embodied participant in a practice.

Notwithstanding the abjuration of detailed methodological explication by pioneering exponents of the paradigmatic case methodology (Dreyfus, 1986; Borgmann, 1987, Foucault, 1995), it is possible to outline some guidelines for research. Thus, I propose a few norms for the methodology derived from the *methodological guidelines* of Flyvbjerg (Flyvbjerg, 2001, 2006; Flyvbjerg et al., 2012) and the *ethical-practical presuppositions* of Kompridis (Kompridis, 2000). These norms lay out the responsibilities and obligations on the part of the disclosive researcher to assure the quality, validity, and impact of their research. Flyvbjerg describes nine such guidelines (Flyvbjerg, 2001, pp.129-140) and Kompridis, seven presuppositions. From these I distil five norms for ensuring the quality of realistic research. I have already described the first norm (1) of practical involvement in the field. Deep, open-ended, and committed practical involvement<sup>xviii</sup> is critical to developing the holistic understanding and rich distinctions of a situation that are necessary if one is to see what counts as a transformational issue for that situation (Dreyfus, 2008a, pp.41-46). On this basis, researchers must have developed high levels of practical expertise to be able to conduct transformative disclosure research if they are to reliably transform rather than simply understand everyday action. The remaining four norms are (2) attunement to community to ensure validity and avoid relativism and nihilism; (3) situated, expert orientation to issues; (4) little things, cases and context; (5) participation, public and polyphonous self-narration. I describe them in turn below.

### **Community Attunement for Validity and Against Relativism and Nihilism**

If one must develop practical understanding of the practice before researching it, one must also tackle questions of nihilism, relativism, and validity by attuning and orienting to the “common view among a specific reference group to which the researchers refer” and to the values shared by the members of that reference group.

For the researcher with a disclosive orientation, there is no detached position that offers the sure footing from which a researcher can take a view of the situation. The understanding that a piece of research achieves rests upon the researcher and their researched community’s background of practices. Background practices foster successful ways of practically coping in the world, and their longevity provides surety of their realism and counters nihilism, the understanding that there is no foundation or reason for choosing one action over another. In the disclosive understanding of the primordially of practice, anything does not go. Accordingly, it is required of a disclosive researcher that they immerse themselves in the community of practice being studied.

To the extent that practices can be sensed, articulated, contested, and justified they provide a defence against relativism. One set of interpretations is not as good as another, we cannot simply abandon one way of making sense and adopt another. Instead, the social and historical practices of a community provide an ordering of concerns that, in specific situations, can be articulated and re-ordered but not jettisoned. It is this considered ordering and re-ordering that provides a defence against relativism (Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, Chapter 4).

These defences against relativism and nihilism also ground the claims for a case’s validity. In the absence of the view from nowhere to definitively assess validity, a situation that shows no sign of changing, the gold standard for claims of validity is that it is for a reference community to assess the validity of a research project’s claim

that its interpretation is better than extant interpretations, and the community makes these assessments based upon its background understandings.

Central then to this discussion of validity, relativity and nihilism is the identification of, and immersion in, a specific reference group whose values and common sense will frame these assessments. My reference group is twofold. In general, it is the community of practising strategists for whom the shift toward an agile strategic management practice is commonly accepted and, in particular, it is those advocates of CbM who first promoted the post-agile thinking of Heidegger as a viable alternative to capitalism. I have described above my immersion in this community and my involved practical engagement with its theorists and practitioners to manage strategic management projects. For me that meant, on the one hand, immersing myself through employment in the world of commitment-based strategic consulting and, on the other, immersing myself in the skills of disclosive thinking as developed by Hubert Dreyfus and his students and colleagues, and learning, developing, and testing a textual reading and writing methodology that those thinkers would assess as being appropriate. To this end, I have interacted intensively with Charles Spinosa, editing and co-authoring two academic papers with him and developing and adjusting my work following extensive speculation, advice, criticism and comment on this and earlier sketches and complete drafts over a period of ten years, from Spinosa as well as to Hubert Dreyfus, Mark Wrathall, and Sean Kelly.

### **Does it Matter? Ensuring Relevance of the Orienting Issue in a Situation**

A researcher must avoid “idiosyncratic morality and personal preferences” when articulating their stance towards the situation. The identification of issues, anomalies and “tension points” (Flyvbjerg et al., 2012) must be done in such a way that

it is attuned to the common sense and valuations of the reference group. In other words, one might disagree with the values commonly held by actors in a situation, one might be answering a call of conscience experienced from within the situation, but one's stance toward an issue must make sense to the reference group. It may not happen immediately but, whatever one declares as an issue must at some point be seen by an expert community as a relevant issue, even if only to oppose it. If not, one develops research with little or no impact.

I justify the relevance of the orienting issue that I bring to this study by sketching a little more of the wider contextual concerns of the two groups. Within both reference groups, questions of the instrumentalism, absurdity and oppression of the agile style have already been raised, if currently only as marginal concerns.

In the previous chapter, I referred to the recent writings of agile strategy gurus on meaningfulness, fulfilment, and performance stress in agile-style companies (e.g., Fleming, 2009; Christensen, 2012). However, concerns about the loss of existential meaning and oppression of the agile style of firm had begun much earlier among the CbM community. Indeed, one of the major publications of this new CbM community, *Disclosing New Worlds*, was originally written to address misgivings about the absurdity and oppression of an early version of Commitment-based Management, Tracy Goss's *The Last Word on Power* (Goss, 1996; Spinosa, personal communication). Even so, in an extended response to *Disclosing New Worlds*' first publication in essay form, Grant claimed that its entrepreneurial form of business transmutes "means into ends and vice versa" (Grant, 1995, p.126). In other words, entrepreneurs are fundamentally preoccupied with the pleasure of exercising their skilful way of acting (or *form* of life) to change human practices in a particular situation (with some product or other as a kind of by-product,) much more than they are seeking

to create a particular product or have a particular end in mind. Indeed, exercising their form of life becomes an end in itself, even as the outcomes tend toward absurdity or meaninglessness. This transposition, Grant argues, has profoundly negative consequences for entrepreneurship's role in "producing large-scale cultural and historical changes". He notes that entrepreneurs have indeed produced innovations that can be said to have significantly 'reconfigured' our 'practices' such as "the automobile, television, the jet airliner and the contraceptive pill" (Grant, 1995, p.125). However, he notes that entrepreneurial action has also produced many innovations that cannot be said to have brought about significant cultural change including "the safety pin, the press stud, the zip fastener (the last two being merely glorified buttons); disposable ballpoints, safety razors, lighters and diapers; paper handkerchiefs, and kitchen towels; even such a major labour-saver as the dish-washing machine" (*ibid*). Entrepreneurial action has also led to some innovations that might be considered to be undesirable, he suggests pornography. This list could be updated with consideration of the absurdity of a wide-ranging list of innovations such as, surrogate maternity factories, sub-prime mortgages, McHouses, Mega-project disasters like Wembley stadium, and \$30 hamburgers. If Grant emphasises the absurdity of agile management, Thrift sees the greatest danger in its co-opting of freedom to capitalist productivity. In an early description of the agile, commitment-based management style, he describes it as emblematic of the agile, performative cultures of late capitalism and doubts its sustainability because of the impossible demands to perform continuously that it places on actually existing human beings (Thrift, 2005, pp.151-152). However, as we shall see, these moralising complaints about the tendency toward meaninglessness may paradoxically be precisely the kind of examples of the phenomena needed to lead ultimately to an authentic form of such agile management due to the encounter with



meaninglessness that they foster, and the consequent spur to own one's decisions authentically that this experience opens up.

Realist social scientists advise getting close to the community and situation studied in order to ensure the relevance of their research project. By getting close to the group studied, the research becomes oriented to issues of consequence to a community of practice during data collection, analysis, feedback, and publication, and by probing deeply into its history. As I stated earlier, I have been a student and work colleague of Charles Spinosa and other inventors and practitioners of the CbM practice tradition for over 10 years. The commitment-based practice articulated in the writings of Spinosa, Flores and others, is also my own practice. However, I am an exponent who is prompted to question this practice. This questioning has derived in part from my own already-described experiences as a commitment-based practice consultant, and also from my conversations with other Heideggerians from different interpretive communities to the Berkeley Heideggerians. The Berkeley Heideggerians gather around the research and teaching of Hubert Dreyfus and include Charles Spinosa and Fernando Flores. This interpretive community, perhaps the dominant one in the English speaking world, has been identified as holding a pragmatic interpretation of Heideggerian philosophy that argues for *a priori* mindless coping through cultural practices and bodily endowments to consciousness or the mental (Levine, 2008). However, other Heideggerians argue that this emphasis on practical human being or *Dasein* was only a preliminary step to Heidegger's larger project of working out the source of meaningfulness *per se* and the proper human relationship to this source. This project could only be achieved through the historical destruction of the history of meaning (Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011; Sheehan, 2013, 2015; Levine, 2008). This engagement with a broader Heideggerian community and the ensuing recognition of

Heidegger's later historical work suggested the issue of CbM's nihilism and the questions of truth, language, history and the sacred that I alluded to in the introduction to the thesis. Both Grant and Thrift's concerns about absurdity and oppression were acknowledged to me in personal communications with the lead author of *Disclosing New Worlds* and in many conversations that I have had with other CbM practitioners (Spinosa, personal communication). Further, when I first suggested the issue of the loss of the sacred in the CbM approach, Spinosa described it as "extremely insightful and brilliant!" I take this to be adequate evidence that my issue and research questions are of, at least initial, relevance to the community of practitioners.

### **Little things, cases and context**

Whereas theoretical inquiries answer big problems by determining covering law causal relations between dependent and independent variables abstracted from their context, paradigmatic human science relies on thick descriptions of single cases (Tsoukas & Knudsen, 2005) and the "near-documentary stance" of the researcher (Chia & Holt, 2009, p.152). These cases may, initially, seem limited in their explanatory reach but, if well selected, small questions asked of single cases can lead to big answers. Dreyfus himself argues for the single case approach in *Disclosing New Worlds*, and contends that further cases would add only marginal value by sharpening the original and providing variations on its theme (Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, p.31). The single case strategy has been elaborated by Flyvbjerg who recognises four kinds of case study: paradigmatic cases, critical cases, peripheral cases, and deviant cases (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Glynos & Howarth, 2007).

A *paradigmatic* case provides an infrastructure or prototype against which specific concrete cases can then be assessed for their family resemblance. Classic

paradigm cases include Geertz's thick descriptions of the Balinese cockfight (1977) or Borgmann's description of the central heating system as a paradigm case of the technological style of thinking that he called the *device paradigm* (1987). The paradigm case allows him to illustrate some of the basic features of the device. The features are the reduction of the goods that it provides from many goods (warmth, community, skilfulness, time awareness) to a single good (warmth), the device's tendency toward making the good ubiquitous, available always and everywhere, its disburdenment of the need for skilfulness on the part of device users, and the device's hidden and disconnected machinery for making the good available. A paradigmatic case must be sufficiently rich and sharp to enable diverse observers of particular cases of the agile strategic management style to adjudge similarity between their case and the paradigm and then identify the specific features that are relevant. Note that the relationship goes this way around from the particular to the general. Paradigm cases have family resemblance and do not generate complete, holistic and abstract rules, principles and features that can be used to identify a particular case (Dreyfus, 1986, p.21). So, for instance, one might add to Borgmann's list of features on the basis of one's appreciation of the paradigm by, for example, noting how the device diminishes the social identities required to attain warmth. In days gone by in traditional households in Europe, a wood fire would be laid by the woman of the house, the man of the house would chop the large logs and the children gather and prepare the kindling.

*Critical* cases can lead to the re-consideration of a commonly-held understanding by selecting a case that, if demonstrated, would lead to many other cases and the wider common sense being reframed. Flyvbjerg considers the selection of an industrial plant where cleanliness, air quality and other safety procedures are exemplary to consider whether handling organic solvents can lead to brain damage. If the link can

be demonstrated in this stringent case then it is more likely to exist as a problem at less carefully-run plants (Flyvbjerg, 2006, pp.229-230). *Peripheral* or maximum variation cases serve to delineate the scope of “travel” or range of application of a paradigmatic case. For instance, by inquiring into several cases that differ widely in their features, such as for different national locations, income brackets, genders, sexualities, and so forth, one can demonstrate the broad relevance of the paradigm (Flyvbjerg, 2006, pp.231-232). Finally, *deviant* cases, such as Foucault’s use of Bentham’s *Panopticon* to foreground the basic features of disciplinary society (1995), serve to sharpen the contrast with another set of practices, for instance contemporary surveillance and control practices (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.229).

So, if there are no such rules for ascertaining in advance that one has a paradigmatic case, how does one select one that can serve as a prototype for more specific cases and that sets the standard for other cases? In response to Flyvbjerg’s question, Dreyfus answered,

“Heidegger says, you recognise a paradigm case because it shines, but I’m afraid that’s not much help. You just have to be intuitive. We all can tell what is a better or worse case – of a Cézanne painting, for instance. But I can’t think there could be any rules for deciding what makes Cézanne a paradigmatic modern painter... . It is a big problem in a democratic society where people are supposed to justify what their intuitions are. In fact, nobody really can justify what their intuition is. So you have to make up reasons, but it won’t be the real reasons.”

(Personal communication to Flyvbjerg, 1988, cited in Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.232)

While Flyvbjerg accepts the intuitive origins of such a selection, he disagrees with Dreyfus’ disavowal of public justification. For Flyvbjerg, the researcher must still use their experience and intuition to assess whether a case is a candidate to serve as a paradigm and provide collectively acceptable reasons for their choice. Hence, I justify my selection of commitment-based management as exemplary, in different versions, of agile and post-agile management for four reasons. Firstly, I cite my own practical

involvement in strategic management and the relevance and usefulness of CbM to corporations seeking to develop the agile style. Secondly, I note Thrift's identification of CbM as emblematic of the agile performance culture of contemporary capitalism, what he called the fast company. Thirdly, I note the emergence of the contemporary representation and problematisation of the technological, agile style and its promise and mood management in contemporary literature (e.g., Shteyngart, 2010; Eggers, 2013). Finally, as I described in the previous chapter, I note also the growing influence of CbM and its iterative OODA loop in the scholarly and popular strategic management literature, and its evident adoption, from examples cited in those literatures, by major corporations and consultancies.

### **Polyphonic and Self-transforming Narration**

Transformative disclosure addresses the problem of confidence to act without close-minded certainty while also avoiding the problem of self-reference. The principal demand of the disclosive approach is on the sense-making orientation of the reader more than the methodical technique or theoretical structure adopted (Kompridis, 2000, p.38). I highlight three aspects of the disclosive stance: intersubjectivity, materiality, and receptivity. These aspects are derived in part from the fuller exploration of the ethics of disclosure in Kompridis (2000, 2006). In the context of a reading of a text, *materiality* means staying close to the material of the text i.e., to elucidate its style, signifiers and syntax, before leaping to their interpretation. Only after close attention has been paid to the material of the text is an interpretation worked out that aims to lay out the pre-reflective disclosure at work in the text. I assume the previously-laid out descriptions of the reading method are adequate for the purposes of demonstrating materiality.

Disclosive analysis demands polyphonic *intersubjectivity* on the part of the reader. Consistent with the Heideggerian *Dasein*, any individual's being-in-the-world is always already social, a *Mitsein* or a *being-in-the-world-with-others*. Our already-existing, pre-reflective disclosure of a world enables our practical and skilful involvement in a world. In the current instance, we do not enter the world of business consulting through classroom education into thematised *present-at-hand* ways of making sense of the world. We simply get on with *ready-to-hand* coping in situations, supplemented by thematised *present-at-hand* learning in the encounter of specific breakdowns, and with any rudimentary classroom understandings pushed to one side (Tsoukas, 2010b). This pre-reflective disclosure also sets up the possibility for specific breakdowns in intelligibility, such as the one that instigated this research project – the dissonance experienced by the author between the revolutionary claims for commitment-based practice and its oppressive technological reality in actual situations.

*Receptivity* denotes the openness of the reader, both to receive their historically and community-grounded disclosure of a self and a world and, at the same time, to listen to the particular call to act of the situation. Disclosive thinkers and the community of commitment-based management practitioners place great store in responding to the *call of conscience*, as the making sense of and appropriation of oneself and one's situation, and see this as always already in a relationship of sense-making with one's tradition, one's future possibilities, one's language, one's multiple communities, and one's others. For the disclosive understanding, the image of a private observer making sense of data according to objective or external standards is a fallacy. Whatever sense a reader makes of a text is also a connection to and a scission with these other intersubjective relationships, and the reader's interpretations are never final and complete. The appropriately receptive and intersubjective sense-making stance for the

disclosive reader is that of *Entschlossenheit*, which in Kompridis' interpretation is much better translated as 'un-closedness' rather than the more typical but misleading 'resoluteness,' with its connotations of decisiveness and steadfastness. This translation also brings *Entschlossenheit* into close proximity to *Erschlossenheit* or disclosure with their opposite being 'foreclosure' of possibilities and interpretations. Adopting a stance of *Entschlossenheit* requires organising one's sense-making around what Heidegger terms the 'call of conscience', a demand from the social situation to unify and appropriate one's own understanding of the situation in order to become free and intelligible to oneself and others.

Again, this response to the call of conscience is not an individual, isolated response to the call but occurs within the already existing social and temporal space of relatedness. A particular relationship to a so-called 'friend' is vital to this un-closedness. According to Stanley Cavell, a friend is,

“The figure, let us say, whose conviction in one's moral intelligibility draws one to discover it. To find words and deeds in which to express it.”

(Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, p. xxxii, cited in Kompridis, 2006, p.56)

In addition to my supervisory relationship, I have such a community of friends. Throughout my reading, I have been in regular and frequent conversations and written communications with Charles Spinoza (see above) and other of the leading commitment-based theorists and practitioners both informally as part of my ongoing consulting work and formally in extended visits, exchanges of emails, and seminars presenting my work to the philosophical and business community. These exchanges shape my own sense-making more continuously and in more ways than I am able to document, although I make reference to thousands of pages of personal records,

journals, and communications where relevant, significant, and traceable. This may be a limitation of the method although I argue that any demand for traceability of influence would be an inappropriately private-mind and scientific stance of just the kind that the disclosive inter-subjectivity criticises.



### 3. Heidegger's Argument for a Better Way of Life

In Chapter 1, I argued that the loss of meaningfulness in agile businesses has become a central concern for scholars and practitioners concerned about the worthiness of current business life. Heideggerian philosophers see the loss of meaningfulness in contemporary life as the result of a growing tendency in Western thinking to optionalise everything to the extent that there is nothing that cannot be treated as an option and hence nothing that can exert existential or sacred meaning for Western humans. In Chapter 2, I set out the appropriate methodology that I would use to answer my research questions and the ethical guidelines that would inform the study. In Chapter 3, I elaborate on the account given in Chapter 1 of the Heidegger's thinking about truth and of the truthful life as the life worth living. There is a rather straightforward and attractive core to Heidegger's philosophy of a life well-lived that has profound implications for contemporary strategic management and commercial life in general. That core consists of understanding reality as what is meaningful to oneself and one's generation but then, from that start-point, owning the material, historical and cultural contingency of whatever understanding of reality one's generation has, and then liberating oneself into a thinking that both preserves and transforms this understanding. This thinking though is not easily accomplished and I provide Heideggerian suggestions for how it can be developed among strategists. My argument has four parts and draws on both early and later Heidegger's thinking.

## The Basic Picture of Propositional Truth from Early Heidegger (1920-1931).

We can begin tracing Heidegger's inquiries in to truth with his statement in a lecture course in 1931 regarding the generally accepted philosophical understanding of truth as correctness, the correspondence between a proposition and a thing.

What is the 'essence' of truth? We know particular truths; e.g., that  $2+1=3$ , that the earth revolves around the sun, that autumn is followed by winter, that the World War began in early August 1914, that Kant is a philosopher, that it is noisy in the street outside, that this lecture room is heated, that there is a light on here, and so on. These are 'particular truths'; we call them this because they contain 'something true'. And *wherein* is the true 'contained'? What is it which so to speak 'bears' this truth? It is the *propositions* we have just enunciated. Each particular proposition is true, is 'something true', 'a truth'. We now ask: what is truth as such and in general? What makes each of these propositions true? Just this: that *what* they say corresponds with the facts *about which* they say something. Therefore, the being-true of the proposition means such correspondence. What then *is* truth? Truth is *correspondence*. Such correspondence obtains because the proposition is directed to the facts and states of affairs *about which* it says something. Truth is correctness. So truth is *correspondence, grounded in correctness, between proposition and thing*.

(Heidegger, 2013, p.2)

However, Heidegger's inquiry was not about truth as correctness itself but about the existential conditions of possibility of that correctness. For Heidegger, an enquiry into the ground of truth as correct propositions about entities leads to a further enquiry into their ontological truth, a progressively deeper inquiry into the way entities themselves are disclosed or unconcealed by human practices such that truth-claims are possible (Wrathall, 2011, pp. 11-39). These practices provide a background understanding or, to use Heidegger's specialised term, *clearing*, in which one's self, other people, things, and actions are familiar and intelligible as real. Heidegger's inquiry first demonstrates the way that propositional truth is dependent upon the uncoveredness of entities, such that they show up as relevant or irrelevant to the situation, that Heidegger calls the *ontic truth of beings*,

Propositional truth is rooted in a *more originary* truth (unconcealment), in the pre-predicative manifestness of *beings*, which may be called *ontic truth*.

(Heidegger, 1998a, p.103)

Ontic truth is gained by being socialised into the practices of a local historical and cultural world. For example, asking his students, in 1919, what it is that they have direct contact with in their everyday lives, Heidegger illustrates with the structure of his own experience of standing before them lecturing and advised that:

In the experience of seeing the lectern something is given *to me* from out of an immediate environment (*Umwelt*). This environmental milieu (lectern, book, blackboard, notebook, fountain pen, caretaker, student fraternity, tram-car, motor-car, etc.) does not consist just of things, objects, which are then conceived as meaning this and this; rather, the meaningful is primary and immediately given to me without any mental detours across thing-oriented apprehension. Living in an environment, it signifies to me everywhere and always, everything has the character of world.

(Heidegger, 2008, p.58)<sup>xix</sup>

Thus, a thing becomes meaningfully present to a human because of the practices that condition the world within which the human always already finds herself. One always finds oneself already coping in the midst of entities experienced as instrumentally relevant to a practical world: the chalk, the lectern, and so forth, or irrelevant to or in discord with this world and hence marginalised: the traffic noise, the interior decoration. However, things show up as instrumentally meaningful or not because the world itself hangs together as fundamentally intelligible. Thus, the truth of beings in the world depends upon the ontological *truth of being* of the world per se – how the world hangs together and makes sense.

Ontic manifestation, [the ontic truth of beings], however, occurs in our finding ourselves, in accordance with our attunement and drives, in the midst of beings and in those ways of comporting ourselves toward beings in accordance with our striving and willing that are also grounded therein.

(Heidegger, 1998a, p.103)

Most times, one is smoothly, unthinkingly dealing with the ontological truth of being in an automatic, absorbed mode of coping with entities' instrumental meaning, that Heidegger calls the *ready-to-hand*. The instrumental meaning of a thing is not laid on in a cognitive move after the objective perception of those things by a human being. Rather, everything present to a human comes already meaningful and the objective perception of aspects and properties of a thing become salient only when the thing has stopped serving its purpose within the practical context, for instance, when too-dry chalk continually breaks against the chalkboard, the lecturer may stop and examine its properties. Such an objectifying way of being of an entity Heidegger terms the *present-at-hand* mode and the transitional state in which the chalk is breaking, the *unready-to-hand* (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 91-145).

As we saw in Chapter 1, when one is smoothly coping in the world, the self's way of being comprises a stable way that relationships between entities hang together as meaningful in a the three-fold structure of care: *understanding*, *mood*, and language or *discourse*.

The ways of doing things that make up the truth of being of the clearing are not, however, rigid habits. Instead the make-up of the world is volatile and, in response to local conditions, practices can be refined, modified, broken down, disconnected one from another and re-connected in particular and novel ways within the free space of the clearing<sup>xx</sup>. In such situated modifications from among a finite range of possibilities, one develops and takes a stand on one's own individualised way of being. On the basis of this stand, one's own particular sense of selfhood arises. This sense of oneself gains its resonance from the intimation that one's way of being could become meaningless. In short, it could die. As a flipside, life is *existentially meaningful* or authentic to the

extent that one is taking a stand on and expressing one's own rather than the general way of being. In Heidegger's language, our way of being is for being to be an issue for us and existential meaning or authenticity is a matter of being true to that insight, being open to beings and to ourselves as they change while, at the same time, holding on to our past for the sake of the coherence of ourselves and our world.

Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an *issue* for it.

(Heidegger, 1962, p.32)

## Heidegger's Later Thinking of Epochal Truths (Early 1930s to early 1950s).

*Veritas est adequatio intellectus ad rem.* The entire thinking of the Occident from Plato to Nietzsche thinks in terms of this delimitation of the essence of truth as correctness. This delimitation of the essence of truth is the *metaphysical concept of truth*; more precisely, metaphysics receives its essence from the essence of truth thus determined.

(Heidegger, 1998, p.50)

As described in Chapter 1, propositional claims to truth make sense only against the background clearing of practices. In his later thinking of the 1930s to the mid-1950s, Heidegger developed an account of the way truth and truth-making practices stabilised and changed over the course of human history in the West. On this basis, Heidegger described a hidden history of being in the West tracing a number of holistic transformations in the prevailing *style* of the clearing. A style is the way the practices for dealing with selves, others, things, institutions, actions, and so forth hang together to bring out truth. Each transformation reveals a different kind of truthful life and a different way of making correct propositional statements. This gathering and fitting of one entity to another, Heidegger calls the gentle law of *Ereignis* (Wrathall, 2011, p. 206; 2013). Heidegger saw *Ereignis* as a tendency for styles to gather into different configurations of meaningfulness rather than to disintegrate into meaninglessness. In this gathering, entities, including selves, mutually fit to each other and assemble a relatively stable configuration. Hence, the adaptation connotes a happy or apt fit of one entity to (ad-) another (King, 2009, pp.50-52; Wrathall, 2013 and personal communication, Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011, p. 177).

Each style gathers and conditions truth, *the truth of beyng or of the clearing*, by determining the truest material that comprises all *entities*, the truest *attitudes* and

*actions* for attaining truth by skilfully coping with the way things really are, and the truest kind of *self* to be, if one is to be in step with the way truth is construed in one's world and time (Wrathall, 2011a, pp.212-242; 2013). In language common to business practice, each style conditions its own way of doing the right thing and doing things right.

Heidegger reconstructed several ways in which Western people had conceived of truth and of truthful action. For instance, for the philosophical Greeks, nothing made more sense than that things, like shields and vases, were craftworks that approached the look of the truest matter, the eternally stable and perfect *ideas*, that served as paradigms or models. While the craftworks of a craftsperson may or may not instantiate the idea more or less closely, the *idea* itself would remain as an ideal:

Being as *idea* is now promoted to the status of what really is, and beings themselves, which previously held sway, sink to the level of what Plato calls *mē on*—that which really should not be and really *is* not either—because beings always deform the idea, the pure look, by actualizing it, insofar as they incorporate it into matter. On the other hand, the *idea* becomes the *paradeigma*, the model.

(Heidegger, 2014a, p.196)

If the truth is to be found in the idea then the truthful life for a craftsperson could be attained by adopting an attitude of conformity to the ideas, the careful adjustment of one's senses, thoughts and works to the ideal forms that serve as the prototypes of a truthful work.

Because the *idea* is what really is, and the *idea* is the prototype, all opening up of beings must be directed toward equalling the prototype, resembling the archetype, directing itself according to the *idea*. The truth [...] now becomes *homoiōsis* and *mimesis*: resemblance, directedness, the correctness of seeing, the correctness of apprehending as representing.

(Heidegger, 2014a, p.197)

Finally, the paradigmatic activity for the philosophical Greek craftsman is one of *theôria* or theoretically-guided activity, learning to see the world through the theoretical lens of the ideas that are shaping the world's structures and developments and making propositional claims about the fitness or otherwise of an actualised craftwork to the ideal.

In the Christian Middle Ages, while the material truth of entities continued to be ideas, these ideas no longer established themselves from some unknown other place but sprang from the mind of God. The truest entities for the mediæval Christian are the *ens creatum* and things – like the stone of the cathedral – showed God's light and order.

The Christian theological belief that, with respect to what it is and whether it is, a matter, as created (*ens creatum*), is only insofar as it corresponds to the *idea* preconceived in the *intellectus divinus* i.e., in the mind of God, and thus measures up to the idea (is correct) and in this sense is "true."

(Heidegger, 1998, p.138)

In the Christian age, nothing made more sense than that people were either saints – those who used their God-given intellect to bring their thoughts into correspondence with their deeds and both into accord with God's idea and divine plan – or they were sinners. Thus, the appropriate attitude for the saint to take was one of adequation or *measuring up* to God's ideas and the paradigmatic activity were cognitive ones of having faith in the revealed word and piously reading and adhering to the scriptures and church doctrine, and making propositional claims about the correspondence or otherwise of an act to the scripture.

The *intellectus humanus* too is an *ens creatum*. As a capacity bestowed upon human beings by God, it must satisfy its *idea*. But the understanding measures up to the idea only by accomplishing in its propositions the correspondence of what is thought to the matter, which in its turn must be in conformity with the *idea*.

(Heidegger, 1998, p.138)

If human knowledge wants to experience the truth about entities, then the only reliable way for it remains to diligently compile and preserve the doctrine of the



revelation and its transmission through the church teachers. Authentic truth is only mediated through the *doctrina* of the *doctores*.

(Heidegger, 1991b, p.88)

Thus, from epoch to epoch, people were quite different. A saint from the Middle Ages would be seen simply as a peculiar slave in the ancient world. An Athenian philosopher would be at best a virtuous pagan in mediaeval times. Then, in the Enlightenment, we in the West saw people as free, autonomous subjects reaching after certainty and calculating cause and effects so as to order the world as a system of objects. For the Enlightenment moderns, just as for the classical Greeks and the mediaeval Christians, the truest entity is the idea. However, these ideas are no longer self-standing entities in a perfect, eternal other realm as they were for the Greeks nor ideas created in the mind of God, rather the ideas become *representations*, literally the re-presentation of the objects (*res*) presented as a *world-picture* to the *ratio* mind of the human subject. Rather than the *ens creatum*, the truest entity becomes the *ens certum*, the most stable, certain representation that can be discerned when one's representational apparatus is working correctly and can be relied upon to calculate the future effects in the world of actions in the past and present. In order to represent securely the *ens certum*, the truest attitude for the modern thinker to adopt is that which can ascertain certainty.

*Ratio* is not just one power among others but is the basic power of man. That to which man is empowered by this power is decisive with regard to his relation to the *verum* [true as veridical] and *falsum* [false]. In order to obtain the true as what is right and correct, man must be assured and be certain of the correct is of his basic power. The essence of truth is determined on the basis of this assurance and certitude. The true becomes the assured and certain. The *verum* becomes the *certum*. The question of truth becomes the question of whether and how man can be certain and assured about the being he himself is as well as about the beings he himself is not.

(Heidegger, 1998, p.51)

Thus a line of thinking can be traced from Luther's obsessions with the purity of his own thoughts, through Descartes' inquiry into the correct use of reason, to Kant's critique of pure reason to provide guidance as to the correct use of the cognitive faculties to represent nature and calculate its future movements formulated in propositional statements.

Luther asks how man could be a "true" Christian [...] the striving for correctness [...] the basic stirring of the disposition of faith. [...] The essence of truth in the modern period is determined on the basis of certainty, correctness [...] the question of truth becomes the question of the secure, assured, and self-assuring use of *ratio*. Descartes inquires into the *usus rectus rationis*, i.e., *facultatis iudicandi*, the correct use of reason i.e., the faculty of judgment. [...] The untrue is the false in the sense of the erroneous i.e., in the sense of the wrong use of reason. [...] In Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, the question of the "correct use" treats of the will to secure the certainty which man, on his own, standing amidst beings, must attain and wishes to attain.

(Heidegger, 1998, p.51)

During the twentieth century, Western selves began to see both people and things alike as being without stable essence other than as options to be ordered at will to get the most out of their possibilities for the sake of further ordering. On the basis of this radical acceptance of a chaotic and fluid reality, the truest entity of all can only be a temporary stabilisation, a value relative to the practical purposes of a particular stance or way of life. For instance, in his dialogue with Nietzsche, seen as the exemplary philosopher of the emerging agile epoch, Heidegger writes,

To the question "What is truth?" Nietzsche answers, "Truth is the kind of error without which a certain kind of living being could not live. The value for life ultimately decides."

(Quoting from Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, Heidegger, 1991a, p.29)

And the truest attitude for living a truthful life is one of the artist who accepts chaotic reality and learns wilfully to posit her own values and stances and see all

entities as resources, people or things that could be made productively available or unproductive.

The truth, which is conceived [by Nietzsche] as error, was defined as what has been made secure, the stable. But what is thought to be error in this way necessarily thinks truth in the sense of being attuned to the real, that is, with becoming chaos. Truth as error is a missing the truth. Truth is a missing the truth. In the unambiguous essential determination of truth as error, truth is necessarily thought twice and each time differently, thus ambiguously: once as making secure what is stable, and the other time as being attuned with what is real. Only on the basis of the essence of truth as being attuned can truth as stability be an error. The essence of truth taken here as the basis of the concept of error is what has been determined since ancient times in metaphysical thinking as conformity to the real and as being attuned with it, as *homoiôsis*.

(Heidegger, 1991a, translation modified in Wrathall, 2011a, pp.226–27)

And, in this technological thinking, nature shows up first and foremost as something to be ordered and mathematised for the precise calculation of effect. In a lengthy passage on mathematics and physics, Heidegger concludes that the currently dominant mathematical physics will never be able to renounce that “nature reports itself in some way or other that is identifiable through calculation and that it remains orderable as a system of information” (Heidegger, 1977, p. 23).

Consistent with early Heidegger’s thinking of mood, *Ereignis*’ configuring is most fundamentally affective rather than cognitive, set in play by a general mood rather than by imaginative rationality. The mood attunes or sets the tone for the style and disposes a language considered in a very broad sense, not as a collection and grammar of terms but, as the expression of a stylised world, that is, as the clearing. As Heidegger wrote in 1941/42,

What is the word? The soundless voice/ tune of beyng. What is called voice here? Not ‘sound’ but the tuning, that is letting ex-perience.

(Heidegger, *Das Ereignis*, p. 283, quoted and translated by Ziarek, 2013, p. 102.

See also Mitchell, 2015, pp. 204-210; Wrathall, 2011, pp.119-155)

Of course, moods can be relatively minor and superficial, such as the mood of jealousy towards all other's successes, but, in the context of *Ereignis*, Heidegger is primarily interested in much more fundamental, grounding-moods that set the tone for the configuration of all the practices of a culture at a historical moment in time. These grounding-moods set the tone of the style that, in turn, conditions a particular kind of everyday *self*, a particular interpretation of the world and its entities, and the particular skilful actions appropriate for the style. The particular thinking of a style is first carried and set by a disposition, attunement, or simply mood. As Haar writes when introducing Heidegger's work on historical moods, "Thought is the accomplishment in language of a giving of being [style] to man, who is first attuned in the silence of mood" (Haar, 1992, p.160). Heidegger identifies how the style of the philosophical Greeks was set by a mood of *astonishment*,

In astonishment we restrain ourselves. We step back, as it were, from being, from the fact that it is as it is and not otherwise. And astonishment is not used up in this retreating from the Being of being, but, as this retreating and self-restraining, it is at the same time forcibly drawn to and as it were, held fast by that from which it retreats. Thus, astonishment is the disposition in which and for which the Being [style] of being unfolds. Astonishment is the tuning within which the Greek philosophers were granted the correspondence to the Being of being.

(Heidegger, 2003, p.85)

Similarly, the fundamental mood attuning the truth of the mediaeval Christian age was one of *faith* in one's future salvation (Heidegger, 1998, p.51), and the mood of the modern epoch is one of doubt and certainty,

For [Descartes] doubt becomes that tuning in which the attunement [structure of determination] vibrates to the *ens certum*, i.e., being in certainty. *Certitudo* becomes a fixing of the *ens qua ens* which results from the unquestionability of the *cogito (ergo) sum* for man's ego. Thereby, the ego becomes the distinctive sub-jectum and thus the nature of man for the first time enters the realm of subjectivity in the sense of ego. Out of the attunement to this *certitudo* the language of Descartes obtains the determination of a *clare et distinctive percipere*. The tuning of doubt is the positive acquiescence in certainty. Henceforth, certainty becomes the determining form of truth. The tuning of confidence to the absolute certainty of knowledge which is

attainable at all times is *pathos* and thus the *archè*, the beginning of modern philosophy.

(Heidegger, 2003, pp.88-89)

What fundamental mood tunes this contemporary technological or agile epoch?

Writing in the 1950s, Heidegger is rather speculative, naming several moods in a complex *hopeful anxiety* tuning Western people in to a world where reality is chaotic and any truth only temporary,

Into what kind of tuning does this put contemporary thinking? The question can scarcely be answered unequivocally. Presumably a fundamental tuning prevails. It is however, still hidden from us. This would indicate that our contemporary thinking has not yet found its unequivocal path. What we come across is only this—various tunings of thinking. Doubt and despair, on the one hand, blind obsession by untested principles, on the other, conflict with one another. Fear and anxiety are mixed with hope and confidence.

(Heidegger, 2003, pp.89-91)

However, by 1961 he settles on boredom as the basic mood that grounds the truth of the West in the late twentieth century,

The man of today has no more time for anything, and yet, when he has free time, it immediately becomes too long. He must kill long periods of time by whiling them away through pastimes.... In this “ennui” nothing appeals to us anymore, everything has as much or as little value as everything else, because a deep boredom penetrates our existence to the core.

(Heidegger, “Messkirch’s Seventh Centennial,” *Listening*, 8 (1973), pp.50-51 (translation emended). Quoted in Thiele, 1997, p.507)

Following his interpretations of pre-Socratic philosophical and poetic texts, Heidegger came to see the moods as the divinities, messengers of the gods. As he wrote in the early 1940s,

We are thinking the essence of the Greek gods more originarily if we call them the attuning ones.

(Heidegger, 1998, p.111)

And the divinities, as messengers of gods, point toward divinity or Godhood *per se*, that is, toward a sacred authority beyond human comprehension or wilful control, namely, the clearing, which counters human will and desire and attunes their meaningful lives. The *gods*, in Heidegger's account, are the keepers of the spirit or ethos of a community's style in a particular epoch. Historically, it has been the gods that inspire humans, by charisma rather than force, to live lives in accordance with the ethos of the origins and destiny of that community. Until the contemporary epoch, gods played the chief role in determining each unifying style. For Heidegger, a god is that which, in some way, determines the taken-for-granted relationships that constitute what entities most basically are and the meaning of events, in other words, its style. The history of Western thinking or metaphysics is thus the history of different gods that order those different ways of thinking (Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011, p.163). As Wrathall and Lambeth write, each of the different gods, "called on us to constitute the world differently" (*ibid*). They play this role by being the ones who *counter* us, that is to say, they attune us with a counter-mood to the mood of the prevailing style and one that calls us out of our current desires and settled way of being into another.

Attunement does not represent something or set it before us: rather it transports our *Dasein* [existence] out into an attuned relation to the gods in their being thus and thus.

(Heidegger, 2014b, p.123)

The gods accomplish this countering by:

1. Resisting our ability to stay in the current world
2. Revealing a new order or meaning to the world
3. Calling us to the service of that order
4. Bestowing on us a new attunement to the world

(Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011, p.165)

Thus, each new epoch is instigated by a new god who deranges the prevailing style, forcing people out of a current world and casting a different light upon it such that the world, and the affordances it offers for a good life, appears quite differently. If it is a god that sends a style, it is a *divinity* that gathers and focuses the mood for human experience, such that, as we are oriented by the divinity, we are attuned to the god of the world and its practical affordances.

If it is a god that sends a style, it is a *divinity* that gathers and focuses the mood for human experience, such that, as we are oriented by the divinity, we are attuned to the god of the world and its practical affordances. Divinities are material entities (including artworks and cultural figures) or practices that serve to remind us of, and orient us to, the ineffable sending of a style upon which all our practical existence depends. The style of each epoch was each attuned by a mood carried by a divinity in the guise of sacred monuments or the works of thinkers considered sacred. Such sacred monuments and thinkers attuned selves to a style and brought “the God closer” (Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011, p.169). Thus, the temples and Sophocles’ *Oresteia* disposed the classical Greeks to astonishment at the gathering of beings into a meaningful political whole, Athens. Cathedrals, the Bible, and the rituals of the sacrament attuned mediaeval Christians to pious observation of the word of God. And, Descartes’ *Meditations*, Kant’s *Critiques*, and the institution of science attuned modern subjects to the sceptical reaching for certainty. In Heideggerian terms, all three of these epochal styles belong to a mega-epoch that he characterised as the *Machenschaft*, or epoch of planning (Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011, p.175). The epoch of planning arose out of the Platonic Greeks’ experience of the polytheistic Homeric Greeks’ world “full of evil forces, unpredictable change, difficult conditions, and inevitable death and defeat” (Lefkowitz, 2005, p.239). Philosophical thinking, since its Platonic inception

and subsequently, has been concerned with dealing with the Homeric world's anomaly of instability. Thus, in the age of planning, everything becomes calculable and reliable, whether the Platonic ideas, God's designs, or Descartes and Kant's representations, and everyone is disposed by different variations of the foundational mood of calculative control that was a response to the dismay experienced at the dangerously unstable and pluralistic world of the Homeric Greeks (Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011, p.175). Heidegger argued that the epoch of planning has culminated in a technological or agile style. The agile style represents the "greatest danger" to our human essence because, uniquely, it has come about, not from a direct experience of countering by a god, but from an inward turning away from the gods and towards the self. It marks the beginning of a time when God no longer plays the role either of an ultimate arranger or deranger of human affairs, the so-called "death of God" (Nietzsche, 2001). In Western political economies (Thrift, 2005; Sennett, 2006), notwithstanding their material achievements, Western selves are oblivious to their distinctively agile style and while there may be suggestions for an ultimate God that authorises their style, perhaps the market or the Internet (Dreyfus, 2009, pp.1-2), all suggestions can themselves be co-opted as a flexible resource that only "asymptotically approach perfect flexibility and efficiency" (Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011, p. 171). This turning away from the gods eventually dissolves any authority, even of the self, as a stable determinant of truth:

Addiction to control, to power, then to flexibility, and finally to the provision of an unlimited supply of options for the pursuit of self-realization. Eventually, the provision of options became an end in itself, unhooked from any ideal of self-realization.

(Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011, p.170).

The machine [technology] does not at all merely step into the place of equipment and tools. The machine is just as little an object. It stands only insofar as it goes. It goes insofar as it runs. It runs in the drive of industry. The drive drives as the bustle of the requisitioning of the orderable. If the machine stands, then its standstill is a



condition of the drive, of its cessation or disturbance. Machines are within a machinery. But this is no piling up of machines. The machinery runs from the plundering of the drive, as which positionality orders the standing reserve.

(Heidegger, 2012a, p.33)

In the nihilistic technological age, it seems there is no god to counter this nihilism, only a series of technical challenges to accomplish greater flexibility, and the contemporary Western self loses a sense of itself as a being that undergoes and participates in historical transformations in its style of life. Heidegger argued that we should not, indeed cannot, reject the agile understanding of being but he did argue that we can develop a free relation to it by recognising it, simply, as a style (Heidegger, 1977, pp.3-49). However, if Western selves experience how the currently dominant agile style is treated as complete and the only feasible truth of being and truthful life, and how it understands people and things alike only as enhanced or enhanceable resources, then they can sense their own lost freedom and meaningfulness.

As we have seen, in the agile age anything that might be proposed as a sacred paradigm unifying and authorising the style, will not be revered as sacred but, instead, be co-opted as an imperfectly frictionless and flexible resource. And any actual feature of that thing that resists pure flexibility will be treated as a technical challenge to be reduced or eliminated to “asymptotically approach perfect flexibility and efficiency” (Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011, p. 171). Any breakdowns in the smooth functioning of a tool of liquidity, such as a hedge fund’s financial investment instrument or the Internet, are not seen as the “experience of resistance and refusal” in the name of something that matters ultimately, but instead are requisitioned as resources for innovation in the direction of greater volatility or liquidity (*ibid.*, p. 178). Those sensitive to this narrowing of meaningful difference may come to sense themselves as trapped in a single understanding of truth: the co-opting of resources for the sake of flexibility. This

experience of the resistance and refusal of one's clearing to any one style both throws into relief the agile style, with its thin sense of mattering, and also reveals that, as a consequence of one's history and culture, one already has some marginalised things and practices that matter and that focus the meaningfulness of one's existence. During this middle period of Heidegger's thinking, he referred to this disruptive glimpse of the technological clearing as a background that enables this pluralistic truth but that must conceal itself in order to work, as an experience of the *last god* (Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011; Polt, 2013, pp.203-213; Sheehan, 2015, p.268).

The essence of Da-sein, ..., is the sheltering of the truth of being, of the last god, in beings.

(Heidegger, 2012b, p.244)

So far, our account of lesser, more specific gods describes how they counter an existing style and set a new style that guides appropriate action and truth. In contrast, the last god is later Heidegger's first attempt to describe a sense of an absent or "absconding" holiness, sacred, godliness or Godhood – a never-present, ultimate end that opens a space of existential and instrumental meaning, action and truth. While still ambiguous among Heidegger scholars, on my reading, the last god disrupts the totality of the prevailing agile clearing, and all previous clearings, oriented as they are towards human mastery and wilful planning and control. The last god works by revealing the clearing, as a self-concealing background meaningfulness, and by refusing to come to presence to institute a new clearing. Instead, in the event of the last god, the human responds to a situation, not by imposing human plans and treating all entities as interchangeable, but by drawing a self to attend and respond to the mysterious particularities of a thing in the world. Early Heidegger had already identified the importance of the "tiniest spheres" of humble things to a true and worthy life

(Heidegger, 1988, p.304). In contrast to Latin-origin terms for entity, such as *res*, *ens*, or object, which denote an entity that can be made fully present to human inquiry but which, in their drive for presence, destroy richer remote or liminal meanings, later Heidegger uses an archaic Germanic term *dinc* (for *gathering* to negotiate an affair) that points towards the way that a humble thing brings near, *gathers* or focuses a worldly context of subtle meanings and conditions worthy human action (Heidegger, 2012a, pp.12-16). When a thing is working, it brings near and unifies meaningfulness (*Ereignis*) from four regions called the fourfold. The thing gathers the tension between the presentable clarity of practice of the focal thing itself in a particular time and place (Heidegger calls this region: sky) and the ever-mysterious, absent potentiality of the material and tradition that support the practice as worthy and appropriate (earth). Similarly, the things gathers the tension between the historical way of being of the community of human beings engaged in the practice (mortals) and the futural sense of an ultimate end that can never be made present (divinities). It is by engaging with a thing in a way conditioned by the fourfold of sky, earth, mortals and divinities, that an individual can generate the kind of sensibility of, what Charles Taylor calls, one's "focal awareness" that reveals it is in an interplay with a background style of the world *as a moral context* (Taylor, 2016, p.93-98). It is this interplay between focal thing and contextualising world that allows the thing to be neither economically nor morally commoditised because, while it is being made fully present for propositional truth it is also not cut off from its meaningful, historical or material context (Borgmann, 2010, p. 29). Adopting the stance of dwelling allows both the thing to be "the locus of the full corona of liminal meanings" conditioned by the fourfold and the focal practitioner to sense that their "zone of focal awareness is surrounded by a corona of potentially articulable meanings, corridors that I might explore" (Taylor, 2016, p.94). In this way,

which Heidegger calls *dwelling*, the human preserves the richness of the thing and allows it to flourish.

When we think the thing as thing, then we protect the essence of the thing in the region from where it essences. Thinging is the nearing of the world. Nearing is the essence of nearness. Insofar as we protect the thing as thing, we dwell in nearness. The nearing of nearness is the authentic and sole dimension of the mirror-play of the world.

(Heidegger, 2012a, p. 19)

Heidegger sees these particular and plural callings as the sacred demands of things. Heidegger saw an encounter with the last god as setting contemporary selves on the path to escaping entrapment by any style, including the trap of agility, by engaging with entities and other people in a way appropriate to the local meaningful situation rather than simply as a means to productivity (Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011, p. 177). Thus, the Heidegger of the 1930s and 1940s is beginning to see how dwelling with focal things and practices both preserves and meaningfully transforms truth and freedom by allowing the practitioner to think in a different way than representing or calculating,

When and how do the things come as things? They do not come through the machinations of humans. But they also do not come without the vigilance of the mortals. The first step to such vigilance is the step back from merely representational, i.e., explanatory thinking into commemorative thinking.

(Heidegger, 2012a, p. 19)

Heidegger writes of the experience of the last god as a thinking conditioned by three moods: *shock* at the *a priori* nature of the clearing, in this case of agility, *restraint* to acknowledge but also refuse this clearing, and *diffidence* or *awe* at the mysterious potentiality retained by the existing focal thing in the face of the agile style. While Heideggerians disagree on the extent to which we just feel ourselves trapped thus by modernity and technology or have to develop a sense of our historical epochs or of the last god before we can experience this trappedness, all accept the domination of a single

understanding of truth as a threat to the essence of the human way of being as a discloser of different styles.

The approaching tide of technological revolution in the atomic age could so captivate, bewitch, dazzle, and beguile man that calculative thinking may someday come to be accepted and practiced as the only way of thinking.

(Heidegger, 1966, p.56)

### **Heidegger's Last Thinking of Thinking and Mystery (1950s onwards).**

The question remains of how we can inculcate the essence of the human as a discloser of different styles, different kinds of truth, and different disciplinary ways of living truthful lives. Heidegger provides a clue as to how humans in the West might retain their human essence as a discloser of different styles in his call to provide people with “an education in thinking”. In a dense but optimistic passage from *Basic Principles of Thinking* regarding thinking in a fundamental mode that he calls “the event of appropriation”, Heidegger speculates that thinking could transform our relationship with technology from one of domination by technology to being served by it,

One such conversion of positionality [technology] from the event of appropriation—something never accomplishable by humans alone—would result in the appropriative retraction of the technological world from its position of mastery into one of servitude within a realm where the human more authentically reaches into the event of appropriation.

(Heidegger, 2012a, pp.117-18)

Building on this speculation, Heidegger later goes on to propose educating people in a form of thinking that is more basic even than the scientific and agile thinking that pursues correctness and is capable of loosening the grip that both have in shaping current selves.

Perhaps there is a thinking which is more austere than the irresistible race of rationalisation and the sweeping character of cybernetics. Presumably it is precisely this sweeping quality which is extremely irrational.

Perhaps there is a thinking outside of the distinction of rational and irrational still more austere than scientific technology, more austere and thus removed, without effect and yet having its own necessity. When we ask about the task of this thinking, then not only this thinking but also the question about it is first made questionable. In view of the whole philosophical tradition, this means:

We all still need an education in thinking, and before that first a knowledge of what being educated and uneducated in thinking. In this respect, Aristotle gives us a hint in Book IV of his *Metaphysics* (1006a ff.). It reads: *esti gar apaeideusia to me gignoskeing tinon dei zetein apodeixin kai tinon ou deit*. ‘For it is uneducated not to have an eye for when it is necessary to look for a proof, and when it is not necessary’.

(Heidegger, 1972, p.72)

Heidegger’s early thinking of the human as a practical coper within an existing clearing suggests a thinking of *education* as the practice through which a self develops her understanding or mastery of the truth of being of a domain. Domains are wide and varied and could include mathematics, sports, law, the arts like painting, music or sculpture, the different trades such as plumbing or carpentry, and even cultural taste like fine dining. While the curricula for each domain will vary widely, we can identify certain common functions for an education in practical mastery of a domain (Wrathall, 2011b). Firstly, education enables an individual to make “discriminations” or meanings within the domain that they were unable to make prior to education. Secondly, they shape an individual’s “disposition” towards what they perceive when practising the domain. Thus, education shapes an individual’s repertoire of appropriate and inappropriate actions – what to do and when and what not to do. When one is educated, a situation calls for certain responses and effectively closes off others. Thirdly, an education shapes the normative categories or sense of what is better or worse in a domain. Following Wrathall, we can call this third capacity “taste”. Thus, education brings an individual into accord<sup>xxi</sup> with what is essential in a domain – education disciplines the learning practitioner.

Now, as we have seen, the particular domain is governed by the paradigmatic style of its clearing, education brings our discriminations, dispositions, and taste into accord with the spirit or mood that governs that paradigm. Education, thus construed, is an education of one's spirit to master a discipline in a particular style. We will call such an education that cultivates practical mastery of a discipline in a style – *disciplinary* education. For successful initial education, the teacher reproduces his own way of responding (or spirit) in the student. It is a way for the student to “grasp the prevailing paradigm” (Wrathall, 2011b, p.5). Thus, given the pervasiveness of calculative thinking to different disciplines across Western life, education becomes the cultivation of the calculative spirit and skills within a domain – it is an education in calculative thinking.

However, deeper than a disciplinary education in calculative thinking, Heidegger proposes another education that he names as an education in “austere thinking” or sometimes “meditative thinking”. In an education in such thinking, the student comes into accord, not with any one style but, with our essential human condition—our essential openness to different styles and our lack of any single style or “homelessness” – the existential fact that there is no “true me” or one way for the world to be but rather we are open to plural different ways of being in the world. Thus, Heidegger argues that there is a way out of agile thinking to the extent that all, and we can begin with enough of this generation, “receive an education in thinking”, directly or indirectly, that enables us to twist free of any single dominant style (Wrathall, 2011b).

Following Wrathall (2011b), I elaborate on Heidegger's suggestions for an austere thinking that both constrains and liberates, rather than simply confines, in order both to provide some positive characterisations of such a thinking and proposals for its

education. I begin with the characterisations that will allow us to recognise austere thinking when we see it.

Firstly, we have said we are educated in the ordinary or disciplinary model of education when we have been educated in the skills, the discriminatory capacities and the taste to know what to do in a situation in a particular style. Thus, if we have been educated in modern brewing we might know how to practice *kräusening*, dry hopping, or decoction mashing, how to distinguish liquid pressures, the speed of heat diffusion in a brew kettle, the extent of sugar caramelisation, and so forth and, finally, how to configure all such factors to make a brew that fits with the evolving tastes of beer drinkers. However, this *disciplinary knowing* is not the same as *thinking*. One does not think when one simply knows what to do<sup>xxii</sup>. When one is thinking, no clear course of action presents itself for an automatic response, in other words, something is question-worthy.

We learn to think by giving our mind to what there is to think about.

What is essential in a friend, for example, is what we call ‘friendly.’ In the same sense we now call ‘thought-provoking’ what in itself is to be thought about. Everything thought-provoking *gives* us to think.

(Heidegger, 2004, p.4)

In general, thinking is provoked, literally called forth, not by our force of will but by something missing in the situation itself. This might, say, when the temperature of the brewing container fails to reach optimum, be a case of the transition from ready-to-hand to present-at-hand. In such a case, it is appropriate simply to cast about for a reason for the failure, such as having left the thermostat control at too low a setting, and then correcting it. In such situations, it is appropriate to think instrumentally, calculatedly, to correct what is missing or awry and return the system to smooth functioning.



However, a more profound provocation comes about when two existing styles conflict, no single course of action offers itself, and, indeed, any ground, that might justify either one of the two styles over the other, is absent. Consider a process consultant who is also a devotee of traditional beers. As a consultant, he is passionate about bringing agile forms of process and marketing efficiency to every domain. However, as a craft beer-drinker he abhors mass-production and ironic marketing. For such a consultant, bringing current brewing techniques to his favourite beer could destroy it but adhering to expensive craft methods could leave it vulnerable to the same fate as cheaper beers take its market. The consultant must think deeply about how to brew in a way that is neither simply efficient nor nostalgic. He is called to think. In such austere thinking, Heidegger describes how a sense of “openness to mystery” reigns, a sense that is driven out of agile thinking that would treat the absence of craft as a call for further agile thinking.

There is then in all technical processes a meaning, not invented or made by us, which lays claim to what man does and leaves undone. We do not know the significance of the uncanny increasing dominance of atomic technology. *The meaning pervading technology hides itself.* But if we explicitly and continuously heed the fact that such hidden meaning touches us everywhere in the world of technology, we stand at once within the realm of that which hides itself from us, and hides itself just in approaching us. That which shows itself and at the same time withdraws is the essential trait of what we call the mystery. I call the comportment which enables us to keep open to the meaning hidden in technology, *openness to the mystery.*

(Heidegger, 1966, p.55)

As I argued earlier, human activities in particular disciplines (brewing, accounting, teaching) make sense against the pervasive background of the current historical clearing. Thus, contemporary business people are in tune with their agile times to the extent that they are called to break down their operational process and its component ingredients so as to maximise optionality and productivity. That is what the truth of the agile world calls them to do to be leading any kind of truthful life. But

Heidegger is drawing attention to the question that lurks in this certainty, why do we do that? From where does the agile sense get its authority? How does it condition and constrain what is possible? Is another style possible? How might it be accomplished? In asking such questions the thinker is confronted by mystery. And an education in thinking would educate the thinker with the discrimination to recognise such mystery and the taste and skill to explore it fruitfully. In this it liberates and allows human beings to live most truthfully by disclosing and at the same time questioning truth.

Heidegger makes two suggestions for what characterises such thinking that preserves a sense of mystery and yet is not disabled by it. First, he describes a mood of composure or *Gelassenheit* that changes how the thing matters to us. Instead of the modern mood of certainty that would drive scientific investigation or of agile fright that would drive manic action to fix the problem, the composed mood of thinking will foster more intense involvement with the situation and allow for an entanglement of one's thinking with what is missing from the situation. Instead of being driven to fix what is missing from within the productivity and optionalisation logic of the current world, the thinker engages with the situation in such a way that it comes into its own more fully than simply as one possible style, what we referred to above as the "event of appropriation." Heidegger describes this composed engagement as a kind of simultaneous affirmation and denial of what is there,

Meditative thinking demands of us not to cling one-sidedly to a single idea, nor to run down a one-track course of ideas. Meditative thinking demands of us that we engage ourselves with what at first sight does not go together at all. [...] We can affirm the unavoidable use of technical devices, and also deny them the right to dominate us, and so to warp, confuse, and lay waste our nature. [...] Our relation to technology will become wonderfully simple and relaxed. We let technical devices enter our daily life, and at the same time leave them outside, that is, let them alone, as things which are nothing absolute but remain dependent upon something higher. I would call this comportment toward technology which expresses "yes" and at the same time "no," by an old word, *Gelassenheit*, *releasement toward things*.

(Heidegger, 1966, pp.53–54)

Thus the thinker is able to make sense of things in a way that fits with the prevailing pervasive style of our world thus retaining relevance for those others with whom they live. At the same time, they are not confined to think only in this way but, somehow, to sense it for what it is in a deeper sense, just one way to make sense of things. Clearly, in order to accomplish this ambivalent composure, we must be open to the way that we make sense of things in this world and this re-connects the education in austere thinking to disciplinary education via the second key Heideggerian term of *sensibility*<sup>xxiii</sup>.

To follow a direction that is the way that something has, of itself, already taken is called, in our language, *sinnan, sinnen* [to sense]. To venture after sense of meaning [*Sinn*] is the essence of sensibility [*Besinnen*]. This means more than a mere making conscious of something. We do not yet have sensibility when we have only consciousness. Sensibility is more. It is calm, self-possessed surrender to that which is worthy of questioning.

(Heidegger, 1977, p.180. (Translated modified))

To be educated in thinking is not simply to learn the *sense* of the pre-established set of possibilities and impossibilities for recognising and manipulating a thing in order to bring it correctly into line with a model. An education in such disciplinary thinking develops the sense of mastery of the prevailing clearing. A disciplinary education develops an experience of the proper purpose for a thing within a style, the different possible ways of doing something, of the equipmental whole that the things fits into and works with, and the skilful and appropriate actions for a self who uses a thing. Thus one learns how to drink beer, on what occasions, and from what vessels, and so forth. A disciplinary education can also condition a sense of what one does not or cannot do with a thing. For instance, one does not drink beer ordinarily before going to work or use a bottle of beer to name a ship.

However, an education in austere or meditative thinking develops a *sensibility* or attunement to the clearing in itself and thus reveals that the current space of possibilities is just that, one possible space that remains in place only if current practices and dispositions for using a thing are continued, and consequently, as contingent, opens up the possibility that other spaces could be different. Such a sensibility becomes a prerequisite for composure, given that that mood is a simultaneous affirmation and denial of the current style, and for the openness to the mystery of the lack of a grounding justification for the current style.

In sensibility we approach the place from which first opens up the space that our actions and omissions traverse in any particular case.

(Heidegger, *Science and Reflection*, Cited and Translated by Wrathall, M (2011b))

So, sensibility and composure enable thinking inasmuch as they keep open the possibility of both preserving and transforming the prevailing style and maintaining the essence of the good life for a human as the discloser of different, rather than just one, styles or regimes of truth. How then might such an education in thinking be accomplished? Heidegger makes two proposals for such an education in thinking. First one must stay close to, that is to say, fully and bodily commit to practising a particular thing, what as we have seen, Heideggerian philosopher Albert Borgmann calls a *focal thing* (Borgmann, 1987, pp. 196-210; Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011, p. 178). It is only in such closeness to a thing and commitment to those true practices that reveal its realness, that the truth of the overall style that coordinates those particular practices is revealed,

[Speaking in the context of shoemaking] It is only in the tiniest spheres of the beings with which we are acquainted that we are so well versed as to have at our command the specific way of dealing with equipment which uncovers this equipment as such. The entire range of intraworldly beings accessible to us at any time is not suitably accessible to us in an equally original way.

(Heidegger, 1988, p.304)

Thus, disciplinary education in a particular discipline of a narrow domain reveals how to make practical sense of a domain – enabling truthful action – by inculcating particular distinctions, dispositions and skills, and taste for dealing with the reality of the thing. However, if that disciplinary education were to take the form of disciplining a learner to adhere to a set of decontextualized rules, applicable in every circumstance, rather than usher the learner into a world of practices and dispositions, then it will close off the possibility of sensibility.

So I studied with this man. He teaching me how to sharpening. But he didn't teach at all. I looked at what he does. I saw how to do it many times. My teacher, he don't teach you anything. Sometimes I clean up the floor for a couple of years. He says, "Clean up the sawdust." So I go and clean up the sawdust.

Master carpenter, Hiroshi Sakaguchi, *Being in the World*, 33m47s.

If the disciplinary education takes the form of an apprenticing to a master craftsman, in which the teacher inculcates a sensibility to a style in a learner, and then “gets out of the way” encouraging the learner to learn from a diverse set of craftspeople each with their own style, then the sensibility to style *per se*, the composure that affirms and also denies the prevalence of any one style, and the openness to the mysterious grounding of each style, that are required for thinking can be inculcated. In order to think, a learner must develop a historical or, perhaps, spatial sensitivity to different styles of the disciplinary practice of the domain and both their incommensurability, that they require profound transformations of disciplinary practice for each style to make sense at all, and their contingency, that they need not be this way or any other way. Eventually, the learner becomes mindful of the styles governing the worlds of practice in which she dwells, and develops her own unique style as a kind of continual integration of the past of different styles and the emerging future of a unique style. This sensibility is experienced as the awe felt in the presence of the sacred,

Sensibility is like gasping in awe before the expected miracle. The genuine search is a constant hesitation. Not the hesitation of those who are merely perplexed and undecided, but the hesitation of the one who tarries for a long time, who looks ahead and looks back because he is searching and tarrying in the transition. The finding and appropriating of what is fitted is one with the hesitating transition.

(Heidegger, 2000, p.124)

Having set out Heidegger's account of the history of various, holistic styles that shape the most general way that Western selves understand things, themselves and how to act, I turn in Chapter 4 to how contemporary strategic management is shaped by the two latest styles: the world-picturing and the agile.

## 4. Two Orthodox Styles of Strategic Management

### Introduction

So far I have developed an account of how since the pre-Socratic Greeks, Western human beings have understood themselves and their world quite differently over the course of their cultural history. I have also described how this history of being can be seen as an ongoing strengthening of the skills necessary for dealing with things in ways that reliably explain and predict what happens in the everyday world set by that style while, at the same time, losing our essential skill for establishing new styles of meaning *per se* and of different ways to be. This loss of our essential skill strips life of its meaningfulness and freedom because it leaves only a life in which the roles we can take and the meanings we can make in a world are pre-ordained and closed. In such a life, we are deprived of the role in the disclosure of truth, of different worlds and of different ways to be in a world. It is this truth-making role, as the discloser of worlds, that marks the essence of the human way of being – life at its best.

Using the account of the conceptual and affective aspects of the truth of different historical styles developed in Chapter 3, in this chapter I analyse and demonstrate the modern, world-picturing style and the agile, commitment-based style at work respectively in Michael Porter's and Donald Sull's strategic thinkings<sup>xxiv</sup>. Both authors are identified as paradigmatic cases due to their acceptance as leading exponents of each style in the English-speaking business culture. This acceptance is indicated by publication of multiple books by prestigious publishers, frequent publication in Harvard Business Review as the most popular business practitioner journal, and appearance in Thinkers50 business guru lists. If my choices strike the reader as particularly obscure or perverse then my selection should be adjudged faulty.

I draw on the conceptual and affective framework set out in Chapter 2 and 3 to analyse Porter's and Sull's work. I first analyse the thought and unthought of the world-picturing style exemplified by Michael Porter's calculative thinking of how to create competitive advantage by increasing bargaining power. I then similarly analyse the agile style exemplified by the Donald Sull's agile, commitment-based thinking. In each case, I read the texts against the matrix of the previous chapter that sets out how the style works to orient the strategic thinking at play in the text. Having analysed the world-picturing and agile approaches, in Chapter 5, I sketch an emerging post-agile proto-adaptive style before, in Chapter 6, developing a close reading for difference of its foundational text *Disclosing New Worlds* (Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997).

As I argued in the previous chapter, a style is a unified and shared understanding of "what things are, how the world should be arranged, what it makes sense to aspire to, and so on" (Wrathall & Lambeth 2011, p164). A style then is a way in which a particular truthful life is organised. In each style, one lives well by being in tune with the unifying style of one's time and a life well-lived in one time is quite different to one in another. Adapting the previous chapter's conceptual and affective framework to set out a style's thought, a style can be seen as comprising two material aspects, two attitudinal aspects, and a paradigmatic activity that characterise what a thing is most truly. The material aspects are: (a) an *ontology*, the understanding of what is most basic and general to all entities in that style, and (b) a *theology*, the beingest being as an ultimate goal towards which all relationships between entities are organised. The two attitudinal aspects adopted by a self to apprehend the truth of a thing are: (c) a *calling* to an ideal of a life lived well and a corresponding (d) *mood* to which one is attuned. Finally, (e) a *paradigmatic activity* is what it makes sense to do to grasp the truth (Thomson, 2005; Wrathall, 2011; Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011, p.164). Rather than



developing another broad survey of the styles of strategic management (e.g., Cummings, 1999; Seidl, 2007; Mintzberg, Ahlstrand & Lampel, 2009; Clegg, Carter, Kornberger & Schweitzer, 2012), I concentrate on the two latest Heideggerian styles as they manifest themselves in contemporary strategic management: the modern world-picturing and postmodern agile styles.

I begin by reviewing the texts exemplifying the detached, rational style of modern, world-picturing strategic management that seeks sustainable competitive advantages in a more or less stable world.

## The Modern World-Picturing Style of Strategic Management

Strategic business management, since the 1960s through the 1990s, has been grounded in assumptions of a stable world, economic equilibrium, and sustainable competitive advantage (D’Aveni, 2010; McGrath, 2013). These assumptions have encouraged the development of several popular frameworks and tools for analysing and attaining sustainable competitive advantage in a stable, predictable world.

Decade	Tool	Proponent
1960s	SWOT framework	Ansoff (1965)
1970s	Matrix analyses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth-Share Matrix (Henderson, 1979)</li> <li>• GE/ McKinsey Market Attractiveness-Business Strength Matrix (Sudharshan, 1995)</li> </ul>
	Scenario analysis	Wack (1985)
1980s	Industry Structural Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Five-Forces Industry Structural Analysis (Porter, 1979, 1980)</li> <li>• Generic Competitive Strategies (Porter, 1985)</li> <li>• Value Chain Analysis (Porter, 1985)</li> </ul>
	Strategic Systems Analysis	7-S Framework (Peters and Waterman, 2004 (first published 1982))
1990s	Value-based Management	Value-based planning (Rappaport, 1986) EVA-management (Stern et al., 1995)
	Resource-based Management	Stalk et al. (1992) Barney (1996)

Despite the diversity of these various strategic management frameworks and tools, a common style and set of characteristics shared by the different frameworks can be discerned. That style is the one described in the previous chapter as the modern world-picturing style. Using the conceptual and affective framework summarised above into five key aspects of a style (two material aspects that characterise what a thing is most truly: theologic, ontologic; two attitudinal that condition apprehending the truth of a thing: calling and mood, and a paradigmatic activity of what it makes sense to do), I set out the modern world-picturing style’s way of making sense and

illustrate the thought of this style in passages taken from texts of its paradigmatic strategist Michael Porter.

The culture figure who exemplifies the modern, world-picturing approach is Michael E. Porter, the Bishop William Lawrence University Professor at the Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness at Harvard Business School. Porter was acclaimed in 2004 as “by far the world’s most influential strategy writer” (e.g., Ramos-Rodriguez & Ruiz-Navarro (2004), cited in Clegg et al., 2012, p.11). Prior to his professorial and consulting career, Porter was a Phi Beta Kappa and Tau Beta Pi scholar at Princeton, graduating with highest honours in aerospace and mechanical engineering, before he switched to economics and business at Harvard where he obtained his PhD. He was a founding Director and active consultant at renowned strategic consultancy Monitor Group, leads Harvard’s programme for newly appointed CEOs, and is author of best-selling strategy textbooks *Competitive Strategy* and *Competitive Advantage* (Porter, 1980, 1985).

### **The Thought of the World-Picturing Style**

In these two influential textbooks and a series of papers, Porter sets out over 900 pages of detailed theoretical and practical instruction for strategists (Porter, 1980, 1985, 1991, 1996, 2008; Porter & Kramer, 2011; Porter & Driver, 2012).

Firstly, all modern approaches share a theologic, a way in which they arrange all their entities and activities toward a highest goal. The modern theologic draws the human to construct a “world-picture” or objective representation of the performance of the business in its context as a systemic world, a network of material, natural entities and causal interrelationships between those entities that produce an outcome. In other words, they organise their strategic management activities to do away with subjectivity

and strive for objective, materialistic, scientific understandings of nature. Porter's modern theologic is clear: construct an objective representation of the performance of the business in its context with the explicit intention to establish those fundamental factors that drive above-average sustainable profitability. Thus, Porter declares that strategy is aimed at developing superior long term return on investment in order to generate real economic value,

First, [strategic positioning] must start with the *right goal*: superior long-term return on investment. Only by grounding strategy in sustained profitability will real economic value be generated. Economic value is created when customers are willing to pay a price for a product or service that exceeds the cost of producing it.

(Porter, 2001, p. 71)

On Porter's modern view, strategists succeed by establishing a position within an industry that maximises the firm's bargaining power when it comes to winning a share of the industry's economic value,

Competitive strategy is the search for a favourable competitive position in an industry, the fundamental arena in which competition occurs. Competitive strategy aims to establish a profitable and sustainable position against the forces that determine industry competition.

(Porter, 1998, p. 1)

All the modern frameworks also share an ontologic, "a particular understanding of what makes entities the entities they are" (Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011) comprising the *ens certum*, the features that are the most basic or essential to all and any beings and the substance that supports properties and causal interactions. In the modern style of strategic management, the *ens certum*, are the numbers that render an object calculable, verifiable and predictable and value is the substance that supports properties and causal interactions. In Porter's modern strategic management, all that counts as real are those stable features that allow us to ascertain universal cause-effect

relationships and then manipulate those features in order to calculate, reliably predict and verify the effects of our manipulations in all situations. Porter identifies several such candidates including bargaining power in the industry structural analysis and economic value in his work on generic strategies. The modern ontologic is also clear in Porter's use of multivariate regression analysis to identify just those stable and universal features that are most basic or essential to the creation of economic value. Porter's works develop systemic frameworks integrating multiple factors that allow the strategists rationally to ascertain their organisation's position in its environment, manipulate his organisation and its environment in calculable ways, and predict the effects of their actions on performance.

Informed by industrial economic theories of structure-conduct-performance, Porter defines an industry as having five stable kinds or entities: direct rival firms, buyers of the firm's offerings, suppliers who contribute goods and services to the offering, possible new rivals in the shape of new entrants, and organizations whose offerings could substitute for those of the firm. He also identifies five forces that interact to determine the bargaining power of a particular firm as it competes for a share of the economic value of its industry. Porter recommends that strategists only plan their company's conduct within an industry after first analysing its position amidst these five universal structural forces that collectively determine how the industry's economic value will be shared out among its actors.

The first fundamental determinant of a firm's profitability is industry attractiveness. Competitive strategy must grow out of a sophisticated understanding of the rules of competition that determine an industry's attractiveness. The ultimate aim of competitive strategy is to cope with and, ideally, to change those rules in the firm's favour. In any industry, [...], the rules of competition are embodied in five competitive forces: the entry of new competitors, the threat of substitutes, the bargaining power of buyers, the bargaining power of suppliers, and the rivalry among the existing competitors.

(Porter, 1998, p.4)

Porter recommends that strategists develop a systemic picture of how all five forces work together,

By considering all five forces, a strategist keeps the overall structure in mind instead of gravitating toward any one element. In addition, the strategist's attention remains focused on structural conditions rather than on fleeting factors"

(Porter, 2008, p. 86)

An attractive industry would be one where a particular firm's bargaining power is high because there is low rivalry between direct rivals providing a similar offering, potential new rivals face high barriers to entry, there is low pricing and cost pressure from fragmented customers and suppliers, and little opportunity for customers to address their needs by turning to a firm's indirect competitors (Porter, 1985).

In order to assess internal direct competition between similar firms, one would quantitatively assess multiple sub-factors including the concentration and balance amongst competitors, the growth of the industry, competitors' fixed costs, differentiation of their offerings, their ability to scale capacity up or down cheaply and quickly, the costs to buyers of switching among alternative suppliers, and the cultural and other kinds of coupling between a buyer and its supplier. In order to assess the bargaining power of customers, the strategist would analyse their number and concentration, the availability of substitute offerings and indirect competitors, their buyer's switching costs, the mutual threat from one actor taking over the other's own activities (vertical integration), the contribution to the buyer's quality made the firm, the share of the buyer's cost base taken by the firm and its industry, and the profitability of the buyer. Similarly, complicated and detailed assessments would be constructed for the other three forces: the bargaining power of suppliers, availability of substitute

offerings from indirect competition, and the threat of entry from new direct competitors (Porter, 1985, Ch. 1, Appendix B; 1998, p.6).

Having determined the favourable fundamental structure of an industry, the second question a strategist must answer, according to Porter, is how to compete to ensure sustainable competitive advantage by deciding upon a *value proposition* that delivers different economic value to competing offerings. Such an ascertainment will primarily be based upon establishing value based on having either the lowest cost operations, a differentiated offering, or a focused niche position.

Finally, the strategist configures and maintains the firm's activities or value chain so that they fit together and reinforce the delivery of the value proposition and create economic value. Ultimately, economic value is defined as benefits minus costs and getting a handle on economic value usually comes down to ascertaining and measuring financial revenues and costs. As time has passed, Porter has expanded and deepened his appreciation of how economic value is created,

Firm success is manifested in attaining a competitive position or series of competitive positions that lead to superior and sustainable financial performance.

(Porter, 1991, p. 96)

Companies must take the lead in bringing business and society back together. [...] Yet we still lack an overall framework for guiding these efforts, and most companies remain stuck in a "social responsibility" mind-set in which societal issues are at the periphery, not the core.

The solution lies in the principle of share value, which involves creating economic value in a way that *also* creates value for society by addressing its needs and challenges.

(Porter & Kramer, 2011, p.64)

Companies can create shared value by creating social value. [...] The concept of shared value resets the boundaries of capitalism.

(Porter & Kramer, 2011, p.67)

There is nothing soft about the concept of shared value. These proposed changes in business school curricula are not qualitative and do not depart from economic value creation. Instead, they represent the next stage in our understanding of markets, competition and business management.

(Porter and Kramer, 2011, p.77)

The whole emphasis on shareholder value over the past couple of decades has focused managers on the wrong thing when they should really be focusing on creating economic value sustainably over the long term.

(Magretta, 2012, p. 192)

In any particular epoch, the ontologic and theologic combine together to form an essential unifying style that determines what any thing is and what is the appropriate action to take with it. For Porter, this style is the natural scientific style in which things show up to us as their essence rather than in their particularity, as buyers for selling to or as value for maximising, and as such are regular, machine-like and predictable in their interactions

My frameworks provide a set of logical relationships that are really fundamental. They're like physics – if you're going to have higher profitability, you've got to have a higher price or a lower cost. That industry competition is driven by the five forces. That the firm is a collection of activities. These frameworks provide basic, fundamental, and I believe unchangeable relationships about the 'matter' of competition.

(M.E. Porter, N. Argyres & A.M. McGahan, (2002). An interview with Michael Porter, *Academy of Management Executive*, 16(2), quoted in Magretta, 2011, p. 7)

This style calls individuals to an ideal of human being as a detached, rational and autonomous observer of both ourselves and the world. The paradigmatic activity of such a masterful human is act of bending both others and the world to our will. Porter himself is explicit about this calling,

[*Competitive Advantage*] is written for practitioners who are responsible for a firm's strategy and must decide how to gain competitive advantage, as well as those who seek to understand firms and their performance better.

(Porter, 1985, p. xvi)



That a large number of thoughtful practitioners have embraced [*Competitive Strategy*] as a powerful tool has fulfilled a career-long desire to influence what happens in the real world.

(Porter, 1998, p. ix-x)

The paradigmatic activity of world-picturing is to accomplish a stable, certain and rational representation of ourselves and the world, a world-picture, and calculate a failsafe position from which to put into effect our will upon the world. This call for the detached, rational and autonomous master strategist is evident throughout Porter's writings with their comprehensive descriptions of the methods of strategic analysis. These are the paradigmatic actions the modern master strategist must take to attain a certain representation of their organisation in its context and calculate the optimum position of power within that context. Indeed, in a recent interview, Porter described his greatest gift as,

The ability to take an extraordinarily complex, integrated, multidimensional problem and get my arms around it conceptually in a way that helps, that informs and empowers practitioners to actually do things.

(Kiechel, 2010, p.122)

In the modern epoch, Heidegger claimed we are attuned by the twin *moods* of doubt and certainty, those anxious and suspicious moods "proper to the exactitude of rationality" (Haar, 1992, p161). The characteristic mood of Porter's work fluctuates between certainty over his research and his findings and doubt that reaches for ever-greater certainty. These twin moods of doubt and certainty are in clear evidence in Porter's engineer's reaching to calculate what will happen in future through mathematics. In several passages offering practical advice to strategists who might undertake an industry analysis, Porter is clear that the strategist must reach for ever-

greater certainty, continually doubt her own objectivity, and strive for numbers as an offer of such certainty:

A competitor's assumptions may well be subtly influenced by, as well as reflected in, its *current* strategy. It may see new industry events through filters defined by its past and present circumstances, and this may not lead to objectivity.

(Porter, 1980, p. 60)

Yet discounting for legitimate uncertainty about the future, there seems to be a failure in some companies to look objectively at the prospects of decline, either because of long identification with the industry or overly narrow perception of substitute products [...] From my examination of many declining industries, the firms that seem to be the most objective about managing the decline process are those that also participate in the substitute industry. They have a clearer perception concerning the prospects of the substitute product and the threat of decline.

(Porter 1980, p.273)

The company position/ industry attractiveness screen is less precisely quantifiable than the growth/ share approach, requiring inherently subjective judgments about where a particular business unit should be plotted. It is often criticised for being open to manipulation. As a result, sometimes quantitative weighting schemes, using criteria determined to lead to industry attractiveness or company position in the particular industry, are employed to make the analysis more "objective." The screening technique reflects the assumption that every business unit is different and requires its own analysis of competitive position and industry attractiveness. As noted above, actually constructing the growth/share portfolio in practice involves the same type of particularistic analysis of each business unit. Hence, its actual "objectivity" may really not be far from that of the company position/industry attractiveness screen.

(Porter 1980, p. 366)

Although it is important to get some basic understanding of the industry to maximize the value of field interviews, the researcher should not exhaust all published sources *before* getting into the field. On the contrary, clinical and library research should proceed simultaneously. They tend to feed on each other, especially if the researcher is aggressive in asking every field source to suggest published material about the industry. Field sources tend to be more efficient because they get to the issues, without the wasted time of reading useless documents. Interviews also sometimes help the researcher identify the issues. This help may come, to some extent, at the expense of objectivity.

(Porter 1980, p. 371)

Good industry analysis looks *rigorously* at the structural underpinnings of profitability. [...]

As much as possible, analysts should look at industry structure quantitatively, rather than be satisfied with lists of qualitative factors. [...]

Many elements of the five forces can be quantified: the *percentage* of the buyer's total cost accounted for by the industry's product (to understand buyer price sensitivity); the *percentage* of industry sales required to fill a plant or operate a logistical network of efficient scale (to help assess barriers to entry); the buyer's switching *cost* (determining the inducement an entrant or rival must offer customers). [...]

The strength of the competitive forces affects prices, costs, and the investment *required* to compete; thus the forces are *directly* tied to the income statements and balance sheets of industry participants. Industry structure *defines* the gap between revenues and costs. [...]

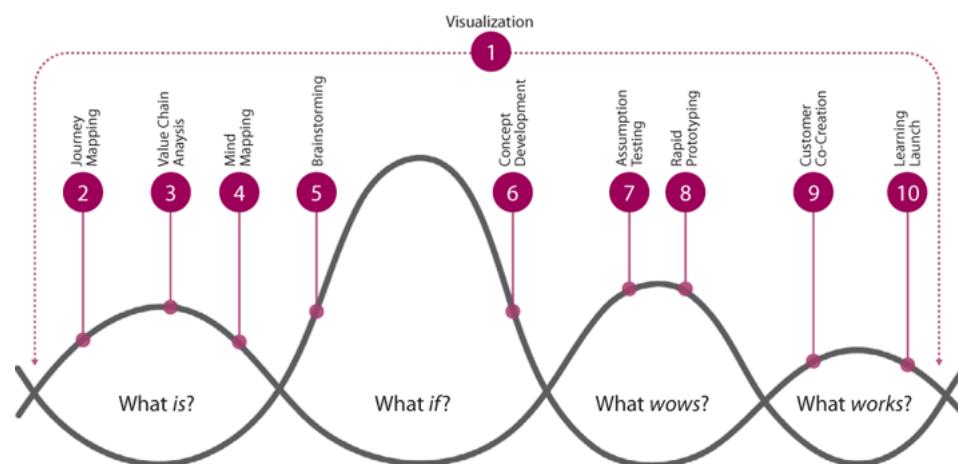
For example, intense rivalry drives down prices or elevates the costs of marketing, R&D, or customer service, reducing margins. *How much?* Strong suppliers drive up input costs. *How much?* Buyer power lowers prices or elevates the costs of meeting buyers' demands, such as the requirement to hold more inventory or provide financing. *How much?* Low barriers to entry or close substitutes limit the level of sustainable prices. *How much?* It is these economic relationships that sharpen the strategist's understanding of industry competition. [...]

Finally, good industry analysis does not just list pluses and minuses but *sees an industry in overall, systemic terms*. Which forces are underpinning (or constraining) today's profitability? How might shifts in one competitive force trigger reactions in others? Answering such questions is often the source of true strategic insights. [...]

(Porter, 2008, pp. 79-93; my emphases)

Porter's work exemplifies the modern style of strategic management and is commonplace in most popular teaching texts in strategic management (see e.g., Hax & Maljuf, 1996; Johnson & Scholes, 1999). These texts continue to place emphasis not only on Porter's frameworks, tools and techniques but also on his world-picturing, scientific style. However, the modern style can also be seen in less obviously scientific texts such as the *business design* approach (e.g. Martin, 2009a, 2009b; Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010; Liedtka & Ogilvie, 2011; Lafley & Martin, 2013). In common with Porter's foundational scientific inventions, all such design approaches assume it is possible to identify, design and realise a more or less stable business model whose means and ends can be identified, quantified, and specified in a blueprint organisational design, a world-picture, that then serves as the basis for implementation. These design theories were developed from idealisations of empirical observations made of the design work of independent and corporate entrepreneurs and specialist design agencies such as IDEO. The theories propose normative, idealised, and creative processes and recommendations for practice. In common with Porter's approach, design theories assume that they have discovered stable processes that know in advance (Heidegger,

2002, p.59) how reliably to create business model innovations and that can be represented and emulated by process designers, whether organisational consultants or leaders. The design process involves individual or group subjects observing and representing an external reality using an over-arching representational activity they call visualisation and a range of representational tools including various kinds of timeline and mind mapping, value chain analyses, business concept analyses, risk and assumption registers, and empathic customer and other stakeholder interaction systems (Figure 3).



**Notes:** The design thinking process can be illustrated by combining four basic questions, which correspond to the four stages of the process, with the 10 essential tools.

**Source:** Exhibit 2 from *Designing for Growth*, Jeanne Liedtka and Tim Ogilvie, Columbia University Press, © 2011, reprinted with permission

**Figure 3: Liedtka & Ogilvie, 2011.**

The world-picturing style of strategic management, in its various guises, whether Porter's competitive strategy or Liedtka's design, has dominated the strategy discourse for at least three decades and remains highly influential. According to management consultancy, Bain & Co.'s annual management tools survey, strategic planning remains the most or second most popular management tool used by large corporations in each survey undertaken from 2000 to 2013. In 2013, Michael Porter

has remained as the Number 7 most influential management guru in the Thinkers50 business thinkers ranking.

### **The Unthought of the World-Picturing Style**

The world-picturing style cultivates strategic managers marked by certainty about their facts, their analyses of causal relations, about the consequences of their proposals for action, about themselves as masterly strategic thinkers and, finally, about the imperative to be certain, an imperative which always throws up further doubt that could only be assuaged by more careful, more patient analyses. However, what is at work in world-picturing and yet goes without question, is the very reaching after certainty itself that characterises the style. Instead, the emergence and consolidation of the modern style itself is taken as a given rather than as a historical style. Consistent with its self-certain style, its partiality, incompleteness, and historical contingency are themselves overlooked.

The unthought hiddenness of the world-picturing style itself and its certainty about the need for certainty in analysis and prediction eventually also throws up its own anomaly; while one must commit to succeed, one's commitments will eventually prove wrong. Agile strategists have latched on to the, perhaps literally, infinite number of uncertainties and the impossibility of creating complete certainty of representation of them across time. While one must have an understanding, in order not to be paralysed, one's understanding will be wrong. Notwithstanding recent moves by Porter himself to make his approach more dynamic (Porter, 2008), the world-picturing style leaves unthought assumptions about the material existence and long-term stability of the industry's boundaries, features and structural forces, and the calculable predictability of strategic moves, all assumptions that have been widely called into

question. For instance, D'Aveni et al., point out that in the US mobile phone industry in 2010 it is vexing to identify the business model of incumbents such as AT&T, Verizon, Apple, Google, and Comcast, or to allot them a stable role in the industry as buyer, seller, or competitor, or, indeed, to predict the above-average performers (D'Aveni et al., 2010).

This unthought of the conflicting need to commit and the inescapability of uncertainty confounds business analysts who aspire to ascertain future developments for all possible relevant aspects of a business model and its context, and to business designers hoping to design-in longevity to any particular finite and stable business model in the face of such uncertainty. Faced with irreducible uncertainty, business strategists began to invent a new agile style of strategic management that accepted uncertainty as basic and, instead of attempting to eliminate it, embraced it and learned to prosper from it. However, in doing so, strategists opened up a completely new way of being that was incommensurable with the modern style. It is to this agile style that we turn in the next section.

## The Turn towards Agile Strategic Management

While Porter’s world-picturing remains the dominant strategy style, the most influential strategy gurus of the past ten years are those who have proclaimed the end of the age of stability and sustainable advantage and the dawn of the new age of temporary advantage (D’Aveni, 1994; Christensen, 1997; Markides, 1999; Hamel, 2000; Sull, 2009; McGrath, 2013)<sup>xxv</sup>. These authors argue that the long-term pursuit of sustainable competitive advantage by the dominant firms in an industry always opens new possibilities for any competitor prepared to move faster and to attack the weak spots of the incumbent. To coin Tom Peters’ phrase (1991), where world-picturing strategy pursued certainty, agile strategy “thrived on chaos”.

Decade	Framework	Proponent
1980s	Performativity	Language-action (Winograd & Flores, 1987)
1990s	Complexity and chaos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simple rules (Brown &amp; Eisenhardt, 1998)</li> <li>• Dynamic capabilities (Teece, Pisano, and Shuen, 1997)</li> <li>• Thriving on chaos (Peters, 1991 first published 1989)</li> </ul>
	Breakthrough strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disruptive Innovation (Christensen, 1997)</li> <li>• Revolution (Hamel, 2000)</li> <li>• Fast (Markides, 1999)</li> </ul>
	Hypercompetition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• D’Aveni (1994)</li> </ul>
2000s	Real options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MacMillan &amp; McGrath (2000)</li> </ul>
	Non-predictivity, agility & OODA loops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sarasvathy</li> <li>• Sull (2005b; 2009)</li> <li>• Zook &amp; Allen (2012)</li> <li>• McGrath (2013)</li> </ul>

As the table above demonstrates, these new strategists developed strategic management tools and frameworks that could cope with uncertainty. Their tools reflected and supported an agile style that Heidegger identified as technological. Instead of attempting to stabilise every uncertainty until it was ‘calculable, verifiable,

and predictable” as a material and natural fact, agility favoured transforming everything into a controllable option or resource (Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011). In disclosing the agile style, the strategists crossed an invisible line. The world-picturing strategist is a rational, consistent and objective decision-maker, choosing soberly and seriously from among already existing, pre-formed options while, at the same time, keeping themselves detached and inviolable. In contrast, the agile strategist is a post-rational, selfless re-inventor trying an option on for size, testing it out, playing with it, feeling its effects on herself and her world, and retaining or dropping it to the extent that its effects are pleasing or displeasing. For the modern strategist, choices are serious and mistakes are made. For the agile strategist, the volatilised world affords burgeoning alternatives and options can be taken up or dropped on a whim. Even mistakes can be re-used and re-purposed. In this sense, these theories are non-teleological since they do not assume, and are not oriented toward goals, other than the positing and re-positing of values and the optimisation of options in new artistic and propagandistic inventions, and then, when those inventions die, starting the reinvention process over again.

Our paradigmatic case of agile strategic management will be the approach described by Donald Sull, former Professor of Strategy at the London Business School and current Senior Lecturer at MIT Sloan School of Management. Sull teaches executive courses in strategy for volatile markets. In contrast to the natural science education of Michael Porter, Sull was primarily a humanities student. His tertiary education began with an AB in Government from Harvard, an interdisciplinary political science course that combines history, law, economics, sociology, philosophy, and ethics. Subsequent to his AB, Sull attained an MBA and DBA in Business Policy from Harvard. Prior to academic life, Sull worked as a strategy consultant with McKinsey and Co. and a management-investor at a leveraged buyout firm. In a series



of books and papers, Sull has developed an agile approach to strategic management that assumes turbulence rather than stability (Sull, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2009, 2015; Sull & Escobari, 2005; Sull & Houlder, 2005; Sull & Spinosa, 2005, 2007; Sull & Turconi, 2008; Sull & Eisenhardt, 2015). In this chapter, I will focus on Sull's most recent and detailed description of the approach to set out its thought and unthought and demonstrate the way that it exemplifies the technological style identified by Heidegger. I will also briefly allude to variants of its approach.

### **The Thought of the Agile Style**

The agile style of strategic management can also be analysed using the conceptual and affective framework: the theologic, the ontologic, paradigmatic activity, the calling, ideal human being, and mood.

All agile approaches share a theologic. In the agile style, the beingest being or paradigmatic entity that orders an experience of the world is the option or resource and all entities are ordered so as to be optionalised that is, experienced so as to maximise one's options and minimise the constraints past actions can exert on future decisions. In the case of Sull's agile strategic management, whether one encounters an environmental feature such as the structure of a consumer's day, an element of an offering such as its packaging, the selfhood of the organisation's customers, or even the different aspects of oneself as a business executive, all are experienced as options, flexible resources to be brought under control in pursuit of opportunity.

Firstly, Sull frees managers from a past commitment to a long-term vision in a stable world in favour of simply succeeding in an ongoing game in a fundamentally volatile world with no stable meanings and minimal commitments to any particular identity:

Based on the evidence, we come to a simple yet controversial position: managers have always faced the fog of the future, and they always will. In fact, the essence of management is effective action in an unpredictable world.

(Sull, 2005, p.36)

Although leadership gurus have extolled the benefits of a long-term vision, they have downplayed the risks, which can be quite substantial in an unpredictable world. The siren song of a long-term vision can distract employees and managers from opportunities and threats emerging in the present [...] tempt managers to bet too much, too early, [...] lull employees into a false sense of security that the future is clear, when in fact it is anything but [...] a long-term vision can paralyze managers. [...] Rather than blindly following a preconceived long-term vision, managers in unpredictable markets should sense the situation in all its complexity and anticipate emerging threats and opportunities in the short to medium term. Corporate priorities, and hence action, should grow out of the situation rather than being pushed by a pre-existing vision of what should work. [...] In an unpredictable market, managers should adopt a fuzzy vision, such as “we aspire to be a global leader in our industry.” [...] Executives should not, however, mistake these visions for incantations endowed with the magical properties as management gurus suggest. Fuzzy visions do tell employees what industry the company is in and where it competes globally. One hopes, however, that they already get these points. Fuzzy visions do raise aspirations, but in practice, no one can distinguish such statements from competitors’ versions, and so they provide no competitive advantage.

(Sull, 2005, pp.194-196)

There is no single “right” configuration, but rather many possible combinations of existing pieces.

(Sull, 2009, p.114)

Having established optionalisation as the ordering principle for understanding the world, Sull places the optionalised entity or resource as its beingest being:

Turbulent markets create opportunities in three distinct ways: turbulence introduces new resources into the economy, enables innovative combinations of existing resources, and stimulates novel consumers demand.

(Sull, 2009, p.18)

Resources include both hard assets (oil reserves or real estate, for example) and intangible assets (brand, technology, or expertise). [...] Newly privatized plants were not the only resource that created opportunity for Mittal. In Trinidad, the government was paying \$20 million a year for a team of sixty German technicians to manage the factory. Mittal replaced the consultants with Indian managers and technical experts who earned one-tenth what the European advisors made, Mittal was among the first executives to tap emerging markets for labor.

(Sull, 2009, pp.18-19)

The true measure of an opportunity, however, is whether it creates economic value, which is the difference between what a customer is willing to pay for something and the cost of all resources (including capital) to produce it.

(Sull, 2009, p.37)

The basic features of the agile ontologic are the commitment, which enables the strategist to identify and harness a resource as an option, and the iterative strategic management loop, which coordinates commitments in a productive circuit balancing “commitment and revision, stability and flexibility” (Sull, 2009, p.66). Ontologically, the agile strategist understands entities as lacking any nature of their own other than the minimal essence of being an optionalisable resource for maximizing productivity. Nothing is valued simply as what it is as a particular thing with essential properties. Instead, what something is, its being, is optional until committed to and brought into a cycle of productivity and, even then, its meaning – what it is – can be revised. The agile strategist experiences all entities as inviting the strategist to turn them into an option, harness and change them. An entity’s properties are regarded as purely contingent rather than the way they must or should be. An entity and its properties are broken down, reconfigured, switched about, re-combined and re-purposed in any way that continues the strategist’s pursuit of opportunities and economic value. Resources are committed to and re-configured by “reconceptualising the strategic process as an iterative loop rather than sequential series of activities” (Sull, 2008). In a strategy loop, strategies are ongoing achievements that are always “subject to revision or rejection in light of new knowledge that might arise in the future” (Sull 2009, p.62). The iterative loop can be adopted to improve the timing of corporate portfolio decisions of entry and exit into product, market, technological and geographical spaces and exit (Sull, 2009, Chapter 10). It can also be adopted to accumulate competitive-level strategic operational advantages and build corporate-level strategic resilience (*ibid*, Chapters 9

and 11). While, on this view, the formal strategic management processes of an agile firm would be run on iterative rather than linear lines, the agile capacity of a firm would be seen in the loop pervading the general style of an agile company, shaping and connecting interaction at all of its managerial levels and in its most everyday actions. The ontologic and theologic combine to form an essential unifying style, that determines what any thing is and what is the appropriate action to take with it. For Sull's agile style this involves extending the economy by co-opting ever more resources to be reconfigured and harnessed for human needs in an endless cycle of making and unmaking commitments:

*A commitment* refers to any action people take in the present that binds them (or their organization) to a future course of action.

(*ibid.*, p.70)

More precisely, a commitment is an action taken by a person in a time period that increases the probability that she, or the organization she represents, will behave in a specified way in subsequent time periods. Commitments operate by increasing the costs of deviating from the specified behaviour in the future, up to the limit of excluding the possibility of alternative courses of action altogether.

(*ibid.*, p.248, n.8)

People crave certainty about the future before making long-term commitments. [...] Turbulence, however, clouds visibility into the future and can sap confidence to commit. [...] The absence of certainty, however, does not eliminate the need to commit.

(*ibid.*, p.70)

Five types of commitments – to frames, resources, processes, relationships, and values – reinforce mental maps with particular force.

(*ibid.*, p.76)

Piling reinforcing commitments one atop another makes it harder to change the underlying map. [...] The dense interrelationships among established commitments further complicates the difficulty of unpicking one without disrupting others. Eliminating a single route of service for FedEx reverberates throughout the entire system.

Decision makers are also reluctant to admit – to themselves and to others – that earlier commitments were wrong. This reluctance to reverse commitments, especially those made with much public fanfare, can lead people to escalate commitment to a flawed map even as evidence piles up that things are getting steadily worse.

Finally, when mental maps go unchallenged for extended periods of time, they slip into the background of taken-for-granted assumptions that people no longer consciously notice. Maps are most likely to become invisible when they have been

held for a long time, have worked well at some point in the past, or are shared by many people.

(*ibid*, p.80)

The ritual of predict, plan, and implement may allay anxiety about the future, but it is a crummy way to advance into an unknowable future. [...] Linear planning is a siren's song that lures leaders to disaster with a seductive promise of control. In a turbulent world, it is better to bend the line into a loop, and proceed through iterations that allow adjustments to changing circumstances.

(*ibid*, pp.145-148)

This agile style calls individuals to an ideal of human being as a joyful master of paradox and Sull provides several examples: the lucky master seaman coping with stormy seas, the improvisational actor weaving convincing stories from unpromising resources and accidental happenings, and, finally, F. Scott Fitzgerald's paradoxical genius – the one able to “hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time”. Sull himself is explicit about this calling.

Individuals can take practical steps to seize the upside of turbulence. [...] The greatest lesson I learned from studying and working with dozens of successful and failed companies in those heady days was this: entrepreneurs and managers succeed not because of who they are but because of what they do. [...] The skills [...] can be mastered by anyone.

(*ibid*, pp.22-23)

Whether they find themselves in the right place at the right time to encounter specific opportunities is largely a matter of luck. [...] Machiavelli offered three images of fortune, and each conveys an important insight about snatching opportunities out of turbulence. The wheel of fortune implies nurturing hope [...] and avoiding hubris. [...] Machiavelli also likened fortune to a fickle woman who yields her attention to the bold suitor over the timid advances of the tentative beau [implying one should] strike boldly when an opportunity presents itself. Machiavelli wrote that fortune “resembles one of those violent rivers that, when they become enraged, flood the plains, tear down trees and buildings” [implying one should] limit its damage by constructing embankments. [...] mitigating identifiable risks. [...] I propose a different image of fortune, [...] before engines, [...] a sailing ship depended on elements beyond its control. The best seaman – think Captain Jack Aubrey in *Master and Commander*, could still master the sea, not [...] by bending the beast to his will, but rather by harnessing favourable winds when they gust, riding out the inevitable storms, and remaining ever alert to the shifts in the weather that demand a change in tack.

(*ibid*, pp.42-45)

Improvisation is the art of making it up as you go along. It differs fundamentally from traditional theatre, where the script dictates what happens, directors guide the

action, and rehearsal ensures that actors know what is expected from one another (*ibid*, pp.113-114).

Improvisation necessitates the reuse of existing pieces in new ways, since important pieces of the puzzle, such as an established brand or long-standing customer relationships, cannot be discarded whenever circumstances change (*ibid*, p.115).

Closely related to improvisation is the notion of *bricolage*, a French term that describes the process of solving a problem by tinkering with the materials at hand (*ibid*, pp.116-117).

I am not arguing for execution of small improvements instead of a strategy of seizing golden opportunities when they arise. In turbulent markets, execution is strategic. [...]

(*ibid*, pp.32-37)

[...] Every mental map [or paradigm], from a start-up business plan to a presidential policy agenda, is both a flawed representation of reality and a tool to secure long-term commitments. These two roles work at cross-purposes. To represent a turbulent world, the ideal map is complex enough to encompass a multifaceted reality, fluid enough to adapt as circumstances change, and loosely held enough to be discarded when proven wrong. To secure commitments, however, a map should be simple enough to communicate widely, sufficiently stable to induce long-term commitment, and firmly held enough to inspire confidence. The two roles tug a map in different directions – turbulence calls for constant change, while commitment demands stability. [...]

The conflicting roles played by mental maps produce what I call the *map paradox*: in a turbulent world, people must make long-term commitments based on a mental map they know to be flawed. The paradox arises in any situation where progress requires both long-term commitments from many people and adaptation to changing circumstances. In other words, the map paradox arises when grappling with most important issues, including health care reform in the United States, repairing the global financial system, reversing climate change, and negotiating peace in war-torn regions, as well as the personal concerns of running a company or raising a family. There are exceptions, of course-mutual-fund managers face turbulence but can easily reverse their positions. By and large, however, anything worth doing in a turbulent world requires people to act as if their map is right, know that it is wrong, and retain the ability to function.

(*ibid*, pp.63-64)

The map paradox cannot be eliminated but it can be successfully managed. Indeed, seizing the upside of turbulence demands it. [...] The paradox of the map demands a delicate balance between commitment and revision, stability and flexibility. Striking the balance is difficult, but possible, and chapters 5 through 11 of this book suggest practical steps to help strike this balance.

(*ibid*, p.65)

The paradigmatic activity of such a masterful human is the act of artistic creation through conversation. Sull elaborates on the ideal role for the strategists as a commercial propagandist and artistic creator orchestrating commitments to express

newly willed possible realities through language. Conversation is the paradigmatic activity for accomplishing strategy in a turbulent situation.

Leadership, at its heart, consists of getting things done through discussions with other people.

(*ibid*, p.151)

Sull's advice consists of embedding an idealised four-step strategic agility loop modelled on an OODA loop. The Observe-Orientate-Decide-Act or OODA loop moves through cycles from observing the situation, orientating oneself by making sense of those of its most salient features that must be addressed, deciding on a course of action and then acting and then returning to observe the consequences of one's action and future events. The loop allows for the making and keeping of performance commitments in a turbulent world. In Sull's agility loop, the four steps are first, to make sense of a situation, second, to make choices about what to do and not do, third, to make those choices happen, and fourth, to make revisions according to the new information that emerges. In the strategy loop, an organisation is re-conceived as a *dynamic network of promises* (Sull & Spinosa, 2007, Ford & Ford, 2008). Promise-based management builds on the foundations of contract law tradition in the Roman Empire to argue that promises are the "fundamental units of interaction in businesses" (Sull & Spinosa, 2007). The promise-based view of the firm is argued to allow firms to concentrate on their core business while increasing coordination and collaboration across a network of partners, increasing agility and capitalising on opportunities outside their core competencies, and increasing employee engagement (Haeckel, 1999; Sull & Spinosa, 2005, 2007).

Sull argues that the loop "mitigates" the limitations of the linear strategic management style in three ways. Firstly, it tightens the link and shortens the delay

between strategy formulation and implementation. Secondly, the strategy loop reduces the risk of escalating commitment to a failing strategy by building in radical revisions as part of its process. Thirdly, the iterative approach increases the capacity of a firm to seize opportunities before competitors.

*Step One: Make Sense.* During this free-form and creative step a diverse team aims to produce a shared mental map that captures the essence of the situation. Sull encourages the practitioner designing such a practice to think of an improvisational comedy troupe or a jazz ensemble. Essential to this step is raw, up-to-the-minute holistic data and an empathetic leadership style that is said to be open to any point of view. Team members are encouraged to think around preconceptions and to avoid prematurely anchoring on a single perspective and to eschew personal criticism. No action is even considered until a mental map of the competitive landscape is achieved.

*Step Two: Make Choices.* The team must agree on small set of clear priorities for actions that it will pursue and investments it will make. In contrast to the improvisational comedy of the making sense practice, Sull describes the feel of the “making choices” meeting as being more like a venture capital business’ investment portfolio meeting. Team members have an overview of the entire portfolio of opportunities. They take an impersonal and enterprise, rather than impassioned and personal, perspective, and have the authority to make important calls. The team may use simple rules, such as “biggest return soonest” or “drop an initiative before adding one” to make trade-off decisions.

*Step Three: Make Things Happen.* Shifting out of the prioritisation practice, agile strategists must then mobilise actions that will put these priorities into effect. In a further shift, Sull describes such strategic action meetings as feeling like agile programming SCRUM team meetings. In this step, the team makes requests and elicits



promises from its members. Building on a body of philosophical work on the nature and practice of language-action, good promises are deemed most effective when they are public, active, voluntary, explicit, and motivated. Customers and performers, those making requests and those making promises, thrash out what both sides want, and the conversation takes place in a climate of discipline, accountability and support. This is the one step that does not celebrate optionality and selflessness, indeed personal reliability is essential. In this practice, commitments are made and those commitments are taken seriously as anchors.

*Step Four: Make Revisions.* Finally, the team discovers and addresses discrepancies between expectations and the actual outcomes. These rigorously reflective conversations feel like military after-action reviews; they don't just re-negotiate promises but also actively encourage the revision of mental maps and of a company and its people's identities. Agility is at its most radical here. In valuing their intellectual humility, agile leaders pride themselves on identifying escalating commitment to failing courses of action and cutting the actions. Such conversations balance renegotiated perseverance with the creativity of exploring new opportunities in every shortcoming. Everything is up for grabs. Emblematic of this stage, Sull recommends considering venture capital firm ONSET Ventures, which refuses to grant additional funding for an idea until the original business model has changed at least once. Similarly, Boston snack manufacturer Stacy's Pita Chips went through multiple iterations from its original idea of serving hot dogs through to abandoning hot dogs in favour of the pita chips they gave customers waiting in line for the hot dogs (Read et al., 2011). 1-800 AUTOPSY was set up by a recently redundant deputy coroner who sought to provide personal autopsy services for grieving relatives. Reflecting upon the low take-up of their medical and legal service he spun out CoffinCouches.com turning

coffins into novelty furniture and MorguePropertyRentals.com to sell death-related props like embalming tables and crypts to the TV and movie industry (*ibid*). The highest profile examples of these map-changing revisions are TESCO and its recent admission that it had lost its food retailing heart by diversifying beyond food retailing to become a gold trader, a bank, and a secondhand car dealer. One might also consider, GE, whose simple rule of exiting a business if it fails to be No 1 or No 2 in its market meant it constantly shifted its maps of the market and sense of itself, or NOKIA, which went from being a timber company with a four hundred-year old history to a mobile telecoms supplier.

Sull's work is imbued with optimism and positivity. He believes people can learn to love uncertainty, become free from authority and narrow choices. For Sull, positive moods give people options whereas negative moods shut them down:

Turbulence, for many, equals risk, and risk equals bad news. [...] Framing change in negative terms gives rise to a response known as "threat rigidity," that entails a contraction of authority, reduce experimentation, and focus on existing resources.

(Sull, 2009, p.15)

An uncertain future cloaks unseen risks but also holds unanticipated opportunities.

(Sull, 2009, p.18)

A recent study found that nearly half of large companies surveyed has a chief risk officer, but how many employ a chief opportunity officer?

(Sull, 2009, p.17)

We have already read how hope, humility, boldness, prudence, and equanimity characterised Machiavelli and Sull's lucky leaders. He also names four moods for each of the stages: openness and empathy for making sense, respectful argumentation for making choices, discipline and support for making promises, and dispassionate analysis for making revisions. However, the characteristic light and joyful mood of technology, which Heidegger reads in Nietzsche and that covers over boredom, is also

the mark of Sull's endlessly agile re-styling and self-affirming (Heidegger, 2004, p.109) in which everything we encounter is an option, to be added, removed enhanced or concealed, in the “steadily rotating recurrence of the same” (Heidegger, 2004, p.109). As Nietzsche writes in *The Gay Science*,

*One thing is needful* – to “give style” to one's character – a great and rare art!... Here a large mass of second nature has been added; there a piece of original nature has been removed – both times through long practice and daily work at it. Here the ugly that could not be removed is concealed; there it has been reinterpreted and made sublime.

(Nietzsche, 2001, p.163)

No matter the nature of the contingencies, the dependable firm takes care of the satisfaction of the commitments it has made to stakeholders, and it does so by purifying those commitments into propositions that can be more easily communicated and declared as satisfied. In the face of ineliminable turbulence, Sull recommends the development of the agile firm as a vehicle for “joyful nihilism”, that goes wherever the contingencies require and still turns out a profit. Such an approach needs no past foundations or future certainties, and few if any commitments to the identity and character of the firm beyond its agility. For those who succeed for the lengths of their mortal lives, it is joyful, brilliant and awesome. For those who fail dramatically, who lose everything or nearly everything, like Brazilian tycoon Eike Batista or hedge fund manager Philip Falcone, the sheer joy of pursuing such a creative life is enough<sup>xxvi</sup>.

### **Variations on the Theme**

Other agile gurus make similar claims. For instance, leading thinker of corporate governance and one of the primary inventors of stock options, Michael C. Jensen, Jesse Isidor Strauss Professor of Business Administration, Emeritus, at Harvard Business School, has collaborated with personal transformation guru Werner Erhard to

develop and deliver an agile promise-based leadership programme. He proposes that outstanding leaders and organisations are known for:

“keeping our word, and on time as promised; or [...], as soon as we know that we won't keep our word, we inform all parties involved and clean up any mess that we've caused in their lives.”

(Jensen, 2009)

He calls this state being “in integrity” and claims that it is necessary for maximum performance in organisations that are “up to anything important in life”, that is, those leaders of organisations who attempt some task so difficult they will not always be able to keep their word. However, Jensen's and Erhard's approaches say little about what is considered worthy of a promise, only that leaders develop the capacity to manage ambitious promises. Sull's descriptions also bear a family resemblance to strategy as simple rules, complex responsive processes, sense-making and high-reliability organizations, transient competitive advantage strategy, repeatability, and non-predictive strategic management or *effectuation* (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1998; Wiltbank *et al.*, 2006; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2015; Stacey 2010; McGrath 2013; Zook & Allen, 2012). In all these approaches, a boot-strapping loop of commitment-making continually volatilises and transforms the economy of resource bases and demand spaces.

### **The Unthought of the Agile Style**

The agile style attempts to address world-picturing's paradox of integrating commitment and flexibility in the face of turbulence. However, it comes down on the side of flexibility rather than commitment. Sull's hints at the historical meaningfulness and identity-defining commitments of economic life in the industrial cities of Ohio and Pennsylvania (Sull, 2003, 2009). However, he fails to develop this theme of

meaningfulness. Instead, he leaves it unthought and instead thematises endless economic reinvention and the iteration of commitments. In doing so, we see what agility misses. Sull's work clearly identifies the role of luck rather than Porter's analytical brilliance and willpower but, in his account of luck, it is possible to glimpse what remains unthought for a worthy life. With his examples of "Lucky" Jack Aubrey and multiple billionaire entrepreneurs seizing opportunities thrown by blind fortune, we discover the echoes of a Stoic understanding of luck that leads to nihilism because of its omission of a sacred dimension (Dreyfus & Kelly, 2009, p.65). Roman Stoic thinking recognised the importance of luck but personified it in the form of the blind goddess Fortuna. For the Romans, because fortune was blind and did not direct her effect at particular individuals, the proper response to luck is, like that of Captain Jack Aubrey, a kind of stoic reticence and resolve to withstand life's contingencies. One prospers where one can and barely survives where one must, rather than maintains a gratitude to a god, outside of one's control, who had us in mind in bestowing or authorising a space of meaningful opportunity. In the next chapter, I turn to other accounts of a post-agile management that hint at but, do not develop, this unthought sacred dimension and its necessity for meaningful lives of truth and meaning.

In Chapter 4, I have demonstrated how Porter's world-picturing strategic management theory and Sull's agile, commitment-based theory of strategy line up respectively with Heidegger's modern and agile styles that were described in Chapter 3. I turn in the next chapter to exploring a post-agile, proto-adaptive style emerging from the work of three sets of writers influenced by Heidegger and working in the Strategy-as-Practice field.

## 5. Post-Agile Strategic Management

The agile form of strategic management analysed in Chapter 4 is highly successful. Firms that have adopted it, like AB-InBev, Apple, and Haier, answer the turbulence of the times by creating even more disruptive turbulence. Instead of seeking to avoid turbulence, they embrace it. In these examples, one begins to see the limitations to the agile life. In the agile business, there is nothing that is sacred in itself. Everything can be co-opted into a productive resource, de-constructed and its parts made available for the sake of further optionalisation. The agile life promises exciting novelty every day and freedom from constraints. But, it is a freedom only to perform ever more intensely and to co-opt ever more entities. From a Heideggerian perspective, the problem for this understanding is that, this novelty and freedom comes at the expense of any other possible ways of living that may be more committed and more personally meaningful. Every other way of living is only another option. Propositional truth reigns but at the expense of ontological truth.

Agile strategic management is successful in terms of helping firms achieve market-leading share and profitability. It has become an established style of strategy-making alongside Porter's world-picturing management. However, an alternative to its relentless and narrow performance focus and ceaseless change is taking shape in the form of inquiries into what actual strategists do in practice and the ways that they seek to receive and adapt meaningfulness in the face of historical events. While these inquiries question both world-picturing and agile styles, they have not yet fully described an alternative adaptive way of strategising. Thus, it is to these post-agile but only proto-adaptive Strategy-as-Practice approaches that I now turn. In this chapter, I consider the attempts of those of a handful of theorists, both business and philosophical theorists, who have responded to what they see as the overly normative strategy

research of the two previously described styles and have tried to think strategy in a new way. Chapter 5 analyses three contributions to a Heideggerian, proto-adaptive strategic management, two contributions put forward by Strategy-as-Practice theorists Tsoukas, Chia, and Holt and the commitment-based management prototype of philosophical theorists Flores and Spinoza. I begin by introducing the Strategy-as-Practice school of strategic management.

## **SAP as Post-Agile Strategic Management**

There is another approach to strategic management that also assumes the world as fundamentally volatile but that emphasises rather more its meaning-making aspects. Since its first explorations of strategy making in the early 1990s, the Strategy-as-Practice approach (SAP) has grown in size and impact to reach the stage where it is an established approach to understanding strategic management (Carter *et al.*, 2008; Jarzabkowski & Whittington, 2008; Golsorkhi, Rouleau, Seidl & Vaara, 2010; Vaara & Whittington, 2012). SAP broadens strategy research away from what it considers to be narrow issues of business performance control, micro-economics, and statistical prediction, and intensifies the focus on micro-processes of strategic action. This wider focus brings ethnographic, discursive, social research methodologies to the study of a strategic agency situated within already operative communicative, affective, and embodied practices (Golsorkhi *et al.*, 2010, pp.2-3). In the Strategy-as-Practice style, strategists are seen to be working within existing horizons of meaning that always already constrain their possibilities for action. Opportunities for inventions are not generic, random, or posited as if from nowhere, but are instead constrained by the particular anomalies that show up to situated practitioners working within their local horizons of meaning and existing business strategies.

Whittington (2006) is widely accepted as being the first to formalise a research agenda for Strategy-as-Practice (Whittington, 2006; Jarzabkowski, Balogun & Seidl, 2007; Golsorkhi *et al.*, 2010). In the 3P framework, Whittington proposed that researchers study strategic *practitioners* engaging in specific strategising activities collectively called *praxis*, which in turn draw upon the wider cultural *practices* that exist as the background of all practitioners. Practitioners include those managers, consultants and internal change specialists working in multiple hierarchical levels and domains and engaged in strategising “as a socially accomplished situated activity arising from the actions and interactions of multiple level actors” (Jarzabkowski, 2005, p.6). Praxis is the specific, concrete strategizing activity that practitioners engage in in a specific business context, such as deciding how or whether to operate in a particular industry or market, managing the acquisition or divestment of a business, or designing an organisation to excel at those activities necessary to achieve competitive advantage. Finally, practice refers to the diverse methods, techniques, tools, and procedures that underlie strategy work in different situations. For instance, these practices might include using PEST and 5-forces industry structure tools to analyse a market for both positioning and acquisitions praxes, core competencies may be used to analyse a firm’s own business model or that of a potential competitor, and the practices of running strategy workshops and writing strategy documents could be used in multiple particular tasks. Over time, these practices become routinised to form strategy practitioners’ background understanding of shared norms and traditions for how to proceed (Paroutis, Heracleous & Angwin, 2013, p.11)

From these three perspectives, several prescriptions for strategic management can be derived. Firstly, to spread the role of strategist in complex organisations across multiple roles, domains and levels. Looking inside a firm, one can see at least three



such levels. Top Management Teams ratify, direct and recognise deliberate strategizing, whereas middle managers champion strategic alternatives, synthesise information, facilitate adaptability of their units, and implement deliberate strategy directives, and operational managers experiment with different approaches, conform and reinforce norms and routines and respond to middle manager requests. Secondly, it is also still commonplace that one senior executive takes the role, even if only informally, of Chief Strategy Officer. However, from a Strategy-as-Practice perspective that officer does far more hands-on, embodied and intuitive work than was hitherto recognised by the world-picturing style. The Chief Strategy Officer is a close confidante of the CEO. She will have an internal social network that is deeply rooted inside the firm. While she has a wide knowledge and experience of using strategy models, she shows little attachment to the purist execution of those models, and maintains a fluid, intensely practical focus on their use in tackling strategic contingent issues. The CSO is often supported by a strategy team comprising analysts who run the various research tools and managers who coordinate and support strategic planning cycles and engage in executing, reflecting, initiating, coordinating, supporting, collaborating, and context shaping in flexible ad-hoc loops of activity. Finally, strategy consultants play a particular role in solving specific client problems. They adapt proprietorial technical tools and problem-solving methodologies to analyse the business situation, develop and assess strategic options, make recommendations and engage with the political forces for and against recommendations (Paroutis *et al.*, 2013).

Thus, the emerging SAP perspective on strategic management accommodates the world-picturing and agile styles of the contemporary strategist. For instance, the agile strategist turns herself to the tasks that appear in the hurly-burly of everyday

business life, she configures and reconfigures her social networks as appropriate to the challenge presented, and draws upon an eclectic mix of specific practices according to the contingencies of the situation. For example, over 250 strategy methods, models and theories are listed on the popular 12Manage strategy web site. Many of these models are those developed in both the modern and agile styles of strategic management including for example Porter's Five-Forces Structural Analysis and the agile OODA loop. However, beyond these specific tools, the SAP approach also draws attention to the way that strategists engage habitually with language to shape and influence the space of meaning or discourse that is an organisation. SAP recognises that strategists are engaged in shaping organisations by changing the discourse of the organisation (e.g., Ford & Ford, 1995; Paroutis *et al.*, 2013, pp.65-89).

The Strategy-as-Practice approach includes several Heideggerians among their number (Spinoza, 2001; Chia & Rasche, 2010; Chia & Holt, 2006, 2009; Tsoukas, 2010a, 2010b). Given that, as we have seen, Heidegger's project was centrally concerned with the question of the meaning of being (Dreyfus & Wrathall 2005, p.9; Sheehan, 2015), perhaps those forms of strategic management informed by his project can address the meaninglessness of the agile strategic management style. I divide these mutually influencing Heideggerian Strategy-as-Practice scholars into two groups: those primarily gathered around the work of Robert Chia and Haridimos Tsoukas, which I will name the *dwelling* approach (Chia, 2004; Chia & Holt, 2006, 2009; Chia & Mackay, 2007; Chia & Rasche, 2009; Tsoukas, 2010a, 2010b; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011; Zundel & Kokkalis, 2010; Holt & Cornelissen, 2014; Shotter & Tsoukas 2014), and those associated with Fernando Flores and Charles Spinoza, which I will refer to as the *commitment-based* approach (Flores, 1993; Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997;

Spinosa, 2001; Heil, 2011; Shaw, Dun-Hou Tsai, Yu-Chung Liu & Amjadi, 2011; Denning and Dunham, 2010; Spinosa, Davis & Glennon, 2014).

### **The Thought of the Commitment-based Approach**

At roughly the same time that Ghemawat and Sull were beginning their work on commitment and strategy, Heideggerian philosophers were proposing a form of business practice that addressed some of the shortcomings of the modern and agile ways of conducting business (Winograd & Flores, 1987; Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997). Their early grand intent to revolutionise the political economy with what they called, *commitment-based management* (see Dreyfus, 2000), while not yet successful, has been justified to some extent given their direct involvement in significant political and technological changes. Either side of being a business entrepreneur, Fernando Flores served as the finance minister in Salvador Allende's socialist government of the 1970s and, for a recent extended period, as a senator in Chile. He recently authored a major research report into innovation for the Chilean government. Flores' co-author and collaborator Terry Winograd, informed in part by Dreyfus' early work on Artificial Intelligence, was doctoral supervisor to the founders of both Google and LinkedIn and continues to be an advisor to Google. Both Winograd and Flores and others among their adaptive agile design network invented early stage examples of email and groupware software. Both Spinosa and Flores continue to be active management consultants and influential, if not prolific, scholars.

Flores and Spinosa have been identified as an influential part of the cultural circuit of capitalism (Thrift, 2005, 2008). Since its initial publication in book-length form in 1997, their main collaborative publication, *Disclosing New Worlds* (henceforth DNW), has become well-established in the academic study and practice of

entrepreneurship (Hjorth & Steyaert, 2003, 2009; Thrift, 2005, 2008; Steyaert, 2007; Denning & Dunham, 2010). In his review of academic processual theories of entrepreneuring, Steyaert (2007) identified the book as one of his illustrative examples of the phenomenological strand of processual research and suggested that, in tandem with the work of another ex-Berkeley Heideggerian, Theodore Schatzki (Schatzki, Knorr Cetina & von Savigny, 2001; Schatzki, 2003, 2005), DNW could be developed into a “fully-fledged practice theory” of entrepreneuring (Steyaert, 2007, p.467).

In his account of the cultural circuit of capitalism that formed and was formed by late-stage capitalism of the 1990s and 2000s, Nigel Thrift (2005) used the commitment-based work of the consultancy firm Business Design Associates (BDA) to illustrate the pervasive ‘soft capitalist’ style of the era. BDA was founded in California by one of DNW’s authors, Fernando Flores and the book’s lead author Charles Spinosa was Vice-President at the firm. The firm’s adaptive agile consulting practice expressed these leaders hermeneutic-existential-phenomenological philosophical education under professors Hubert Dreyfus and John Searle at the University of Berkeley. By the time of Thrift’s later book *Non-representational Theory* (2008), the mild criticism and ambiguity of the earlier book had disappeared and Thrift gave DNW an even more influential role as an emblem of the contemporary ‘soft capitalist’ political economy. As an example of the continuing practical influence of DNW, in 2013, ex-NASA scientist and professor at MIT and Princeton, Peter J. Denning co-authored a book on social practice innovation *The Innovation Way*, that claimed DNW laid out “the primary pattern of innovation” and relied upon this pattern to structure a pedagogic account of adaptive agile entrepreneurial and innovation skills (Denning & Dunham, 2010).

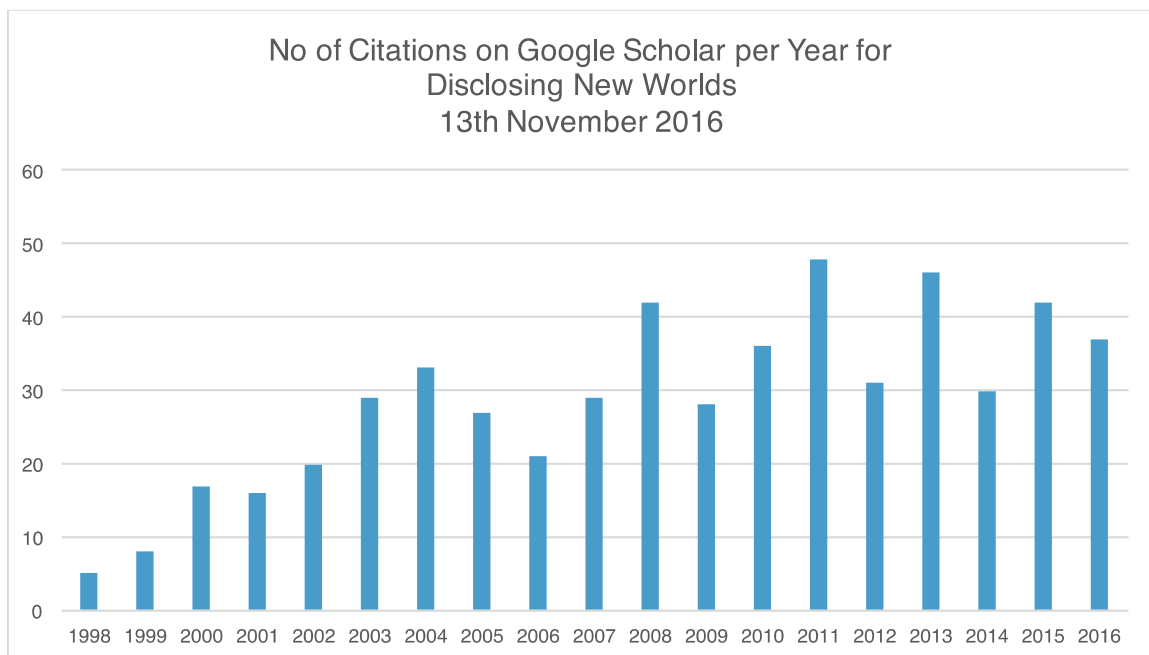
In contrast to the limited first-hand accounts of practice and relatively light prescriptions for practice that we will see in the next section's account of the dwelling approach, Flores and Spinosa have written about and participated in several significant innovations in practice in the last two decades. These practice-informed innovations include new ways of managing very large engineering projects, inventing group collaboration software, introducing e-banking services, and creating less formalised, more human customer contact centres. The question of the extent of the changes that have been brought about through their adaptive agile practice is contestable. None can be said to have resulted in fundamental change to the parameters of contemporary business practice and all were justified in essentially orthodox capitalist terms i.e., extending the reach of capitalist practices such as the availability of credit, opening up marketplaces, creating faster, better and cheaper offerings e.g., Patrimonio Hoy, CEMEX, Grameen Bank (Flores Letelier, Flores & Spinosa, 2003; Flores Letelier, Spinosa & Calder, 2000) and cement manufacture and distribution, mobile telecoms, and credit card processors (Spinosa, Glennon, & Sota, 2008). However, as argued earlier, this should also be seen as consistent with the practice-based approach that sees innovations as gathering around anomalies in an existing world rather than positing and constructing utopian visions of new worlds as if from nowhere.

Indeed, early in their book *Disclosing New Worlds*, Spinosa, Flores and Dreyfus state:

We write in support of entrepreneurial practices within capitalist market economies, of citizens' action groups in modern representative democracies, and of the culture figures who cultivate solidarity among diverse peoples in modern nations. Indeed, we think that these practices are so important to human life that most of the everyday, conventional aspects of capitalist market economies and modern democratic republics necessary to support them must be preserved.

(Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, p.1)

Beyond the work of these original commitment-based managers, a search on the title *Disclosing New Worlds* on Google Scholar in November 2016 returned 564 citations for the book (see Fig. 2).



**Figure 2 Citations of *Disclosing New Worlds*, Source: Google Scholar.**

Many of the writers of the Strategy-as-Practice approach frequently cite DNW (e.g., Chia & Holt, 2006; Tsoukas, 2005, 2010b). However, it is notable that there is very little reference to Dreyfus and Spinoza's earlier philosophical papers that set out and justify their central commitments to realism and to developing the free relation to technology.

While the book is influential in the field of strategy-making, it has been particularly influential in the field of entrepreneurship studies. Many of the entrepreneurial texts that draw on DNW do so in order to reinforce their claim for the good of entrepreneuring beyond simple economic benefit: the claim that entrepreneuring is indeed a form of life lived at its best. Johannisson (2008) draws in

part on DNW to bolster his claim for entrepreneuring as liberating and creating new ways of living. Shaw et al. (2011) propose entrepreneurship as ontological, and thus valuable in itself because it opens spaces for the development of distinctions of value, rather than primarily as a for-profit activity. Clarke and Holt (2010) draw on DNW's example of King Gillette's invention of the safety razor as an example of the unprejudiced thought necessary for Kantian maturity. Hjorth and Johannisson (2009) draw on DNW to promote the cultivation of openness to events of sense as a way of increasing one's possibilities and enhancing one's life. Sørensen (2008) uses DNW approvingly to illustrate the Gnostic flavour of contemporary accounts of entrepreneurs as saviour figures and Weiskopf and Steyaert (2009) also make the case for entrepreneurs as being apart from this world, straddling or existing in between an old and a new one. Lindgren and Packendorff (2006) draw on DNW to bolster their claim that entrepreneuring, as a kind of dynamic becoming rather than static being, is pluralist, liberating and creates new ways of life. Finally, several make claims for DNW promoting the idea of tactical local action to work with contingent opportunities (Johannisson & Olaison, 2007; Hjorth 2004, 2005, 2007; Gawell, 2006).

As ex-scholars turned management practitioners, Flores and Spinoza write quite differently to the more scholastic Chia and Tsoukas and other Strategy-as-Practice theorists. Whereas the SAP writers do not move far beyond using language as an ontological infrastructure and writing as a descriptive tool, Spinoza and Flores' work, from its beginnings, has been performative. As can be seen in the passage quoted above, many of their papers are strongly assertive and declarative. Where they do describe, they describe their own consulting work. In a series of published papers and books they provide detailed examples of practices that can stimulate commitment-based management and cultural innovation. For example, Flores (1993) and Flores

Letelier et al. (2000, 2003) provide detailed accounts of their listening or articulative interviewing skills to identify orienting values and value conflicts set up by the current situation. In a series of papers referred to in the previous chapter, the use of speech acts or language action to coordinate action is illustrated (Sull & Spinosa, 2005, 2007). Similarly, Spinosa, Glennon and Sota (2008) introduce the leadership skills of taking a stand on one's existence and listening to pick up and inflect personal and structural moods and identify the stand taken by another. Finally, Spinosa, Glennon and Davis write up four cases of their consulting work inflecting negative moods to shift destructive company politics (2014).

While commitment-based management consultants have hundreds of pages of unpublished and proprietary methodologies, a relatively comprehensive commitment-based management methodology has been published that proposes immersion into a world to develop sensitivity to its meanings coupled with the development of expertise in eight conversational practices to transform existing settled practices in the domain (Denning & Dunham, 2010).

This immersive inquiry into a domain of practice (for example, energy engineering, brewing, temporary recruitment) is intended as a long-term process to attain the highest levels of skilful expertise in a domain. At these levels of expertise, the intelligibility of the situation and the practitioner is transformed to make wholly new and relative actions possible. Innovations come from immersion in a world of meanings rather than by imposition from outside. Hence, the innovation preserves and transforms meanings. To attain this level of mastery, one would dedicate oneself to engage, not as an observer but as an active practitioner, in a cluster of excellence. Thus, one would devote oneself to becoming a recruitment consultant in London, an entrepreneur in Silicon Valley, a high-performance motor engineer in the F1 motor



sport cluster in Oxfordshire in the UK, or a bioengineer in the Biovalley cluster in France, Germany and Switzerland. It is this immersion in a field of practice that develops the ethical expertise necessary to promote meaningful innovation rather than the kind of rootless innovation promoted by a purely agile innovation described by Sull<sup>xxvii</sup>.

Local practical immersion in a domain's community of practice develops practitioners' ethical expertise – their affective disposition to what matters in the domain, and the linguistic distinctions of meaning and motor skills to act and coordinate action with others in that domain. One must do the hard miles and long hours and experience the emotions, the moods, failures and successes that only come from actually doing the work of the community (Denning & Dunham, 2010, p.371).

Bodily engagement with practice over time transforms what a situation means to a practitioner and opens new possibilities for reliable performance to a masterful performer. These possibilities were hitherto unavailable, indeed unintelligible, to a novice practitioner (Dreyfus, 2008a, 2008b; Dreyfus & Kelly, 2011). Dreyfus describes a seven-stage phenomenology of increasing skilfulness and intelligibility of a domain that culminates in the rare kind of authentic meaning-making that is capable of the disclosure of new worlds.

In the earliest stages, a Stage 1 novice practitioner develops from following abstract instructions and rules for behaving within a particular domain of action to being a Stage 4 proficient performer. A proficient performer puts their identity at risk and spontaneously discriminates among a variety of situations and decides how to respond appropriately and without guidance from a teacher. As Stage 5 experts, practitioners respond immediately and intuitively to the particular demands of a specific situation as an ethical context that offers possibilities for virtuous behaviour.

The deliberate choosing of what to do has given way to an immediate right action. Experts are those who have become personally involved in a domain and have become sensitive to its style and ethical distinctions of right and wrong. The expert's identity is invested in doing the right thing in the conventional style, and they have developed sufficient practical experience and the propensity to take risks to be able to know when it is right to play by the norms of the situation ('the One') and when to deviate and try something new. In other words, they excel at ethical expediency. Some, however, have gone beyond this ethical expertise of the One. Instead of a mood of serenity or confidence bordering on arrogance, Stage 6 masters live in a mood of permanent anxiety (Dreyfus 2008a, p.37). For the master, even if public opinion is that they performed well, there is no right way to do things and they can always perform better. For the master, there is no one way that is the right way that things must be. The master responds not to the specific situation of, say, a competitor challenge or an unusual customer request but to the situation's contingencies guided by the style of the 'whole meaningful context' of their world and community of practice (*ibid.*). As we saw in Chapter 3, according to Heidegger, the origin of this style, indeed of any style, is a mystery. The shock of wonder at our practical role opening this style, in tandem with the gods, as those beyond ourselves that attune us to the situation, is the divine experience Heidegger that names as the last god (Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011; Sheehan, 2015, p.268). Hence, a master is in touch with what is beyond wilful control in the situation's practices. Finally, stage 7 history-makers spot and retain game-changing anomalies that re-define the key issue of a domain. History-makers have a vision of their world, whether of brewing, energy engineering, or recruitment, so original it transforms their own and all others' understanding of the world. Having argued for the

importance of domain mastery, Denning and Dunham go on to argue for history-making as a domain in itself and recommend practitioners master its skills.

According to Denning and Dunham, skilled history-making innovators continually observe,

The *cares* and *concerns* of people

The *practices* people have for taking care of those concerns

The *value* and level of *satisfaction* people place in their practices, current and future

The *breakdowns* and *struggles* people are experiencing

The *disharmonies* revealed by the breakdowns and struggles

*New practices* that, if adopted, would resolve the breakdowns and bring harmony

*Resistance* from people who see a net loss of value in the change

(Denning & Dunham, 2010, p.90)

To become history-makers, Denning and Dunham recommend developing mastery of eight conversational practices each producing a particular outcome to address a particular concern as follows:

**Sensing:** Bringing forth the new possibility that would bring value to the community.

**Envisioning:** Building a compelling story of how the world would be better if the possibility were made real.

**Offering:** Presenting a proposed practice to the (leaders of the) community, who commit to considering it.

**Adopting:** Community members commit to trying out the new practice for the first time.

**Sustaining:** Community members commit to staying with the practice for its useful life.

**Executing:** Carrying out action plans that produce and sustain adoption.

**Leading:** Proactively working to produce the outcomes of the previous six practices, and overcoming the struggles encountered along the way.

**Embodying:** Achieving a level of skill at each practice that makes it automatic, habitual, and effective even in chaotic situations.

**Table 3: Outcomes of the Innovation Practices  
(Denning & Dunham, 2010, p.25)**

Building on their “friend and teacher<sup>xxviii</sup>” Fernando Flores’ publications, including his PhD thesis<sup>xxix</sup>, Denning and Dunham explain that each innovation practice has both a *conversational* and a *somatic* aspect and that it is the somatic or embodied aspect that enables the highest levels of innovation performance. According to the authors, it is only with embodiment that mind and body, language and emotions and moods are connected as bodily reactions (*ibid*, p.24). While their book sets out the various performative language routes that Flores invented in his PhD to define how work gets done through the linguistic coordination of commitments – the so-called *conversation for action* – they insist, in line with Flores, that it is only in the absorbed involvement of embodied actors that these linguistic moves acquire relevance in actual situations of absorbed coping and, through this absorbed involvement, open up the possibility of learning to increase skilful performance. Thus, while beginner and competent students may be able to follow and repeat the linguistic patterns that their book recommends, only one who has absorbed those conversational practices in many actual situations of involved innovation, until such point as those practices are “transparent, automatic, and habitual”, will be able immediately to make the right move in response to the breakdowns that commonly occur in the uncertain and chaotic situations that characterise innovation situations. In the absence of such practice in actual risky situations of innovation, masterful performance will be unavailable to innovators because they lack the embodied ability to listen deeply to their collaborators’ concerns, respond appropriately to invent practices that bring things and other people out into their own, and thereby engender trust. Thus, the authors claim that their eight practices are *conversational* and *embodied* in nature and hence observable and trainable, not hidden away in unobservable drives, personality traits, or historical virtues and vices. This is an unusually complex claim, deriving as it surely

does from their phenomenological advisors' aversion to inwardness and privileging of externally visible commitments, which suggests a personal transformation approach of practising the physical moves and allowing the conscious mind to follow along later. In other words, to "act their way into a new way of thinking rather than think their way into a new way of acting" (Pascale, Millemann & Gioja, 2000).

Denning and Dunham specify each of the eight practices that are deemed essential and universal for innovation. Each specification comprises (1) an *anatomy* of the practice as an idealised path that if practised well will produce the outcome shown in Table 3 and (2) an account of the *characteristic breakdowns* that can obstruct the idealised performance of each practice and prevent the production of its sought-for outcomes or commitments.

In outlining the eight history-making practices, Denning and Dunham's recommendation risks becoming confused and contradictory. In aiming for mastery of history-making as a distinct practice, they endanger the meaningful innovation that Dreyfus' expertise in a domain can foster and move instead toward technological agility. On Dreyfus' model, one must already be an ethical expert and practically wise master in touch with the style of a domain if one is to be capable of history making. As we saw, the meaningful history-making skill appears as a consequence of undertaking an earlier journey to develop ethical expertise, practical coping skills, and sensitivity to the style of an existing domain such as driving a car, playing basketball, or brewing. Training in history-making skills, as a set of skills transverse to the core domain (brewing, etc.) and in the absence of the development of ethical expertise and practical wisdom in the core domain, risks a nihilistic kind of innovation for which nothing matters in itself, and that, as I have been arguing, is deleterious to meaningful and worthy lives (Dreyfus, 2008a, 2008b). Without the resolute commitment to the style of

a world that only comes from immersion in a domain of practice such as energy engineering or brewing, one's innovations will remain uprooted from a ground of meaning and relevance. There are two ways in which this assessment can be taken. First, the nihilistic approach taken by the agile strategy, is to declare that there is literally no one way for things to be and nothing that limits opportunities for innovation. The other, which I will argue is an adaptive *post-agile* approach, is to declare that our traditional, concealed historical and social practices may be inexpressible but that they are all that we have if we are to pursue worthy innovations that preserve and transform existing meanings and reject those that deplete these meanings.

### **The Thought of the Dwelling Approach**

For more than ten years, both Haridimos Tsoukas and Robert Chia have drawn on Heideggerian thinking to critique and reframe world-picturing and agile strategic management practice (Tsoukas, 2005; Chia & Holt, 2006). Tsoukas has primarily drawn on early Heidegger to displace the central role of deliberative thinking for strategy by practical nonconscious coping. Far more common than deliberation is a kind of non-deliberative acting by already committed and skilled actors in order to *cope practically* with familiar situations against an un-thematised background common sense. Deliberate *coping* is engaged in only occasionally in order to restore functioning in the event of breakdown or interruptions to the smooth coping of a skilled practitioner working from her background understanding of what everything is and what actions to take, by drawing on analogous situations encountered in the past. And, even more rarely, *detached theoretical reasoning* is engaged in by strategists in strategic planning workshops and processes (Tsoukas, 2010a, 2010b). Tsoukas draws on early Heidegger to show clearly and precisely how deliberation, ratiocination or problem-solving can deal with breakdowns in our ordinary practical coping. Tsoukas also distinguishes the

question of whether a life lived is a good life as opposed to merely an intellectually, that is to say, propositionally, correct life and recognises the central role to this question of disciplining practical judgment within a cultural context (Shotter & Tsoukas, 2014, pp.232-237). In this recognition, Tsoukas identifies the role played by *phronesis* or practical wisdom in exercising such judgment and of ontological skills, “skills at being this or that kind of person” for becoming a *phronemos*, a self who is capable of such judgment (Shotter & Tsoukas, 2014, p.237). Thus, Tsoukas is explicit about how everyday practical coping, deliberative coping and thematic ratiocination are parasitic on everyday pragmatic human action that exists in a clearing of background practices and suggests that the clearing can take on various styles (Tsoukas, 2010a, p.57). However, Tsoukas’ account of the cultural context is redolent of early Heidegger’s account of tool use in which the technological context of instrumentalism had not yet been thematised. Tsoukas’ reference to the different modes of strategizing remains within this tool-use context and does not extend to the historically different styles identified by Heidegger. Similarly, Tsoukas’ analysis does not consider the question of the maintenance and transformation of the existential meaningfulness of a disclosed world. In general, Tsoukas does not engage with the later Heideggerian work on the history of different styles, of the sacred, or of austere thinking itself described in Chapter 3. A more genuine thinking would consider the contingency of this contemporary pragmatism as a historically-disposed instrumentalism and thus would think about what is most taken for granted and how it can be meaningfully transformed.

Robert Chia is the academic who has done most to articulate a later Heideggerian approach to strategy as a practice. Working with a group of co-authors, Chia has developed a series of papers drawing on later Heidegger as well as a book-length treatment that critiques world-picturing and agility and re-casts strategic action

in a largely Heideggerian frame (Chia & Holt, 2009). The key Heideggerian distinction upon which Chia and Holt draw is that between *dwelling* and *building*. Dwelling names an understanding of human agency and action more basic than those, mainly metaphysical assumptions, that we have shown dominate the strategic management literature. Dwelling is that engaged yet receptive stance to the world that is conducive to Wrathall's description of *adaptive thinking*. To allude to its meanings in rather poetic language, dwelling roughly corresponds to a basic stance of being taken care of by the world at the same time as one takes care of the world. Following Heidegger, Chia and Holt claim that the strategy literature, even that literature such as the strategy-as-practice literature that examines how strategy is actually formed, is dominated by an understanding of human being and agency that assumes that autonomous, transparent actors form assessments or intentional states about an objective world and creates explicitly formulated purposes, goals and plans to act wilfully upon this world. They term this dominant understanding *building* and follow Heidegger in arguing that such activity is always dependent upon a more basic dwelling. Cut off from dwelling, the prevailing style of building, whether modern or agile, roughly corresponds to the *Machenschaft*.

As we saw, the dominant world-picturing and agile perspectives emphasise autonomous, transparent strategic decision-makers who analyse businesses, markets and industries as reified, stable, predictable objects and set goals, design strategies and make action plans accordingly, even if, in the case of the agile strategists, those cycles of action are compressed, volatilised, and accelerated. In contrast, the newer approaches to strategy emphasise 'strategy as pattern' emerging in local relational adaptations between embodied, historical and practical actors (e.g., Chia & Holt, 2006, 2009; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011; Tsoukas, 2010a, 2010b). These latter Heideggerian



practice authors begin to draw attention to the agile, and particularly the world-picturing, styles that are the background thinking behind the calculations and propaganda of these dominant forms of strategic thinking (Chia & Holt, 2009; Heil, 2011).

What both world-picturing and agile approaches to strategy share are a version of an assumed subject-object *building* relationship. In the building mode, we have an “agent-strategist consciously constructing mental representations and models and only then acting upon them” (Chia & Holt, 2009, p.133). Accordingly, the actors involved are taken by researchers to be transparent subjects, autonomous, purposeful and goal-directed, making conscious decisions about an objective world for instrumental gains. Their action is assumed to be consciously guided and un-perturbed by any influence or cognitive processes going on of which they are unaware i.e., no unconscious or sub-conscious processes or at least none that cannot be made explicit.

In the dwelling mode, the world and the self and all their perceptible properties are co-emergent, they arise and appear together in local, practical situations of everyday coping. Cognition is more a question of *phronesis* or practical wisdom primarily involving embodied sub-conscious and unconscious know-how. In most accounts, the two modes are seen as distinct and dis-connected – one is right and the other wrong. Chia and Holt suggest that the two are complementary and briefly describe how the building mode emerges when there is a breakdown in the dwelling mode (Chia & Holt, 2006, 2009). This is an idea that is also referred to in Tsoukas’ account of the implications for management decision-making of early Heidegger’s distinction between *ready-to-hand* and *present-at-hand* in his application of Heideggerian account of tool use to management (Tsoukas, 2010a, 2010b). The basic point they make is that man’s everyday, average way of being is practical coping. The detached, theoretical

mode of building is secondary to the dwelling mode and occurs when dwelling has broken down for whatever reason.

Chia and Holt's recommendations for strategic practice are suggestive rather than prescriptive. Consistent with Heidegger's thinking, its simultaneous saying "yes" and "no", and its openness to mystery rather than wilful control, they propose a "different mode of engagement" to approach strategy. In this mode, the strategist approaches a strategic situation "pervaded by a paradoxical logic", "modestly and elliptically and allowing strategic priorities to emerge spontaneously through local ingenuity and adaptive actions taken *in situ*" (Chia & Holt, 2009, p.xi). Inspired by Heidegger they recommend fostering what they call *way-finding*, an oblique, eclectic and fluid approach to strategy making, change and transformation. Such an open approach assumes the historical situatedness and sagacious prejudice of the strategist and the firm (*ibid*, p.194) and does not rely primarily on either making or using abstract maps of a territory nor on making bold pronouncements or plans for future direction. Way-finding replaces the goal-directed, spectacular, and exclusively top-down strategy of the dominant discourse with a more modest edging forwards by commitment making and an ongoing receptivity to which commitments are succeeding in gathering a world about them and which are foundering. Those commitments that gather a world are preserved and those that fail are abandoned or adjusted. In place of the rational intellect and confidence that leads to blindness they propose cultivating cunning intelligence or *mētis*. In place of accepting the fullness of present objects and the chatter of everyday life, they recommend a certain personal and organisational "blandness" that acknowledges the inherent lack in all things and incompleteness of the self. Such prescriptions, in which "indirectness, *phronesis*, *mētis*, complexity, curiosity and spontaneity persist without any one dominating" are certainly redolent of the tone of

*Gelassenheit* or *composure* that, as we saw in Chapter 3, Heidegger considers the mood appropriate to dwelling and the post-metaphysical age. However, there remain unthought areas to be developed further in Chia and Holt's account. In contrast to Tsoukas, while Chia and Holt do develop an account of Heideggerian thinking of technology as an age of resources (*ibid*, pp.152-154), they do not explicitly contrast their own strategic blandness approach with the similarly non-foundational agile strategy style. However, doing so would sharpen an issue of which the authors are aware but which they do not fully resolve. When they introduce strategic blandness, they describe it as a "will-o'-the-wisp endurance that invites no opposition and assumes no domination; it exists only in the plenitude of as yet unrealised possibilities" (*ibid*, p.xi). Later, in the context of *mētis*, they discuss how its survivalist selfishness and duplicity can lead to the loss of basic, stable character necessary for longer term success. In the context of strategic blandness, they describe how it prevents a self from being too "enamoured" with the current state of things and recognises how a strategic "lightness of touch" can itself "also become too habitual, too devouring of identity." Thus, in its questioning of the loss of a self's identity, it sets up but does not fully resolve the question of how *mētis* agility, blandness and meaningfulness can be brought together. In this absence, the extent to which they are describing agility or post-agile adaptiveness remains somewhat ambiguous. I will deepen Chia and Holt's Heideggerian account of how dwelling with things gathers meaningfulness (*ibid*, pp.137-138) to propose an adaptive strategic practice that addresses this issue. Central to this resolution will be the correction of the omission made, in common with fellow later-Heideggerians Spinoza, Flores, Denning and Dunham of the connection Heidegger makes between mood and the sacred. In Chia and Holt's Heideggerian account of the way a bridge, as a thing, conditions the meaningfulness of a situation

through what Heidegger calls the “fourfold” (Heidegger, 2012b). Chia and Holt provide the following account, which I annotate with Heidegger’s terms for the different dimensions of the Fourfold,

The bridge [the Thing], the landscape [Earth], the sky [Sky], the tradition of human community and the human individual [Mortals] all meet, as a systematic unity, affording one another the chance to be, to live.

(Chia & Holt, 2009, p.138)

Chia and Holt’s account either omits mention of the sacred fourth dimension of the Fourfold, the role of the divinities, or it conflates it with the tradition of human community, which is unlikely as Heidegger always referred to Mortals in the plural and never singular. I will propose that a focal thing can serve to gather existential truth and be the focal point for strategy that transforms and preserves existential strategy but that the sacred dimension must be incorporated to provide authority, beyond human control, for what matters most.

## **The Unthought of the Commitment and Dwelling Accounts**

While modern, agile and proto-adaptive prescriptions for strategic management reveal that we can find no ultimate grounds for the meaningfulness of our strategic actions, decisions, and plans, they still only constitute an ambiguous threat and promise. In this respect, I support the efforts of those Strategy-as-Practice scholars inquiring into the meaningfulness of strategic management but suggest that what is unthought in both leaves significant weaknesses in their accounts. While the SAP agenda has served to return the study of strategy making to concrete, on-the-ground activity, it has been criticised for its descriptive nature, the paucity of its engagement with actual strategic practitioners and practices, and the un-critical nature of its appreciation for the way that discourses, identities and power interact to constrain or

open strategic possibilities (Clegg, 2011; Carter et al., 2008). Its research agenda is occupied with finding new ways to write about and study strategy and to broaden the conception of strategy beyond what it sees as a “citation cartel” of strategy scholars examining strategy from a narrowly economic perspective (Clegg, 2011, p.1587). If there is a recommendation for practice it is that of reconceiving of one’s own strategic practice as a reflective practitioner but that is all. While it aspires to be relevant to strategy practitioners, the SAP approach appears preoccupied by the task of harnessing meanings for productive ends, it is little concerned with distinguishing different basic styles, or between more or less worthy meanings, and hence continues to be oblivious to existential meaningfulness as opposed to instrumental meaning.

As I have described, both Chia, Holt and Tsoukas’s dwelling work and Spinoza, Flores, Denning and Dunham’s accounts of history-making are influenced, at least in part, by Heidegger’s philosophical insights into the historical loss and recovery of meaning as it was set out in *Disclosing New Worlds*. However, important aspects of Heidegger’s thinking were left tacit or unthought in both that book and these strategy-as-practice accounts that it has influenced, to the detriment of both. To re-cap, Heidegger hermeneutically retrieved and re-articulated what he considered to be Western humanity’s various styles since the pre-Socratic Greeks. He argued that, over the course of the *Machenschaft* mega-epoch, humans gained greater control over themselves and their world but, in so doing, also covered over, to the point of near-annihilation, their essence as *Dasein*, world-disclosers or meaning-makers. On the basis of this insight, Heidegger argued that Western humans must attend to and cultivate our essence as meaning-makers and acknowledge “our participation in the creation and maintenance of an intelligible world” (Thomson, 2005: p.170). In *Disclosing New Worlds*, Spinoza, Flores, and Dreyfus assert that it is skilful practices

that will help the practitioner to identify opportunities to make a meaningful cultural difference, invent new practices to bridge identified value conflicts, build trust in a new practice to which actors are unaccustomed, and finally, build recognition of the value being created to help sustain the new practice (1997). More performatively, they ask the reader to read in such a way that they draw attention to the disclosive skills of writing and reading.

We hope that this book will help you develop a skill that is essential for being an entrepreneur, a virtuous citizen, and a solidarity cultivator that is, for regularly and as a matter of course for seeing yourself and your world anew. [...] As you read, we ask you to keep the following questions in mind: is this description true of some part of my life? In what situations have I experienced something like this? Are the authors seeing only a part of some larger phenomenon whose overall shape they are missing? On the basis of experiences that I share with the authors, is what they say compelling?

(Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, p.1)

But do *Disclosing New Worlds* and those influenced by it successfully identify the essential ontological capacities? Taking up Spinoza's question, I ask whether the book overlooked some aspect of Heidegger's thinking, perhaps an aspect closest to it that it could not express adequately but that would prove essential to history-making. My answer is in the affirmative. It left unthought the sacred, the revelatory linguistic and affectively spiritual aspects of world transformation, and their ontological skills. In more recent work from the commitment-based managers' philosophical community<sup>xxx</sup>, Dreyfus and Kelly emphasise the development of skills for living well in a secular age that has lost, or is in danger of losing, meaningfulness (Dreyfus & Kelly, 2011). They recommend developing a *metapoietic* skill of receptivity to the divine moods that are the origin of meaningfulness itself and of the recognition, honouring and practice of the other style-making skills of *physis* – recognising the “wild, ecstatic divine that lifts us up like a wave”, *poêsis* – the ‘gentle, nurturing style

that brings things out at their divine best', and *technology* "an autonomous and self-sufficient way of life that laughs at everything of divine worth" (Dreyfus & Kelly, 2011, pp.219-222). The specific criticism I will level at both post-agile accounts of strategy, is their failure to make explicit and deal satisfactorily with the sacred *per se* and with the revelatory interaction of language and mood, which omissions, taken together, limit their success in re-articulating a way of being freely capable of both instrumental meaning and existential meaningfulness.

In the next chapter, I will closely read an exemplary text of the Heideggerian Strategy-as-Practice movement *Disclosing New Worlds*. I select this book as an early attempt to head off some of the problems of the agile approach that inspired a community of commitment-based practitioners and influenced other lead authors in the Heideggerian practice field, Chia, Holt, and Tsoukas. Having conducted a detailed reading of the text to discern its thought and unthought, I develop two paradigmatic case studies that illustrate how an established agile and an emerging post-agile brewer are dealing differently with the contemporary strategic situation we have already briefly considered.

## 6. Disclosing Disclosing New Worlds

So far, I have set out how the dominant forms of strategic management, the world-picturing and the agile, line up with the basic styles Heidegger saw shaping contemporary Western selves and that he saw as leading to lives impoverished of meaningfulness and freedom. I have also analysed the Heideggerian Strategy-as-Practice literature, which has begun to set out an approach to strategy that can remedy some of these shortcomings, and identified its neglect of the sacred as a significant omission if its remedy is to succeed. Chapter 6 uses the transformative disclosure reading method set out in Chapter 2 to closely read a text that has influenced both sets of Heideggerian strategy writers, *Disclosing New Worlds* (Spinosa, Flores, & Dreyfus, 1997). The chapter reveals the religious unthought of the text and shows that both sets of prototypical adaptive strategy fail because they either fail to get Heidegger's theology right, they think of gods primarily as attuners, as opposed to derangers, of meaning, or because they do not get the religious appeal in today's marketplace right or even at all.

Since their earliest writings in the domain of management, Flores and Spinosa have proclaimed humanity's capacity to disclose to itself its highest ethical good as being its own capacity for disclosing a way of being in the world. They have also claimed entrepreneurial history-making as the disclosure of new worlds as a 2,500-year-old example of human life at its best. For example, in *Heideggerian Thinking and the Transformation of Business Practice*, an essay written with the support of Charles Spinosa and in honour of Hubert Dreyfus, Fernando Flores wrote,

[O]ur view of business is quite entrepreneurial. Indeed, we take the innovative entrepreneur to be the *paradigmatic business figure*. [...] What is important from this perspective is not whether, for example, flexibility or treating ourselves as disposable is an improvement but the fact that *the ability to change our understanding of being is what makes us most human*. [...] Business as much as any



other highly prized activity enables us to disclose new worlds and to disclose ourselves as disclosers of new worlds. On my interpretation, disclosing is our highest ethical good, and a business promotes this good when it listens to customers to articulate their needs, when it designs itself around commitments, when it turns suppliers and customers into collaborators, when it cultivates new company styles, and when it enables entrepreneurs to open new worlds.

(Flores, 2000, pp.288-291. Emphasis current author)

As is made clear in the authors' subsequent *Disclosing New Worlds*, they view entrepreneurial business practice as not only paradigmatic of business but as paradigmatic of life at its best in the contemporary age (Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997: p.178). However, I shall argue that while *Disclosing New Worlds*, and its prequel *Understanding Computers and Cognition* (Winograd & Flores, 1987), defend "disclosure" as an important consolation in nihilistic capitalism, by failing to look further than the *Machenschaft* or to thematise the twin losses of freedom and the sacred, the authors miss the crisis of meaning currently underway. This crisis signals a transformational transvaluation that is creating pressure for a wholly new style of making sense of ourselves and the world. Lacking this identification of the crisis, they propose inadequate remedies that leave the crisis in place.

We write in support of entrepreneurial practices within capitalist market economies.

(Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, p.1)

In so doing they restrict their interventions to producing further kinds of meaninglessness without taking this to its phenomenological conclusion – the experience of absurd meaningfulness amidst groundlessness that Heidegger names the *last god* – the wonder of all wonders, that things make sense. I have already shown how this nihilism remains in the early management writings that have drawn on Spinosa and Flores' thinking and propose remedies that give shape to a more successful *post-agile adaptive* style of strategic management.

The authors of *Disclosing New Worlds* saw the coming problems of technological agility early and tried to address them (Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997). As I demonstrated in Chapter 5, the book remains an influential text in the historical movement toward a post-agile management that offers remedies to the dangers that inhered in a life of flexibility. In this chapter, I will show how more effective remedies than those proposed were available to the authors but were so close to (at least) some of the authors' thinking that they were not able to articulate them. However, those remedies can be sensed in the book's style, its unthought, which awaits further evocation and articulation in language. In *Seeing Things in Merleau-Ponty*, Kelly describes his methodology for reading for a text's unthought,

It proposes a risky interpretive principle. The main feature of this principle is that the seminal aspects of a thinker's work are so close to him that he is incapable of articulating them himself. Nevertheless, these aspects pervade the work; give it its style, its sense and its direction; and therefore belong to it essentially.

(Kelly, 2005, p.74)

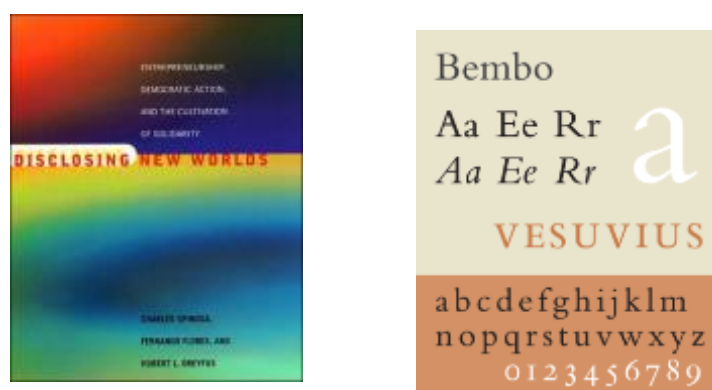
Kelly goes on to argue that the main works of both philosophers and artists are identifiable as examples of their own familiar style. The style may be clear to those who witness the novels of Dickens or Austen, Turner's or Klee's paintings, and Heidegger's or Badiou's writings. However, it is not thematised and cannot be made explicit in a rule or single feature. Instead, a style withdraws into the background and yet pervades the work, exceeding its linguistically articulated meaning. Moreover, it is the author or artist who is least likely to recognise their own style. Drawing on the method described in Chapter 2, my goal in this chapter is first to bring out the thought and then the unthought of *Disclosing New Worlds*, that truth which they attempted and failed to articulate in the book.

## Reading I: The Thought of *Disclosing New Worlds*

I read the thought of *Disclosing New Worlds* by discerning its style through two readings intended to set out its two key meaning-making aspects: a reading for mood and a reading for charged distinctions. I then move to articulate its style and articulate what it was unable to think or express in language, the book's unthought.

I begin by considering the mood of the book as a clue to its understanding of being.

On picking up *Disclosing New Worlds*, one can't fail to notice it has a striking, and to me, beautiful cover but one that is highly unusual for a business book. There is no picture of a mountain climber attaining the peak, no team of rowers working together, in fact no straightforward image of any kind of breakthrough. Instead it is an abstract spectrum of colours as a background to a rather gnomic title, in stark contrast to other books for a business audience that have similar origins in the early commitment-based practice community and which have much more direct and purposeful titles.



**Figure 1: *Disclosing New Worlds*: Front cover design and Bembo typeface**

Inside the covers, the text is set in Bembo, one of MIT Press' standard fonts for its academic books. Bembo is a modernisation of a 15<sup>th</sup> century typeface described on Wikipedia as being “a good choice for expressing classic beauty or formal tradition”.

The lineation and syntax of *Disclosing New Worlds* is complex. This is not a post-modern *Pandemonium* (Burrell, 1997), *Funky Business* (Nordstrom & Ridderstrale, 2000) or *Dangerous Ideas* (Rehn, 2011) replete with multi-directional, non-linear texts, catchy slogans, imprecations and commands, and “too-cool-for-school” conversational gambits. However, neither is it a modernist *Exploring Corporate Strategy* (Johnson and Scholes, 1999) or *Competitive Strategy* (Porter, 1980) with their highly-illustrated formalised instruction book of theories, methods, structures and processes for corporate strategy.

Following Timothy Morton’s distinction between the *hot* and *cold* affect of different material texts with hot texts allowing for greater ambiguity and polysemy and cooler texts stimulating greater specificity of meaning, the form of DNW’s text is unusual (Morton, 2009). As the book’s reviewer Peter Aspden wrote in the Financial Times,

It is refreshing [...] to find a book prepared to revise the traditional liberal agenda with such thoroughness, if not style. The difficulty of *Disclosing New Worlds* will preclude it from making any great impact: but it stands as a brave attempt to reformulate the relationship between democratic rights and economic progress in an age when the triumphalism of technological advance masks an unconfident vision of the future.

(Aspden, 1997)

Indeed, the syntax of the book is highly complex being both highly hypotactic and oddly paratactic (Morton, 2009). *Disclosing New Worlds* is generally cool, highly dense but hypotactically structured syntax. While it does comprise lengthy blocks of text and sentences of up to forty-five, often multi-syllable words per sentence, as we shall see, the book is clearly structured into a single coherent argument with an overall problematic that it is addressing. Single topic chapters are structured into paragraphs that are further structured by themes, and the paragraphs into hypotactically-structured

main and subordinate clauses; each clause is a fully formed, soberly worded, and liberally punctuated sentence with a subject, a verb-predicate and an object. This hypotactic organisation can be seen in its gross organisation:

- The Introduction situates the book as a contribution to the debate of the end of history and proffers a way forward that is neither modernist nor post-modernist.
- Chapter 1 introduces Heidegger's ontology and the three skills of history-making and the case for continuous rather than discontinuous history-making as life at its best.
- Chapter 2 introduces entrepreneurship as *reconfiguration*, the most discontinuous, if not radically discontinuous, skill of cultural innovation.
- Chapter 3 introduces democratic action as *cross-appropriation*, the skill of interpretive speaking to adjust local worlds to new anomalous events.
- Chapter 4 introduces *articulation* of a lost ground as the foundational skill of community solidarity.
- The Conclusion summarises their argument for the completeness and centrality of their account of continuous rather than discontinuous history-making to meaningful lives in the contemporary Western political economy of the turn of the century.
- Finally, the Philosophical Appendix deals with technical philosophical issues raised by the critical readers of an extended paper-length version of the book.

However, there is also a parataxis at work at the fine level in the text and that can be seen within each chapter. I describe this effect as an exemplification of a Heideggerian *Holzweg* or forest path conversation in which the language coordinates

plausible statements that together construct (constructing in retrospect rather than either pre-ordaining *a priori* or discovering an existing theory) a consistent logical path of connections in a domain based upon noticing and dealing with the disharmonies that it finds in dialogue with existing works in the academic entrepreneurship and economic traditions. To be sure, multiple other paths and many other reputable writers are possible. Why for instance do the authors elect to consider Drucker, Vesper, Gilder, Berger, Lavoie, Casson, and Baumol for accounts of entrepreneurial practice and not Burgelman, Gartner, Hamel, Peters, Stacey, Pascale, and Weick? The answer I believe can be seen if one considers the path for a *thinking* inquiry that is proffered by Heidegger himself in his *Country Path Conversations*. This text comprises a three-way exchange between a scholar, a teacher or sage, and a scientist and, instead of taking the form of a univocal posing and solving of a problem or *questioning*, can be seen as a kind of *answering* to a call from some entity or phenomenon, an answering that in its very responding actually constructs the way of being of that entity in the *Open-region* where the meanings of entities is volatile. In other words, a *thinking*-inquiry about an entity thinks or discloses the style of that entity as a coordination between different encounters with the entity. In a style that resonates with the strategy of this thesis, the authors are interacting with different “paradigm cases” of “widespread ways of thinking” about entrepreneurship, thinkers who were selected for their credibility as paradigms but not necessarily in an attempt at exhaustive completeness. In their inquiry, the authors of *Disclosing New Worlds*, construct a new space of thinking of entrepreneurship that un-conceals aspects of it hitherto unconsidered. The authors themselves are active thinkers in this dialogue. It can be seen that their particular path of thinking is shaped by their own largely hidden Heideggerian ontology, for example, in the *Holzweg* metaphor as a path constructed between sparsely located trees that act

as signposts for particular elements of later Heideggerian phenomenology but with often substantial gaps between trees that leave room for alternative interpretations. Chapters 2-4 are exemplary of this wandering and wondering style that starts somewhere and gathers and addresses disharmonies to correct some inconsistencies or losses from the complete history of human being and to retrieve and re-valorise our deteriorating history-making skills. In the Conclusion however, they do argue for the completeness of the three kinds of history-making but they do so from a logical rather than empirical argument. History-making can be a retrieval of the lost past, an alignment with the un-integrated present, or a reorientation to the unknowable future. These three moves to address the un-grounded of the three temporal dimensions exhaust the logical possibilities of the Heideggerian account of the temporal structure of human care. They accept the possibility of other kinds of events that could found quite other worlds and require different skills, for example, the discontinuous change of cultural devastation as suffered by the Native American people (Lear, 2006), but they describe these as non-meaningful, therefore not life lived at its best and hence outside of their range of interests (Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, p.28, p.168). However, they leave the question open of such discontinuous change, and I argue that this openness is demonstrated in their syntax and quite consistent with their pluralistic stance.

Finally, returning to Morton's guidelines for materialistic readings, one notes the rather limited *metaphorical* content at work and the down-home, folksy and drily philosophical *imagery* – everyday examples of childcare and driving cars in city and the country. There is little hyperbolism here, the authors make modest, minimal claims for their account of life lived at its best, a claim made carefully and with modest appeals to the reader to confirm with inquiries into their own experience.

The reading for the book's authorial mood shows it to be neither a book of Platonic theory, Christian revelation, modernist instruction manual, or technological novelty, instead it is rather a sober and intense work that wonders at and articulates an economic and political phenomenology, a book that wants its readers to develop their own sensitivity to a profound skill for living well and constructs its text to create an encounter with such a phenomenology. If there is a single word that expresses the mood or attunement of the book and hence the identity of its divinity as the sender of a style, I propose one, signalled by the authors' opening appeal to the reader and reproduced on page 195 at the end of chapter 10, and consistent with the authors' Heideggerian sympathies, *Gelassenheit*, the wonder-filled releasement or letting-be into their own of oneself, others and things to come. This is the sense of releasement as not simply a passive letting-be in contrast to an active, resolute wilfulness, but also of a responding to a call to "assist in letting other beings to be" (Davis, 2010).

In order to show more perspicuously how the text's signifying structure works to express a Heideggerian thinking of a response to nihilism, I outline below how *Disclosing New Worlds* as a whole traces Dreyfus' and his colleagues' understanding of a satisfactory Heideggerian response to the age of nihilism. *Disclosing New Worlds* takes on deeper meaning and opens greater possibilities for transformation when one is aware of the extent to which Dreyfus had devoted a thirty-year career to bringing Heideggerian philosophical insights of a nihilistic technological age to a wider public. Building from his earlier work on Artificial Intelligence which rested, as he saw it, on severely limited modern assumptions of human cognition, Dreyfus developed a series of papers in order to clarify an account of how humans could gain, what he called, "a free relation to technology" (Dreyfus, 1996; Dreyfus & Spinoza, 1997; Spinoza & Dreyfus, 2003). Dreyfus intended that his account be directly relevant to everyday life



and be grounded in specific actions rather than general, empty gestures. Dreyfus is so closely associated with the exegesis and leveraging of Heidegger's work that he is sometime referred to affectionately as Dreydegger and his work as Dreydeggerian (Woessner, 2011; p208). The following detailed textual analysis identifies the principal concepts in *Disclosing New Worlds* that comprise Dreyfus's arguments for how to gain a free relation to technology, in other words, their current best argument for how to escape nihilism and attain a meaningful life. My analysis shows the punctuation of the book – the moments that introduce what I have been calling “charged distinctions”, following BDA's unpublished paper *Listening: the general account* (BDA, 1991). A charged distinction is a hermeneutic term derived by Flores and Spinoza in conversation with philosopher Richard Rorty (Spinoza, personal communication). It does not refer to a term but to a collection of terms that together constitute a unit of meaning that matters existentially to the reader as meaningful in the course of the reading he or she is undertaking of the text to determine the style of the authors being read. What you see listed below are not the charged distinctions themselves but the collection of terms that mark the introduction or reference to a particular Dreydeggerian charged distinction.

The book starts by appealing to the reader's own experience of the phenomena of entrepreneurial, civic and cultural action and makes a rather modest claim in comparison to those of the original *est* practitioners, who had sought Dreyfus' assistance in their efforts to bring philosophy to practical effect in the world of personal development. They ask the reader to ask him- or herself whether the authors' account rings true to their own experience, whether it is complete, and whether it is also “compelling”. This is the signature punctuation of the entire book that orientates the reader to release their reading towards things themselves rather than to impose a

theoretical structure upon the reader for confirmation or challenge. It is a request to the reader to enter into a conversation that brings the reader's own experiences into dialogue with the observations of the authors and those of the theoreticians that they name.

The authors then make a kind of *invocation* for readers to come together through the book and recover their dispersing common inheritance – our history-making skill:

We write in support of entrepreneurial practices within capitalist market economies, of citizens' action groups in modern representative democracies, and of the culture figures who cultivate solidarity among diverse peoples in modern nations.

(Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, p.1)

The analysis of the charged distinctions of *Disclosing New Worlds*, and subsequent conversation with the book's lead author Charles Spinosa, confirms that the book consolidates the principal themes that Dreyfus and his colleagues have been clarifying over thirty years of scholarship in their explorations of how to live a meaningful life in a nihilistic age. Over the course of seven chapters, the authors set out their proposal for a transformation in our *ontological condition* or understanding of being. This transformation, rather than despairing at or denying meaning-depleting agility, seeks instead to free up our relationship with it. This so-called free relation to technology entails being mindful of it. And being mindful means understanding it such that one accepts it as just one among many available styles, a style that has a time and a place when it can be appropriate to work within it but that is never totalising. I will show that they accomplish this free relation to the agile style by contextualising it as just one of many different ways that we have understood ourselves and the world over the course of human history. On this basis, they go on to recover and position

*receptivity* as the highest good of humans and describe history-making skills for retrieving and inventing other styles. These history-making skills include listening to anomalous historical and emerging practices that are marginalised by the contemporary common sense and bringing change to our everyday practices that take account of those disharmonies. Having thus re-contextualised our contemporary understanding as one among many and re-established our receptivity as our highest good, they intimate the possibility of a new beginning to our thinking overall, that of *Ereignis* or *adaptation*. This last thought brings the question of the unthought in the book – the fundamental mood associated with the authentic experience of meaninglessness, our groundless thrown-openness and the last god.

### **Life at its Best and the Greatest Danger**

In *Disclosing New Worlds*, Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus argue that contemporary Western culture is losing the ability to make history that has marked its understanding of life at its best since the time of Plato. Today, they argue that while the history-making skill can still be glimpsed in the widespread practices of entrepreneurship, civic action and community solidarity, it is being obscured by modern rationalism and technological flexibility. They define history-making as the skill of changing our pre-reflective understandings of a situation. In other words, history-making changes how humans make sense and act with themselves and entities before they have taken a detached standpoint from which to observe, characterise and decide upon them. After history-making, we think differently. They ask the reader to consider the ways that, in the twentieth century, feminism has changed the common-sense background understandings of gender in the West or the way that John F. Kennedy's national mission to win the space race against the Russian efforts in turn transformed America

into a nation that pre-reflectively understood itself as a nation of technological pioneers.

They argue that this engaged, practical way of preserving and transforming meanings is being lost amidst the dominance of two *nonhistorical* ways of living life or styles.

The first nonhistorical way of life, following on from the scientific methodological discoveries of Galileo and deriving from the philosophical discoveries of Descartes, Locke and Kant, is the *modern* style, what we called earlier the world-picturing style. The modern style values the detached, composed mood of the dispassionate, rational and autonomous spectator surveying as wide a view as it can get of an objective world in order to position and control it for benefit. The quintessential modern human being learned to value and bring to the fore those existing everyday practices of their repertoire that brought out this detached way of carrying themselves in the world – their comportment. The detached comportment had three notable features. Firstly, in detaching oneself from the hurly-burly of everyday messy life, the detached observer viewed the widest collection of entities in a world as a whole in order, on the basis of this wide, holistic view, to establish the entities in a situation that matter most in affecting the state of the whole and determine the causal relationships between them for the purposes of control. Secondly, the detached observer established a composed, mood-less mood that enabled the observer to be *objective* and assume the kind of impartiality understood to characterise our thinking at its clearest and most trustworthy. Finally, a detached comportment separates itself from both its historical and cultural practices and habits. An exemplary detached thinker, constantly looks afresh at her customary practices and, as if seeing through an alien's eyes, distances

herself from them better to see their cause and effect relationships (Spinosa, Flores and Dreyfus, 1997, p.5-6).

These three features of detachment – holism, objectivity, and alien-ism, lead to a style of understanding being that privileges the *instrumental* view of cause and effect relationships and a theoretical thinking that purifies a complex world into just those abstract or “context-free” elements that pre-eminently affect the successful achievement of the purpose of that world. Albert Borgmann, another Heideggerian philosopher illustrated this instrumental understanding in his story about modern central heating systems designed to maximise the availability of the single good of *warmth*. More pertinently to the business context, consider the modern analytical view of a business that considers it as having a single good, *profit*, and the purification of business models to identify and manipulate the principal drivers of profit. Thus the *modern* manager of a brewery would clarify the purpose of their brewery as say the reliable production of 12m hectolitres of uniform beer per year at minimum cost and then identify only those activities that affect that purpose and oversee operations to eliminate nonessential activities and optimise performance. Both examples illustrate the modern style of thinking that reduces its understanding of a complex situation to just those entities and relationships that affect the instrumental purpose of a world (Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, pp.6-7).

The modern style values certainty. To the extent that we are modern, we experience the modern style whenever we distrust a passionate speaker as subjective or suspect social media networks and brilliant advertisers as controlling our thoughts and autonomy (Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, pp.8-9). However, the modern style leads to disharmonies, chief among them being that it is slow to respond to changes in history that are changing the common sense. The modern, analytical style must first

take a holistic view and ascertain the relevant entities and determine causal relationships before it can respond to those changes. However, when profound change is taking place, what counts as a relevant fact changes too and hence a view that strives for certainty is unable to respond to changes in the common sense because nothing emergent counts as a foundational fact. Later I will show the way the major US breweries originally struggled to respond to the challenge of the craft brewers as customers' taste for cheap, refreshing and uniform beer gave way to a growing demand for complex and premium-priced fresh craft beers (Hill & Rifkin, 1999, Ch. 12). For the modern managers of mega-brewers, the new distinctions of worth appeared as trivialities or even as irrelevant to what "really counted" – cost, availability and consistency. According to Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus, this inability to respond fast to historical change, leads in two directions. On the one hand, it leads negatively to a mood of *resignation* among modern managers and the development of various risk management or loss-hedging strategies to protect dwindling positions in niche markets, which is how the "Big Beer" brewers initially responded by dismissing craft beers as a fad. On the other, it leads positively to the second non-historical style, that of the *postmodern*, what we have been calling the agile, style, which embraces "change as the supreme good" but ends history as the possibility of any further change in our fundamental style beyond flexibility (Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, pp.9-10).

The agile style improvises from its repertoire of skills to surf the flow of change and optimise its advantages from within the contingencies of that flow. Postmodern selves relinquish a stable self in favour of continually morphing identities that adapt and shift as the contingencies demand. Everything, including their formerly stable selves, becomes a resource for accruing advantage in a continually shifting situation. Thus agile selves are comfortable traversing different worlds in the course of a day and

shifting their different identities across those worlds when they go to work, arrive back at home, take business trips, meet with school friends, and engage in different social networks on the Web. This last practice, though only nascent at the time of the book's writing, is key to our argument here. At the time the book was written, the authors considered playfulness on the Web along with teenager identity-morphing as presaging a radically shifting, multiplicitous way of living. This polymorphous, shape-shifting life had been marginal in modernity which demanded a stable, rational and dependable observer, but, already in 1997, the authors considered it a candidate to become the "central practice of our lives" (Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, pp.10-14).

This technological flexible way of life though conceals a danger. On Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus's Heideggerian account, human beings are practical makers of meaning and, inasmuch as they make sense of themselves as makers of meaning, the proper role of the human being is distinct. It matters to the human being *that* it makes meaning and *how* it is making meaning<sup>xxxi</sup>. They argue that in the contemporary agile age, this role is being forgotten or covered over. Drawing on early- to mid-period Heidegger, their analysis first sets out that we are practical copers who disclose worlds in their skilful coping. Rather than perceiving and deciding upon action in an objective world, we are always already practically engaged in a world that appears from the context of our practical coping.

How then, do we ourselves, other people, and things appear in average, everyday human activity? [...] We must begin by noticing that we do not, for the most part, encounter mere stuff to which we then assign some sort of meaning. [...] When we start by looking at our activity, we find, in the first instance, that we encounter meaningful things. [...] When we say things are meaningful, we mean that they fit with the practices we have for using them.

(Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, p. 17)

Following both the late Heidegger of *Ereignis*, the tendency for configurations of meaning to gather and endure in networks of relations between entities with no ultimate ground, and the early Heidegger of the worlding of the world, they characterise human being-in-the-world as meaning making, opening up a disclosive space that gathers meaning as an interplay between three essential aspects – *equipment*, *purposes*, and *identities*.

The basic intuition, then, is that shared human practices tend to gather together into organizations that we recognize as worlds, people, and selves. Once those organizations gain consistency and effectiveness, we as people and selves bring them into sharper focus and organization. [...] We call any organized set of practices for dealing with oneself, other people, and things that produces a relatively self-contained web of meanings a disclosive space. [...] A world [...] has three characteristics. It is a totality of interrelated pieces of equipment, each used to carry out a specific task [...] to achieve certain purposes [...enabling] those performing it to have identities [...] the meaning or point of engaging in these activities. [...] The webs of practices and meanings, from cultures to tribal nations to individual families, are disclosive spaces.

(Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, pp. 16-17)

Drawing on the mid-period Heideggerian understanding of the “rift design” of a world (Heidegger, 2002b, p.43), they argue that a world has a *style* that determines what shows up as relevant in a world and how it shows up. As we have already seen, the style is a crucial charmed distinction of Heideggerian philosophy that designates not just a set of rules for how a world works – like the explicit rules of a game – but a pervasive way that all aspects and entities in a culture *hang together*. The style is a strife-filled interplay between what Heidegger calls the *sky* of observable and articulable ways of proceeding and the withdrawn background *earth* of those cultural practices and obscure traditions upon which the sky depends. In any world, the foreground and background are in strife with a tension between the attempts to articulate and clarify the ways and rules of the world and the continuing concealing of the background traditions and understandings upon which those ways depend.



When we say that things are meaningful we mean that they fit with the practices we have for using them. [...] All our pragmatic activity is organized by a style. Style is our name for the way all the practices ultimately fit together. [...] A style is not an aspect of things, people, or activity but rather, constitutes them as what they are. Style acts as the basis on which practices are conserved and also the basis on which new practices are developed. [...] A style opens a disclosive space and does so in a threefold manner: (1) by coordinating actions, (2) by determining how things and people matter, and (3) by being what is transferred from situation to situation.

(Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, pp. 16-20)

The authors illustrate the idea of style with Dreyfus' example of different practices between Japan and America for raising a child. They demonstrate that all the gestures in the culture are coordinated by the style and that one learns fluency in a culture by absorbing its style. One absorbs a style in the course of one's practical, involved coping with that culture and not through the explicit learning of rules. They illustrate the way that a style makes different actions and entities more or less worthy by considering the case of driving style in the rural states of the American mid-West, where courtesy and relaxation are paramount and in New York City where hustling and opportunism are seen as more worthy. They argue that one learns a style as one practically engages amidst it rather than by explicit formal teaching of rules. The style is constitutive of the kind of identity one will become and that will shape one's interpretations and actions in future novel situations. For instance, they argue, the child who learns a pacifying style by interacting with a rattle may become the CEO who "offers employees lifetime job security" (Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, p. 22).

History-making skills are those that gather and focus a style, and to the extent that they require a "heightened sensitivity" to that style, Heidegger's authentic intelligibility possible only at the Stages 6 and 7 of Dreyfus' model of expertise, they also disclose that one is a discloser (Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, pp.66-68). For change to be meaningful, disclosing must have some minimal continuity to an existing

disclosure of meaning. The kind of normal, everyday, practical disclosing that gathers and continues an existing style and acts appropriately according to that style, they call *customary disclosing*.

By the time we are adults, most people who live in nations with market economies are proficient at acting in the appropriate competitive way to market their skills and products. [...] We compete because we enjoy the ongoing exercise of our skills in a context where those skills make sense as components of a meaningful way of life. That is, we compete to make things and ourselves more worthy. We compete to make the qualities of products that we care about or qualities of ourselves that we care about stand out. In short, we compete to develop identities within communities. In saying this we are also saying we do not normally compete to make money. [...] We argue that this detached, seemingly rational account distorts our sense of ourselves as involved in the ongoing activity of making sense of our lives. [...] Business owners do not normally work for money either. [...] None of this is the goal of the activity. [...] We are claiming, then, that customary businesses and businesspeople exist in market economies to form identities that are recognized by others as respectable due to their usefulness or excellence.

(Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, pp.55-57)

In cases where the change is discontinuous and comes from a completely alien world of meaning, for example, by the destruction of a culture by an invading force, by definition, such changes deplete or even destroy meaning. If one can find no way to make sense of what is taking place, one is left in a meaningless situation. When the style of human being becomes non-historical, whether modern or agile, it becomes increasingly disconnected from the prevailing style of life and hence subtly disconnected from meaning. In this disconnection, a threat to the human way of being as a maker of meaning emerges.

As soon as one abstracts the entrepreneur from skilled activity in this way, many options appear that would simply not show up within either customary or entrepreneurial ways of doing business. [...] For instance, one will see that one can compete by forming trusts that block competition, or by buying out potential competitors who have good ideas and then holding back the implementation of their ideas to maximize profits on products already on the market. Finally, if rationalization follows its normal course, as it does in some business school curricula and in university economics departments, one tries to work out both the theory of the domain that leads to success and the general theory for succeeding in any domain. Then business activity looks like gaming the system to produce high indicators of success. We call such activity uprooted because it is no longer

grounded in the practices that make sense of competition in the first place. Worse, when business activity amounts to gaming the system, searching for excellence or quality or any other meaningful goal will amount to no more than further gaming techniques. The notion of engaging in these activities to form an identity will be lost.

(Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, p.65)

The authors identified two kinds of skill for history-making that preserves and transforms meanings. The first kind is the skill to “sense and hold on to disharmonies” that show up within the style of an existing disclosive space. The second kind is the set of skills for changing an existing disclosive space.

Disharmonies are practices in which we engage that common sense leads us to overlook because they are not well coordinated with our other practices. We should beware of the Cartesian tendency to imagine the skill of noticing and holding on to disharmonies as primarily intellectual, as noticing a problem in one’s life and stepping back to analyze it, to puzzle through it, in one’s mind. Rather, the skill of uncovering the tension between standard, commonsense practices and what one actually does is a skill of intensified practical involvement. [...] The best way to explore disharmonies, [...] is not by detached deliberation but by involved experimentation.

(Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, pp.23-24)

For instance, the authors describe how King Gillette noticed and retained the surprising disharmony that practices for disposability were displacing traditional masculine reverence for crafted objects and developed disposable razors and other products that took account of that disharmony. They name three possible history making skills that deal with different disharmonies in ways that preserve and transform meanings. *Articulation* from dispersed or lost practices is exemplified by Kennedy’s retrieval from dispersion of the American pioneering history to make it again relevant and worthy in contemporary times. If articulation is successful, a people feels more integrated and centred, more at home with itself, as if they have returned their practices to the core of what matters to them. *Cross-appropriation* names the skill exemplified by the feminists’ borrowing of practices from neighbouring domains in their lives to

address situational problems. For instance, borrowing from patriarchal practices of universal justice, that formerly marked female oppression, to fight unequal pay in the workplace in a kind of subversive adaptation. Successful cross-appropriation generally has a similar effect to articulation, a neighbouring practice has been successfully borrowed to help a community of people feel more themselves. *Reconfiguration* is the skill of bringing an unexplored, emerging practice to the centre of a way of life as exemplified by the newly forming postmodern Internet style. In contrast to articulation when a people might feel more at home or centred, after successful reconfiguration, a community generally experiences themselves as having a broader scope and range of possibilities for living well – their horizons have been extended.

However, all three forms of history-making practices continue an existing horizon of meaning even if in preserving those meanings they transform them.

All of these types of change are historical because people sense them as continuous with the past. [...] When, for instance, a conqueror imposes a whole new set of practices on a people or a people is dispersed and must adopt wholly new practices to survive, such change is discontinuous and is beyond our range of interests.

(Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, p.28)

They ask whether the flexible, technological way of living life has succeeded in banishing history-making completely. As we have seen earlier, Heidegger argued for the late modern, technological understanding of being as the greatest Danger to the human way of being as a discloser of meaning and that,

The approaching tide of technological revolution in the atomic age could so captivate, bewitch, dazzle, and beguile man that calculative thinking may someday come to be accepted and practiced as the only way of thinking.

(Heidegger, 1966, p.56)

Heidegger's primary concern is *not* that the two nonhistorical ways of being may lay waste to nature or to tradition – Heidegger is not nostalgic – but that they squeeze out alternative or even new understandings of being *per se*. As we saw, in its modern and particularly its postmodern or agile form, it does this by establishing an understanding of being in which all entities including other humans and ourselves show up as a standing reserve of flexible resources to be ordered and re-ordered for “maximum yield at the minimum expense” (Heidegger, 1993, p.15). This ordering relationality does away with the subject-object axis in which other entities appear over against ourselves as ordering subjects. In this pure relationality, God, society, other people, or even ourselves are removed as ultimate authorities and become resources to be ordered for the sake of a continually shifting drive toward optimality. The authors of *Disclosing New Worlds* argue that the nonhistorical understandings of being, particularly the postmodern agile kind, cover over the essential sense-making role of the human being as a discloser of meanings. *Disclosing New Worlds* is an attempt to recognise and recover the marginalised *history-making* way of living life in the face of the flexible technological way of living that has pure receptivity as its only good.

We engage in disclosive activity all the time, [...] But we are only sensitive to this disclosing as our way of dealing with things and people when we are engaged in articulating, reconfiguring or cross-appropriating. [...] On reflection – of the sort in which we are engaging here – we may be able to deduce that we can deal with or disclose ourselves in a variety of ways, but only in history-making do we actually deal or disclose ourselves as disclosers and not, for example, as Cartesian subjects with a substantive nature. [...] Why has this phenomenon remained hidden from so many for so long? [...] First, [...] What gets covered up by the taken-for-granted aspect of common sense in everyday understanding is that the ultimate “ground” of intelligibility is simply shared practices – that there is no right way of doing things. Second, [...] once we become habituated to a style, it becomes invisible to us. [...] We all are simply in tune with the dominant style. Third, we do not normally sense that we are disclosers because we are interested in the things we disclose and not in the disclosing. [...] Through these three ordinary tendencies to overlook our role as disclosers, we lose sensitivity to occluded, marginal, or neighboring ways of doing things. Special sensitivity to marginal, neighboring, or occluded practise however is precisely at the core of entrepreneurship, citizen virtue and drawing people together into a community.

(Spinosa, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, pp.28-30)

Throughout the book, the authors carefully distinguish their philosophical position from alternatives offered by, for instance, Habermas, Merleau-Ponty, Rorty, Dewey, Derrida, Foucault, Hegel, and Rawls. For our purposes, it is sufficient to highlight only one. The authors take an important stand against Nietzschean protagonists from both the right and left. They position themselves in antagonism to Nietzsche as the philosopher who, like Spinoza, Flores and Dreyfus, in recognising the end of the entire 2,500-year arc of Western metaphysical thought, declared the “death of God” and the end of philosophy and inverted the Platonic prioritisation of rationality over the passions to propose instead that we celebrate the ascendancy of the passionate will-to-power over detached rationality. It is Nietzsche who, more than anyone, foresaw the loss of any ultimate ground upon which to make choices and celebrated the possibilities for a postmodern human as the self-grounding creator of brief and artistic lives. On this basis, Nietzsche is the anti-philosophical hero of the postmodern style, a celebrator of the will-to-power. Spinoza, Flores and Dreyfus’s argument is that Nietzschean arguments of the political right and left are nihilistic in that they, on the left hand, deny any role to human traditions, practices, and identities and, on the right hand, deny the possibility of human intervention.

People must have identities – senses of what their lives as a whole are about. But they must not have identities of the kind the right imagines – that is, identities that are to be forever strengthened and sharpened – for then their responses to local situations would be defensive and reactionary. But they cannot go over to the left’s view of identities that develop in wholly contingent ways. Rather, they must have identities whose change will be dictated by the style of practices with which they are familiar. This is precisely the kind of historical identity and change we advocate and describe.

(Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, p.22)

In the penultimate chapter of the book, Spinoza, Flores and Dreyfus return to their differences with both modernism and agile ways of living. They argue that when a culture lacks a central figure or institution to bind it together by articulating its shared ultimate concerns, it attempts two unsuccessful ways of gathering its community. The first is the modern way of thinking of a set of stable and objective values that they argue leads only to perpetual divisiveness or “value wars”. The second way is the flexible way of caring only for skilful and forgetful “agile coping”, which avoids the endless value warfare of the modern approach but only at the expense of losing any meaningful concerns.

Again the question arises, have the modern and postmodern agile ways of understanding ourselves and our worlds become so overwhelming that they have driven out our history-making ways? They argue that while they have succeeded in marginalising history-making as central to our understanding of ourselves, they have not succeeded in obliterating it. However, they argue that, compared to the grand mission of the Enlightenment, history making today can be seen only in the diluted ways that members of a generation see themselves as standing for a generational way of life and its skills have been dispersed into our everyday practices of entrepreneurship, civic action and political solidarity. They propose that recovering and clarifying each practice provides a way to avoid the meaninglessness of the completely flexible life.

The choice for us now is between the style of flexibility toward which we seem to be drifting and a resuscitation of our history-making skills. Almost every action each of us in the West takes draws us one way or the other. We need to develop sensitivity to where we are going if we are going to make choices instead of simply following the drift. [...] We hope thereby to encourage a retrieval of history-making skills from dispersion.

(Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, p.15)

An object or event that would ground [...] a gestalt switch in our understanding of reality.

(Dreyfus, 1992)

As stated earlier, *Disclosing New Worlds* sets out, in concrete and specific terms, a Heideggerian response to the nihilism and forgetfulness of the question of being in our contemporary age. To this point we have been introduced to three aspects of the argument (1) there are two dominant understandings of being in our age – the modern and the postmodern or agile, (2) in the face of the postmodern understanding, we are in danger of forgetting our roles as disclosers of being, (3) the postmodern Nietzschean skilful agile coping is an unsatisfactory solution to this loss as it denies that we are disclosers. In the final arguments of the book, they set out their particular Heideggerian response to this danger<sup>xxxii</sup>. This response is an educational curriculum oriented toward developing sensitivity to and skilfulness in historical and customary disclosing. As we shall see the curriculum overlaps considerably with the agile conversational approach but goes rather further to address important omissions. The so-called *curriculum for disclosing*, intended to produce, among others, entrepreneurial business practitioners, would be organised into three modules, each introducing one type of disclosing and describing an ontology for that kind of disclosing. When practically skilled in such an ontology, students are considered to be in position to halt the drift toward losing our sense of ourselves as disclosers and mindfully make choices of how to disclose.

The first module introduces and sensitises students to historical disclosing. The module would itself have two components. The first would reveal to students some of the radically different ways that humans have made sense at different times and in different cultures. Students would examine works of literature, art, history and philosophy to encounter different styles. For instance, students would learn of the



Homeric Greeks' polytheism and how they lived exemplary protean lives as heroes, of the Athenian Greeks' theoretical way of life, and of the mediaeval Christians' pious lives as saints or sinners. Students would also situate the roots of current management science and agile thinking in the Enlightenment and postmodern epochs. The course would exemplify each epoch's style, find ways to practically experience the style by drawing attention to existing but marginalised contemporary practices, and show how each epoch's style had been concealed by later styles. Dreyfus has subsequently developed and taught such a module. First, in the general education courses Dreyfus has taught for over a decade at Berkeley and subsequently by his former student, now Professor of Philosophy at Harvard, Sean Kelly and written up in their co-authored book *All Things Shining* (Dreyfus & Kelly, 2011). The second component would provide students with practical experience with the skills of history-making described in *Disclosing New Worlds* (sensing, holding on to and dealing with disharmonies) and alternative examples of such skills such as Derrida's deconstruction or Foucault's problematisation (see Denning & Dunham, 2010).

The second module backs up from history-making to show students our everyday customary disclosing practices. This module would teach how everyday conversational practices customarily disclose a world by coordinating commitments within an existing world of practices with its own implicit style. BDA's commitment-based management (see Chapter 5) is introduced as an account of "the general constitutive practices that structure all customary disclosing"<sup>xxxiii</sup>. Thus a business student would learn to understand a business as a dynamic network of commitments made in conversational practices and coordinated by a style. Examples of such a module have been developed by Denning and Dunham (2010) and Flores (2012).

Finally, a third module would teach theoretical disclosing – the disclosive style of various epochs of the *Machenschaft* but particularly of the modern style, and demonstrate why such detached, theoretical understanding of decontextualised cause-and-effect relationships fails in the human domain.

### **The Disclosure of Disclosing New Worlds**

The essencing of language as saying is the realm. [...] The realm, now to be experienced as the essencing of language, is the dominion of play, wherein all relationships of things and beings playfully solicit each other and mirror each other. [...] The realm is the location in which thinking and being belong together. [...] Language is the house of being.

(Heidegger, 2012a, p. 158)

*Disclosing New Worlds* should be seen as an attempt to gather and articulate a later-Heideggerian free relation to the agile style, in order to help our culture escape from nihilistic flexibility and find a new central focus for meaningful life amidst groundlessness (Dreyfus, 1992). The moods and signifying structure of the text disclose this attempt. In marked contrast to the agile mood of busyness that can still be seen to dispose the works of the earlier practical exemplars of post-agile practice in business such as Denning and Dunham's *The Innovator's Way*, Spinosa, Flores, and Dreyfus create distinctly philosophical moods of wonder in the reader. DNW neither rejects nor capitulates to the busy moods of productivity that dispose *Machenschaft* thinking but instead, always tempers its own argument with its opening philosophical invitation to readers to consider their own experience "Ask yourself...?" and its allusion to the philosophical injunction to "Know Thyself". This strikingly philosophical introduction already discloses the later Heideggerian mood of the book and sets up a tension with the background business mood of bored busyness that ordinarily conditions commitment-based management. Similarly, an analysis of the charged

distinctions of *Disclosing New Worlds* reveal Spinoza, Flores and Dreyfus's conceptual argument as a Heideggerian protreptic towards a proper response to nihilism and show how the book works to express a later Heideggerian philosophy of a free relation to technology.

To bring together my analysis, I adopt Spinoza's own advocacy of the linguistic practice of articulation as a way to witness something gathering into its own (Spinoza, 2001, pp.206-207).

To structure this gathering, I draw on Heidegger's fourfold to disclose the four elements of the book that work together to establish it as a *thing thinging* i.e., bringing a thing out most clearly, in its existential truth, as what it is in a style (Heidegger, 2012a). These elements are Earth, Sky, Mortals and Divinities (See Figure 2 below). Below, I articulate how Spinoza's own text acts as a thing thinging to gather an understanding of a self and a world, and thus bring both into their own.

As the disclosive space at work at the level of the whole book as a Heideggerian fourfold, it becomes apparent that for the book's "purpose to be brought out most clearly and worthily" (Spinoza, 2001, pp.206-208) it must work on the reader's appropriated clearing such that it:

1. Draws on the reader's background familiarity with the stylistic understanding at work in the early and particularly later Heideggerian phenomenology (the Earth)
2. Foregrounds and clarifies the Heideggerian phenomena of business practice by providing narratological, phenomenological accounts that enable the authors to distinguish and name those phenomena that are normally overlooked in economic activity (the Sky)

3. Reveals a fragile and cherished identity among readers as the articulators of the poetic, disclosive role of humans that can pull us back from nihilism (the Mortals)
4. Evokes a mixture of moods (startled dismay, wonder, awe) appropriate to setting up the composure of *Gelassenheit* that is necessary as “the very essence of thought” (Haar, 1992, p.167) initiating an epoch and history itself (the last god of the Divinities).

In other words, for the book to work most powerfully in interaction with its reader, it is necessary for the Heideggerian fourfold to manifest and for its dimensions to inter-play.

<p>Earth: The Heideggerian traditions</p> <p>Early Heidegger of Being-in-World (Dasein, Modes of Existence, Releases from the One – authenticity, etc.)</p> <p>Later Heidegger of <i>Gelassenheit</i> (History of Being, The Greatest Danger and das Gestell, Works of Art, world preservation &amp; transformation, Dwelling, the Fourfold, abandonment of ontological difference)</p>	<p>Divinities: The Senders of a Style</p> <p>The last god moods of startled dismay, wonder, and awe necessary for establishing <i>Gelassenheit</i> as the essence of thinking enabling an active engagement of oneself, others and things to come into their own by preserving and transforming worlds.</p>
<p>Sky: The focal practices</p> <p>Authenticity – receptivity, heightened sensitivity.</p> <p>History-making skills: reconfiguration, cross-appropriation, and articulation.</p>	<p>Mortals: The finite beings</p> <p>The mystic poet’s philosopher – neither a sophist nor a mystagogue but a calm, inquiring facilitator of the developing sensitivities and skills of others.</p>

**Figure 2: *Disclosing New Worlds* working as a Heideggerian Fourfold**

The operationalisation of Heidegger’s philosophy occurs on two levels that set up the possibility of a way of being a teacher or consultant of commitment-based practice and on the level of entrepreneurial and democratic practice itself.

Firstly, on the level of the book itself, it can be seen to be drawing on the authors' technical Heideggerian writings (the Earth) as the traditions upon which it rests. These writings then set up the possibility of developing an articulated philosophical and phenomenological form of business consulting as protreptic teaching of authentic disclosing (the Sky). This form of philosophical consulting is disposed itself by the moods of shock, awe and wonder that signal the arrival of the last god which counters an actor to become mindful of their own appropriated clearing and role as disclosers (the Divinities), and demands of its practitioners that they devote themselves to its operationalisation in the awareness that they may fail and that the future existence of this way of life may falter along with their death (the Mortals).

It is the text itself that acts as the thing that opens up this possible way of being in the world but that only works if it is seen for what it is. Turning to the literary techniques that act as a kind of disclosure in themselves, I see the authors exemplifying in their writing an identity as the mystic poet's philosophers who wanderingly – in the sense of meandering – and wonderingly, in the sense of awe, weave together listening and speech acts as the focal practices that disclose what is worthwhile and what may be missing from the ontologies of other writers in entrepreneurship and economics. The sequencing of the text does not go quite as linearly as one might expect for a philosophical tract. It starts with an account of feminism as an example of history-making and then moves on to the retrieval of a national character in the Kennedy space race and its key skill of *articulation* then meanders back to feminism to name the skill there as *cross-appropriation*. Then it steps back to look at the loss of history-making amidst modernism and postmodernism, stopping along the way to name-check the third history-making skill *reconfiguration* while discussing postmodernism. The flow of the tract works as literary technique that materially evokes a Heideggerian theme – the

*Holzweg* (Heidegger, 1998: p.xiii). The *Holzweg* or woodland walk characterises the task of meditative thinking as the tracing of a path, through a forest, that is only recognisable in retrospect and is to be contrasted with the representational cognitive and wilful thinking that Heidegger sees as characteristic of the agile age. Reading the text throws one into that mood of engaged wandering wondering. Note how the authors declare the existence of new key phenomena and baptise them with names (articulation, cross-appropriation, and re-configuration), make assertions to orientate and unsettle their readers, offer and request new actions on the part of readers, and finally declare their satisfactory completion of their task. Hence, the book itself is a disclosive thing that discloses its readers' pre-ontological understanding of entrepreneurship, community action and solidarity, names what our generation has been ignoring all along i.e., that we are disclosers who are always disclosing whether customary or historical disclosing and places the normative emphasis clearly on historical disclosing. The authors' textual techniques develop in such a way that they show what needs to be in place for the narrative to exist at all as the thing gathering an adaptive style. It is replete with assertions, requests, promises, and finally assertions of completion and declarations of satisfaction, for instance in declaring themselves satisfied that they have identified all possible historical skills<sup>xxxiv</sup>, structured into sequenced conversations that show what needs to be present for any kind of political economic invention to take place. However, it is also structured by a different kind of language, one much closer to the revelatory language of faith – of namings of new phenomena and requests to dedicate oneself to the exploration of the phenomena. One notes for instance how it starts with a declaration of what is not, asserts a problem of the loss of sensitivity to history-making and declares what the authors stand for at exactly the moment that they say it is being lost and the world dying catastrophically.

Secondly, at the level of entrepreneurial practice, it is possible to see how the book clearly sets out an account of the most skilled entrepreneurial business practice as an exemplification of the Heideggerian fourfold that is an antidote to the technological, egocentric and wilful understanding of being that the authors see as dominating contemporary business practice. The authors have oriented their writing to market economic and representative-democratic political practices as the hidden or concealed Earth background of our everyday life and, in particular, the everyday communicative language-action practices of contracting (requests and promises) that comprise customary disclosing (the Earth). By thematising language-action, via the note on customary business practice as coordination of commitments through speech acts, and the focal practice of entrepreneurship and its principal skills of *reconfiguration* supported by *articulation* and *cross-appropriation*, the authors have articulated the Sky of this fourfold by focusing on simple practices with which we are all familiar. By declaring and emphasising these focal practices, in the context of economic practices, as life lived at its best, the authors articulate the Heideggerian notion of the dwelling of finite, vulnerable Mortals taking care of, and being cared for by, the Fourfold. Finally, inherent to the authors' understanding of new affordances of receptivity at the highest levels of skilfulness, I note how the understanding of participants in a world is transformed to the extent that the divinities appear – either the divinities of the existing customary style (phronesis) or of a newly disclosing style (history-making).

## Reading II: The Unthought of *Disclosing New Worlds*

I have shown how *Disclosing New Worlds* defines history-making as an example of life lived at its best in a technological age marked by two dominant styles of making sense of a situation and oneself – the modern world-picturing and the postmodern agile. In particular, I have shown how Spinoza, Flores and Dreyfus construct an image of a disclosive self that is active in both political and economic domains. In the economic domain, the disclosive, history-making self stands in contrast to the modern rationalist and postmodern agile managers. Disclosive managers find solidarity and meaning in their cultural innovations by retaining their shared concerns for excellence while still working to effect change. Disclosive entrepreneurial managers effect cultural innovations by holding on to and dealing with surprising disharmonies that they find between the style of their current way of life and their experiences of on-the-ground events. As they work to address these disharmonies they recover or extend their disclosive space of understanding in ways that enhance rather than deplete existing meanings. In contrast, the rational modern business manager seeks to purify the purpose of a particular world, such as brewing, most usually into a single-purpose, profit-making system and then designs efficient solutions to maximise the availability of outputs while minimising inputs. The postmodern agile manager, exponent of multiple *brief lives*, embraces the lack of stability and coherence of their identities and, in the absence of these cornerstones, celebrates change and flexibility. Both modern and postmodern styles deplete meaning. Modernism reduces available meanings to a purified instrumentalism that counts disharmonious surprises as distractions and hence as meaningless – ignorable because without value in the current regime. Postmodern agility counts any stability as temporary and contingent and thus promotes the possibility of any aspect of a situation serving as the ground for meaning,



regardless of its rootedness or otherwise. Anything is potentially optionalised and reconfigurable, but nothing is truly sacred in itself.

The authors propose a remedial higher education *curriculum for disclosing* intended to produce disclosive entrepreneurs, virtuous citizens and political leaders who can gather a community around a common meaning. Strikingly however, in their curriculum, the authors do not distinguish communicative from revelatory views of language and do not thematise or even explicitly mention a central aspect of Heideggerian philosophy of which they have made lengthy treatments elsewhere. Yet this aspect is essential not only to the remedy that they are proposing but also to a fully worked out account of how anyone makes sense of a world at all, how worlds and selves hang together, and of how worlds change and new worlds become meaningful.

This unthought element of the interplay between moods, gods and truth was suggested by a passage that captured my attention when I first read the book and that stayed with me as I re-read and discussed it with its authors. In the last three pages of the “entrepreneurial” chapter, Spinoza, Flores and Dreyfus write of the “truth” of an anomaly that overturns the common sense. The following passages abound with the expressive, charged and emancipatory language of “captivation”, “joy”, “complete absorption”, “curiosity”, “reflective thinking”, “heightened sensitivity”, “intensity”, “involvement”, “irresistibility”, “scrupulousness” in which “the world comes to look different” as this “truth comes out” (Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, pp.66-67). Elsewhere, in their various writings on technology, works of art as preservers and transformers of truth, on living gods, on practices, even on the loss of meaning in contemporary life, Dreyfus and his co-authors have developed a central role for *moods*, as the divine harbingers and carriers of the truth a style. As we saw in Chapter 3, divine moods disclose different styles – Aphrodite’s erotic and Ares’ martial moods, classical

Greek astonishment at Athenian theory, modernism's twin moods of doubt and certainty, and technology's mood of bored busyness. The many different moods or divinities are themselves only particular messengers from a less specific Godhead, that which sends being in any variety at all (Heidegger, 2012b, p.15). In the latest Heideggerian research, the Godhead or last god is that indeterminate sender of the whole process of being gathering itself or *Ereignis* (Mitchell, 2015, Ch. 4). As described above, according to Heidegger, humans live life at its best when they dwell in a so-called fourfold dance between their mortal selves and the divinities to open an intelligible world of practices (sky) from out of the meaningful background understanding (earth). In poetic terms, if we leave out an account of moods, we banish the Godhead and all its messengerial divinities and we close off the possibility of dwelling. As we saw in Chapter 3, each of the epochs of the *Machenschaft* is attuned by its own grounding mood. However, there is a particular set of moods that Heidegger named as presaging a turn away from the *Machenschaft*.

My reading of *Disclosing New Worlds* shows how, to the extent that book works as a work of art or a thing thinging to gather a meaningful world, these distinctive moods play a central, though only implicit and unthought, role. In Heidegger's post-metaphysical thinking, the truest entity is the thing that reveals a dynamic tension with a contextual background and that invites one to think. The invitational, philosophical style of the book, its imagery, rhythm, structure and syntax evoke certain moods particular to the later Heideggerian notion of *Gelassenheit* or *releasement* towards things. There is the abyssal feeling of *shock* and *startled dismay* that comes when the easily recognisable, habitual styles of world-picturing and agility are brought out from the background, placed in front of the reader and named and contextualised as only two among many possible styles rather than as natural and universal ways that things are.

There is the *restraint* that can be experienced in the authors' initial invitation to consider the authors' distinctions against the reader's own experience rather than the strident advocacy of procedural steps that disclosive managers should follow to succeed. And there is an overall mood of *composure* or *diffidence* that comes when a deep inquiry into everyday practices of management, community action and politics leads to an awareness of the mysterious "groundless grounds" for meaning that underpins human life. According to Heidegger, it is these that are the moods of the last god, that counters the *Machenschaft* by recalling to us our thrown-openness as a clearing and our essence as makers of meaning (Heidegger, 2012b, p.14, pp.321-330; Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011, Sheehan, 2015). But moods, the gods and the sacred are more or less completely omitted.

Readers seeking straightforward lessons from a quick-fix management how-to book will find such advice elusive and suggestive at best. However, the most powerful lesson of the book, the role of the sacred for a meaningful life in a post-theistic age, lies unthought in the style of the book rather than its explicit argument. From my private correspondence with one of the authors<sup>xxxv</sup>, I learned that the authors could not reach agreement between themselves about whether to include the religious dimension of moods and divinities. They also could not construct an account of the Heideggerian turn away from the *Machenschaft* and toward a new beginning or age of *Ereignis* or of the role of the last god in this turn. Heidegger contended that the potential for this turn away lay within the greatest Danger or technology, that the eventual discovery of the groundlessness of agile life would startle a human being into a restrained awe at the sending of being and at its role as the discloser of meaning. In the end, the authors avoided it almost completely. In fact, mood receives only nine mentions in the whole of *Disclosing New Worlds*. Most of those mentions are made only in passing. There is

only one extended section that explicitly deals with the importance of mood, that which considers the mood of bitter distress in the chapter on the politics of democratic action, which has six of the nine mentions. From those nine mentions, three general observations can be made about the importance of mood to cultural innovation. The first of these lessons is that there is a historical general mood of detachment associated with the Cartesian modern way of making sense in which we see ourselves living life well when we can be objective, separated from our subjective passions<sup>xxxvi</sup>. The second observation is that there is a contrasting entrepreneurial mood of captivation, a “joyful personal involvement”, that is necessary if an entrepreneur is to hold on to disharmonies or surprises that they might otherwise ignore or let drop, bring that disharmony to bear in the different domains of their life “so that its truth comes out”, and be able to listen to others and the ways that they respond to the disharmony and the entrepreneurial inventions that it gives rise to in order to adjust and adapt those inventions to local situations<sup>xxxvii</sup>. Finally, the third general observation, drawn from the cross-appropriation chapter that is a subsidiary skill for entrepreneurship as cultural innovation<sup>xxxviii</sup>, is that a mood of distress (in this case, grief mixed with outrage and bitterness) is necessary to disclose the discrepancies between the general style at play in a situation and particular instances of injustices that this general understanding overlooks. The mood of distress mixed with a sense of some important oversight by a community is the motivating mood that underpins “all genuine political action” (Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997, p.90).

I argue here that these three brief observations of mood are suggestive of a more comprehensive but absent account of the relations between truth, mood, language, and the sacred that is necessary for business lives, indeed any lives, that are to avoid the despair and frustration commonly experienced in the modern and late-modern

workplace (e.g., Sennett, 2008; Crawford, 2015; Fleming, 2009; Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011). However, the authors of *Disclosing New Worlds* do not develop such an account. I go further and argue that the authors do not lay out the most important intricacies of Heidegger's different way of thinking, those aspects which he proposes are necessary to avoid the despair and frustration of agile life (Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011)<sup>xxxix</sup> and make a turning to a different way of post-*Machenschaft*, post-agile, fully adaptive thinking. It is to an elucidation of this post-agile adaptive style in a paradigmatic case of practice and a positive proposal towards its development that I turn in the final two chapters.

The results of my reading of *Disclosing New Worlds* can be summarised as an assessment that, in its privileging of a communicative account of instrumental truth through communicative language-action as the adept fulfilment of propositional promise-keeping, and in its neglect of those fundamental moods associated with existential meaningfulness through expressive language and the last god, the book ultimately fails to avoid the same problems as agility, namely the depletion of the meaningfulness of contemporary life.

## 7. Paradigmatic Cases of Agile and Adaptive Practice

In Chapters 4 and 5, I set out three paradigmatic theories of strategic management: the modern, world-picturing style of strategy theorised by Michael Porter, the technological, agile style theorised by Donald Sull, and the post-agile, proto-adaptive style introduced by various Heideggerian scholars. I argued that, with its emphasis on the sacred and on austere thinking, a more developed adaptive strategic management could provide a remedy for agile strategy's loss of meaningfulness and freedom. In this penultimate chapter, I test the theoretical contrast between agile and adaptive styles by turning to paradigmatic examples of each style in practice: the world's largest brewer AB-InBev and one of its craft brewing competitors, The Boston Beer Company (BBC). I show the way that both businesses draw on the agile styles, but that the dominant agile strategic style of AB-InBev's founding leader, Marcel Telles, covers over the sacred while the adaptive style of BBC's Jim Koch makes it central to BBC's work. As such, these are companies at which this study advocates strategic theorists should look. In the following chapter, I draw on my account of the strategic management style of the Boston Beer Company to set out an adaptive kind of strategy making that addresses the problem of the loss of the sacred, truth and hence freedom and meaningfulness in business.

## Demonstrating the Agile and Adaptive Styles: The Case of Beer

Beer isn't magic; beer is process.

(AB-InBev consultant Vicente Falconi, quoted in Hill and Daneshkhu, 2015a)

Fermentation is magical and mysterious.

(Jim Koch, Founder of Boston Beer Company, 2016, p.120)

In November 2015, AB-InBev's "DreamBig" actions suggested that its leaders recognised a new strategic context had emerged, one in which two radically different ways of being a brewer were vying for excellence. Over a twenty-year period beginning in Brazil, a group of financial engineers had re-engineered one brewing company after another to ensure cost leadership and enable it, not only to survive local market jolts, such as price wars, currency devaluations, and global recessions, but also to out-perform and then acquire rivals weakened by those same jolts (Sull and Escobari 2005; Sull 2009). Their strategy consisted in instituting a management methodology that drew all aspects of the beer invention, brewing, marketing, sales, and distribution process into an iterative loop of improvement and adjustment to anomalies and instilling a culture of highly committed, flexible managers for whom the methodology served as the way in which to over-perform in a fast-changing environment. By 2015, the strategy built the cost leadership in one local market after another that enabled the brewer to take over local competitors, move out of Brazil to the international and global scale, and eventually establish itself as the largest and most profitable beer producer in the world<sup>xl</sup>. On 11 November 2015 AB-InBev lodged a formal bid of £71 billion to acquire its principal global rival, SABMiller. The deal was closed 11 months later on 10 October 2016. The combined brewing operation of the two companies would represent 30% of global brewing capacity and over half the industry's profits. Analysts

projected the merger would result in cost synergies valued at just under 16% of SAB's sales or \$2.45 billion from savings in head office, procurement, brewing and distribution costs. In the same month in the US, AB-InBev also announced an incentive plan to consolidate its powerful market share among independent beer distributors and thereby reverse its declining share of supermarket sales. Repeating a strategic manoeuvre its managers had first honed when establishing Companhia Cervejaria Brahma as the leader of the Brazilian beer market, on the terms of the voluntary incentive plan, AB-InBev would reimburse over half of a distributors' marketing support costs in return for the distributors agreeing to stock 95% share of their capacity with AB-InBev products (Sull & Escobari, 2005, pp. 84-86; Philpott, 2015).

However, over a five-day period in Winter 2015, AB-InBev's announcement of its acquisition-led entry in to the craft brewing marketplace and its subsequent hands-off approach to managing these craft brewers also suggested a recognition that competition was changing in a way mysterious to its financial engineer founders. On 18 December, it announced the acquisition of Arizona-based Four Peaks Brewing. It followed this on 21 December with the acquisition of UK-based Camden Town Brewery and, on 22 December, with the acquisition of the brands and brewing assets of the independent Breckenridge Brewery of Colorado.

AB-InBev did not acquire SABMiller nor introduce the incentive plan because of its fierce competition with SABMiller but because of its dominance. These moves are better seen as demonstrations that it had already won the battle for cost efficiency and market power and was now simply driving home its advantage. Even its launch of a disruptive innovation unit was a sign of "more of the same" preoccupied, as it appears to be, with data, efficiency and standards, and, consonant with AB-InBev's style, led by a graduate in financial economics<sup>xli</sup>. Even its recently described beer mastery



certification programme emphasises quantification and standardisation<sup>xlii</sup>. Rather the acquisition of the craft brewers showed AB-InBev seeking a better platform for using its agile capacities to take on its most dangerous competitors.

Over the last decade, both AB-InBev and SABMiller lost US market share to small-scale craft brewers. Craft brewers strive not purely for scale but in order to establish a community of fervent aficionados of their brew. Over a twenty-year period, AB-InBev had consolidated many of the world's most famous beer brands including Stella Artois, Beck's and Budweiser, re-located the brewing of these brands to be close to US consumer markets, introduced standardised and continuously improved manufacturing processes to reduce costs and ensure consistency, and invested heavily in marketing techniques to create brand associations among consumers. These efforts made them far more efficient producers with a dominant share of the biggest markets in the world, and quadrupled the company's share price in the four years following AB-InBev's creation. Yet despite its significant brand presence and process efficiencies, AB-InBev had lost share in their mature Western markets to smaller craft beer brands. While the two big US brewers AB-InBev and Miller-Coors still control around three-quarters of beer volumes in the US, since the 1980s, small craft beer companies, the US equivalent to UK "real ale" brewers, have made dramatic inroads into the so-called Big Beer's markets. While Big Beer's share of the total US alcoholic drinks market has declined almost 10% over a fifteen-year period, craft beer's share has grown. In 2011 alone, total beer sales fell by 1.3% by volume in the US while craft beer sales were up 13%<sup>xliii</sup>. On the whole, beer drinkers are turning away from mass-produced and additive-rich beers supported by massive but gimmicky advertising campaigns in favour of niche, fresh beers. And, year after year, the leader in the craft beer industry, The Boston Beer Company and its flagship brand Sam Adams has taken share from

Big Beer. As we will see, The Boston Beer Company draws on its founder Jim Koch's 180 year-long family commitment to making what he calls "challenging beers". Koch (pronounced "Cook") rejects orthodox marketing approaches by professionals in favour of personal and deep involvement in recipe-making and brewing, management of carefully chosen contract manufacturers and suppliers of raw materials, and particularly the face-to-face pedagogical selling of purer, fresher and more complex beers to bar staff. It is while talking with bartenders as they pour and taste the complex beers that Boston's staff can see what beer means to its customers and how they can innovate in ways that matter to this community and draw it closer to the deep pleasures of drinking challenging beer. Boston Beer grows sales primarily by encouraging bartenders to talk about the beer to their clients. At first, just as in the UK real ale won back the aficionados, so it was for the US. Big Beer more or less sniffed at craft beers' first efforts and ignored them. But the bartender conversation has paid off. Craft beer has begun to take share in the mass rather than specialist consumer markets. Today, consumers first learn of a beer at the bar and then later purchase it in larger quantities at the supermarket for drinking at home. While craft beers charge consumers up to two-thirds more than Big Beer for every drink they generate intense customer loyalty to beers that taste better and that mean more to consumers.

Craft brewers have been so successful that the craft-brewers' trade body, The Brewer's Association, has raised volume restrictions for inclusion as a craft beer producer from two million barrels per year to six million. And as described, Big Beer has begun to fight back and launched so-called "crafty" beers that looked like craft beers but lacked their small scale and craft-oriented style and, for all the reach and persuasion of their advertising campaigns and marketing gloss, could not manifest the deep traditions, community spirit and authentic craft of the real craft beers.

Consequently, AB-InBev sought the acquisitions and incentive plan to reduce prices even further for their mass-produced brews but also began developing their own craft beer range while flexing their marketing muscle to push the independent craft beers off the supermarkets' shelves. In short, AB-InBev is pushing its agile market manoeuvring and cost-cutting to the limit.

This contrast between the dominant and the emerging way of being a brewer demonstrates the clearly different ways of coping with technology described in Chapter 3 and, I contend, characterises a shift away from a nihilistic capitalism towards a form of economic organising that is both more meaningful and freer.

## AB-InBev: Master of the Agile Style

AB-InBev, owner of leading beer brands including Budweiser, Beck's and Stella Artois, excels at an agile style of strategic management. A style briefly defined, is the most basic understanding of "what counts as a thing, what counts as true/false, and what it makes sense to do" of a particular time and situation (Dreyfus, 1996, p.4). In Chapter 3 we articulated the styles of different epochs by setting out their most real entity, the attitudinal aspects that most lucidly reveal the truth or falsity of any entity, and the paradigmatic activity that reveals truth. In the following section, I draw on several different sources, including personal accounts of AB-InBev's long-term consulting partner, to describe how it exemplifies the agile style. In the subsequent section, I contrast AB-InBev's agile approach with the style of The Boston Beer Company, which I contend exemplifies a new post-nihilistic style.

In the agile style, all entities, whether people, products, equipment, conversations or occasions, appear as flexible options or resources and the material aspect of a thing, which best allows one to unlock its truth, is the feature. By feature, I do not refer to any feature in particular but to the feature *per se*. A feature of an entity can be distinguished, named and evaluated. Furthermore, a feature can be volatilised, considered as an option, and reconfigured for the satisfaction of a human desire or whim.

In customer management for instance, AB-InBev managers break down every part of the customer's world of beer-drinking into modularised options that can be optimised for various kinds of quantifiable performance.

Continual innovation and renovation are essential to our efforts to keep our brands fresh and relevant in the minds of our consumers through initiatives such as new liquids, line extensions, creative approaches to brand identity and packaging, and new marketing and trade concepts. In this manner, we continually refresh the interest

of existing consumers, and extend the reach of our brands to new consumers and consumption occasions<sup>xliv</sup>.

AB-InBev strips out climactic, seasonal and geological variations, indeed even actual craftsmen, fruit and vegetables, from its standardised production of drinks. It invents *cidres* that are not true ciders, ingenious line extensions like fruit beers, and novelty pouring devices and containers like bottles that play music like a record. In AB-InBev's agile brewing firm, beer becomes "new liquids", which comprise bundles of tastes, gassiness, nutritional qualities and quantity formats, each of which are to be optimised for novelty in pursuit of short-term sales volume boosts and higher margins. Thus, the exemplary agile brewer invents fruit beers such as Cran-brrr-itas. Packaging also becomes the focus of invention for enticing customers and delivering micro-thrills as they drink. The Budweiser "bowtie" beer-can is shaped to echo the Budweiser logo but holds less beer than a standard container. Similarly, the Beck's Edison bottle can be played like a record, if you have an Edison cylinder player to hand.

Beer drinkers and their beer consumption also become resources. For AB-InBev, drinkers have become "consumers" and "fans", their gestures co-opted and their financial value quantified, and AB-InBev practices improved to continually optimise their financial value.

For instance, consider AB-InBev's approach to social media marketing in which its marketing officers target a beer drinker's devotion to a beer in order to drive up the financial value of its marketing efforts:

The financial value of a fan who has chosen to engage, compared with a consumer who has not, is a figure that [AB-InBev's Chief Marketing Officer] Burggraeve claims to have quantified, though he doesn't reveal it. He knows why he wants fans, and last year devoted 18% of his budget to attracting and connecting with them. Indeed, some of AB-InBev's local brands are now marketed almost exclusively through social media.

“Fans are our brand ambassadors. If you take our 30 million fans, the influence and amplification potential is huge,” Burggraevé says<sup>xlv</sup>.

However, contemporary AB-InBev’s co-optation of human behaviour for financial gain can be traced in Brahma’s earliest marketing efforts to defeat its main competitor Antarctica and the way that beer drinkers’ ordinary gestures were co-opted as resources:

He carried out a survey to find out how Brazilians generally ordered beer in bars. The customers’ responses were videoed and Fischer [the brand marketing consultant] studied them. It revealed that a large number of them raised their index finger to show waiters they wanted “another cold beer”. It was a simple direct gesture, recognised nationally. That finding gave Fischer the origin of a slogan for his new client: Brahma was now “Number 1.”

(Correa, 2013, p.182)



**Figure 1: Brahma beer can in Brazilian football colours and displaying index finger “Numero 1” gesture.** Downloaded 17 October 2016 from <http://www.blogsoestado.com/danielmatos/files/2014/10/brhma.jpg>.

The nationally-recognised raised index finger signifying “another beer please” was co-opted to signify “Brahma beer is Number 1” and subsequently run through guerrilla marketing campaigns involving celebrities and crowds raising their index finger in front of the press’s cameras at major sporting and cultural events and thus undermining Antarctica’s more conventional advertising strategies.

To AB-InBev, all human beings whether celebrities, communities, or its own relatives, and employees are to be re-shaped and, revealing the pervasiveness of the style, re-shape themselves better to be able to play changing roles in this optimisation and to accumulate power. Celebrities and musicians, whether in the early days of Brazil's popular musical movement MPB or contemporary global artists like Jay-Z, Justin Timberlake, and Avicii, rent out their identities and their index fingers to AB-InBev to endorse its products in theatrical advertisements that facilitate the co-optation of their identities by consumers.

[Chibe] has put a premium on music-themed marketing, signing up artists like Jay Z and Justin Timberlake, as the brewer seeks to appeal to millennials with more aspirational ads and fewer frat-boy pranks<sup>xlvi</sup>.

As we saw, cultural events, music festivals, sports events, and community fairs provide new occasions for raising awareness or sampling AB-InBev products in return for AB-InBev's sponsorship and co-branding. However, every human being at such an event is considered a resource for optionalisation. For instance, when giving his reasons for refusing his own cousin's entry to Brahma's VIP lounge at the Rio Carnival festival, Lemann said,

"This is a business. The invitations are for those who help me gain money, famous people and beautiful women. In what category are you?"

(Correa, 2013, pp.182-183)

And, of course, employees themselves are resources competing against each other to meet promises in games of performance and to become ever more flexible and productive performers. Any employee's commitment to their particular profession as a craft in itself will be willingly jettisoned if the situation calls for them to play another role and take a different identity.

We human beings can get used to anything.

(Falconi, 2010, p.157)

Individuals in a company should be constantly challenged to seek new knowledge, and this is done by setting goals or changing people's positions so as to make them feel uncomfortable.

(Falconi, 2010, p.169)

You will probably have to spend less time with your family than many people are used to but, on the other hand, you will have another kind of benefit. You will be looking after your future. You will earn a lot of money and your life will change. That's what happened to those who chose the company's style. Everybody gained a lot of money in this business.

(Correa, 2013, p.204)

Finally, time itself is optionalised. For instance, the consumer's day is broken up into consumption occasions or thinking-about-consumption occasions for the purposes of optimising liquid sales. On this view, the lives of beer drinkers are to be divided up into quarter-hour segments, each of which becomes the focus of invention of reasons for thinking of an AB-InBev brand or consuming an AB-InBev beverage.

Everything that I am running on air is an ad that has been tested and qualified to drive purchase intent and persuasion," [said Paul Chibe, VP for U.S. Marketing at AB-InBev]<sup>xlvii</sup>.

In the preceding passages, I have focused on the product and customer process to illustrate how AB-InBev everything is a portfolio of options with a constantly reconfigured, tracked and optimised financial value.

If the truest entity for the agile brewer is the co-opted feature, the truest attitude and paradigmatic activity that reveals the truth of an entity, the "epicenter of the company's strategy" (Zook & Allen, 2012), is the wilful management attitude that continually draws those features into an iterative system of information in order to constantly simplify and stabilise a chaotic reality into productivity. AB-InBev has developed such an iterative overall method and refined it into three specific methods



for customer relationships (WCCP: World Class Customer Processes), brewing (VPO: Voyager Plant Optimisation), and financial management (ZBB: Zero-Based Budgeting).

“Marcel (Telles, former CEO AB-InBev) likes to use the expression ‘one trick pony’ to explain what we do... We have one ‘trick’, which is to put in good people and our management system to change a company’s results.”

(Alexandre Behring, Garantia Partners, In Correa, 2013, p.171)

This work stresses the importance of understanding the meaning of Management Method and System ... There aren’t various methods for achieving goals. There is only one: The Cartesian Method... since the Management System is based on one method, there is only one such system... Few people understand systems.

(Vicente Falconi, Board Director and inventor of AB-InBev’s management system. Falconi, 2010, p.11)

In Falconi’s description, the method of breaking down any entity into options, evaluating them, and making them available for productivity becomes especially clear. In each routine, the complex domains of customer management, brewing, and budgeting are broken down into specific “packages” each assigned a global and a local owner who are tasked with devising an iterative measurement and management process<sup>xlvi</sup>, agreeing transparent current baseline and promised performance goals, identifying best practices to close performance gaps and fulfil improvement promises, and communicating progress globally.

AB-InBev’s current strategic thinking style can be glimpsed in its leaders’ educational experiences and their earliest methods for running Companhia Cervejaria Brahma. In 1989, when Garantia Bank bought a controlling share, Brahma was ailing. It was a close second to its nearest rival Antarctica in terms of market share but trailed Antarctica badly in consumer taste tests as well as in gross and operating profitability. However, Garantia CEO, Jorge Lemann, was sure that he could turn the business around and become exceptionally wealthy doing so.

He never liked to have a lot of money lying idle. [...] Buying control of another company, as had occurred with Lojas Americanas, seemed the ideal solution. Deciding which company would be the target of another acquisition was another of his favorite exercises. The pulp and paper producer Aracruz, for example, was one of the companies he tried to buy, but the negotiations did not work out in the end. Another company had also caught his eye for some time, the brewer Brahma.

(Correa, 2011, p.120)

His absolute confidence had nothing to do with any sixth sense or anything like that. Lemann sees himself as a man without any kind of intuition. He relies mainly on good sense, a view of the future and simple thinking in taking decisions. The argument he used to convince Haddad [Garantia's senior economist] that the acquisition made great sense was as follows:

“Tropical country, hot climate, good brand, young population and poor management... OK, that gives us everything we need to transform it into something great,” he said. [...] I was looking at Latin America and who was the richest guy in Venezuela? A brewer. The richest guy in Colombia? A brewer. The richest guy in Argentina? A brewer. These guys can't all be geniuses...it's the business that must be good.”

(Jorge Lemann quoted in Correa, 2011, p.124)

Lemann, was the scion of a wealthy Brazilian family of Swiss origin. After an early career as a world-class tennis player, Lemann attended Harvard. For several reasons, Lemann found Harvard an unpleasant educational experience and resolved to graduate as fast as possible. His solution for achieving this result suggests AB-InBev's future style that emphasises the efficient delivery of measurable results.

“Harvard also taught me to focus on a way of obtaining results. To finish within my deadline meant I had to create a system involving great focus... I always try and reduce everything to what is essential and this has also helped us a lot in forming our businesses. Most of our companies—and people—have five goals...Doing something simply is always better than doing it in a complicated way.”

(Jorge Lemann, CEO Garantia Partners, Owner, AB-InBev. From Correa, 2011, p.42)

Once determined to acquire Brahma, Lemann put Marcel Telles, a securities trader with no previous brewing, manufacturing or even significant management experience, in charge as CEO of a company of 25,000 employees. Telles took the

agility that he learned as a trader at Garantia into Brahma and dismissed its historical modern world-picturing, analytical strategy style in favour of a wilful, agile leadership. His vision of a fast moving, performance-oriented approach depended upon ambitious, elite business graduates who would commit to narrowly focused but dramatic goals for performance improvement and break down every component of the brewing world to make it available as a resource for vigorous management (Sull 2009, pp.173-192).

Telles was puzzled, “What am I going to do with this mess?” he asked Falconi. The consultant said the answer was to establish standards for each plant activity and measure everything.

(Correa, 2013, pp.140-41)

Telles hired the most talented and ambitious leaders and graduates, had them make personal promises to out-perform in specific areas, and rewarded high performance generously. Each year, senior Brahma executives made three priority promises such as broadening distribution, re-launching a low-price brand, and improving productivity. Bonuses were linked to out-performance against personal and team objectives. Up to eighteen months’ salary and equity went to out-performers. The bottom 40% of performers received no bonus. As Telles said, “A bonus has to be large enough to truly motivate people. If you give it to everybody it won’t be big enough” (Sull, 2009, p.181). The performance culture created a fighting force of coloniser-leaders, with the attitude of a “cohort of Vikings”—energetic, acquisitive adventurers constantly on the look-out for new market territory or operational performance horizons to explore and dominate (Sull, 2009, pp.182-185). The relentless, wilful “high performance” attitude developed first at Brahma became the basis of AB-InBev’s business culture as Brahma overtook and then acquired Antarctica to form AmBev in Brazil, then Belgian brewing group Interbrew owner of the Stella Artois brand, and then Anheuser-Busch owner of Budweiser to form AB-InBev, each time implementing

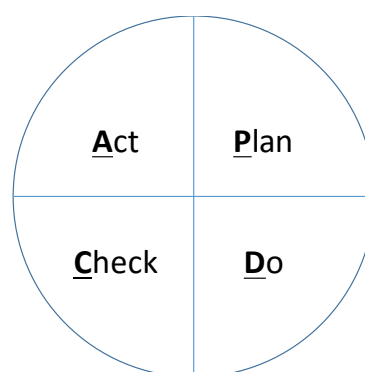
its cultural system. New recruits to AB-InBev are all hired for this attitude and indoctrinated into an iterative method of performance improvement based upon a totalising system of information and then, as they progress through different parts of the organisation, producing masters of the method over five to seven years.

“AmBev’s experience in Brazil has shown it takes five to seven years to have a good human resources system functioning satisfactorily and for the first wisely recruited and well-trained exceptional elements to reach a high managerial level”

(Falconi, 2010, p.49)

The system itself was devised by Brazilian consultant and management professor, an engineer by education, Vicente Falconi. Falconi has described the method in detail in two books with multiple illustrations drawn from AB-InBev (Falconi, 2010, 2011).

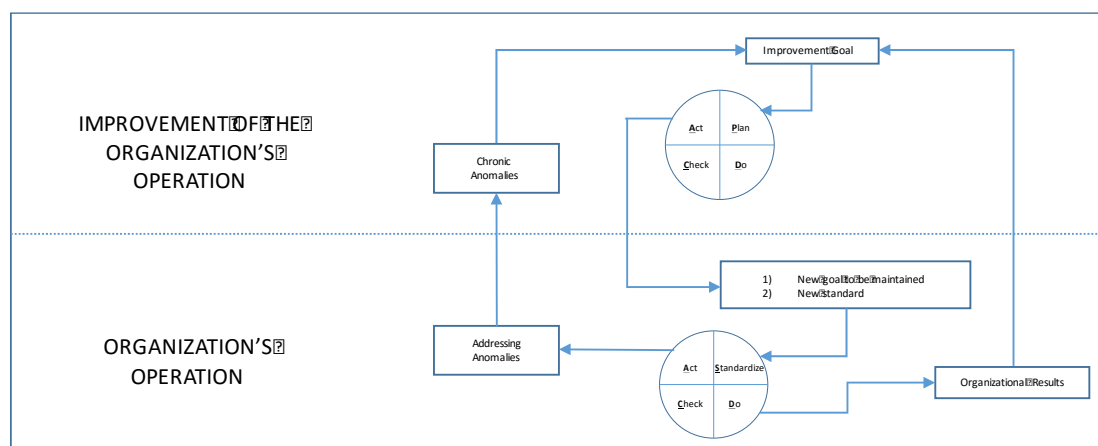
The systems method that Falconi describes, though he erroneously attributes it to the thinking of Descartes and neglects Nietzsche’s later development of recurrence of the same and its Japanese cultural inflection, is based upon the familiar Toyota Management System and its Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle (Figure 2).



**Figure 2: PDCA Method (Falconi, 2010, p.53)**

In an important sign of the kind of underlying nihilistic thinking that levels all meaningful differences, the iterative method translates all other concerns and sources of value into a single fungible measure—financial value. As Falconi writes, “financial indicators allow us to translate all the other objectives into a single measurement unit, which gives us the opportunity to compare them and to identify priorities more clearly. [...] I am convinced that financials are foremost, not only for companies but also for governments and even for churches. Nothing exists without financial resources, which are human labor’s means of exchange” (Falconi 2010, pp. 20-21).

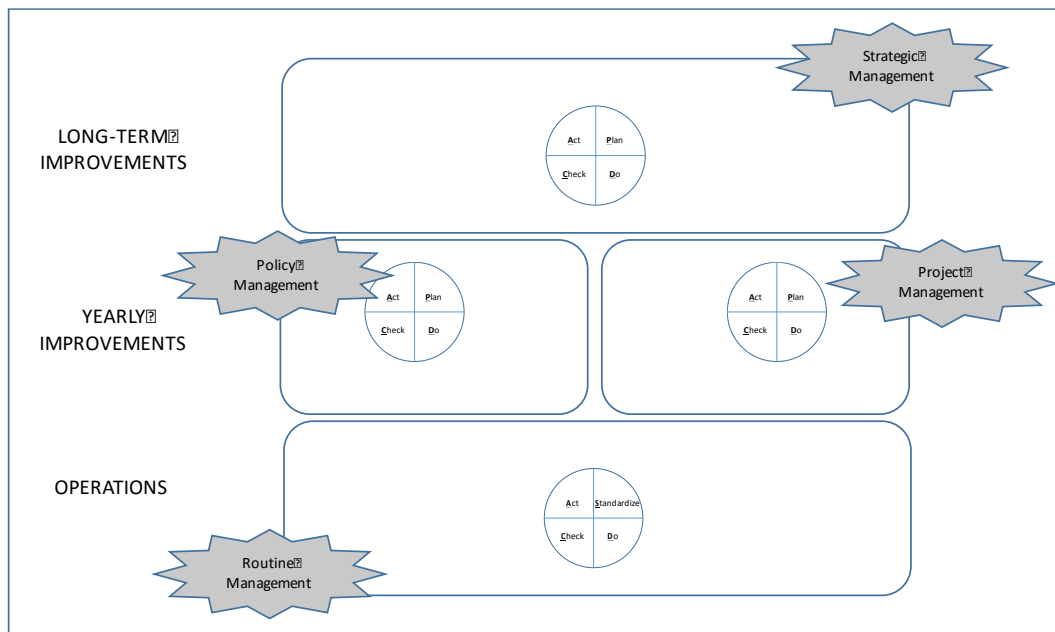
Financial value is deployed through the method both to improve the organization’s operations on a day-to-day basis and to improve the entire system of operations in order to pick up and deal with recurrent anomalous issues that the current system fails to address (See Figure 3).



**Figure 3: Model of the PDCA Method (Falconi, 2010, p.55)**

The iterative PDCA method is then institutionalised throughout an organisation to draw all people and their activities to set strategic mission, strategic policy, innovation and operational work management into a cycle that picks up and addresses anomalies in order to improve the system’s performance for the sake of excellence in

generating long and short-term financial value. As Falconi writes, “Everything in this world is a system or part of a system” (Falconi, 2010, p.55) (Figure 4).



**Figure 4: Model for the PDCA Method Used for Operating and Improving an Organization, (Based on Falconi, 2010, p.57)**

Today, this method remains in place and performance goals or promises are still made public. Everyone, including its most senior executives, visibly posts his or her performance against their personal commitments.

On a wall outside the brewery's control room, a board tracks every worker's performance on a specific indicator he has chosen to improve. “There will always be people who don't like it, especially the ones who were just entitled to be there for historical reasons, the ones who were not performing,” says Luiz Edmond, chief of AB. “Our processes, our systems, do not allow that. They do not allow you to hide in a nice room, stay for the whole day. No.”<sup>xlix</sup>

These commitments are generally quantitative, not simply because of a preference for the hard over soft, but because quantitative assessments change much more frequently and so reveal more opportunities for innovation<sup>1</sup>.

Examining a complicated printout that shows one rep's sales goals for the week, [AB InBev CEO Carlos] Brito says, “This is very much our company, this sheet. We like metrics, tons of numbers.”<sup>li</sup>

Is the use of the agility loop really strategy? Businesses that employ the agility loop make a strategy out of exploiting opportunities. Their competitive advantage is that they time and execute their pursuit of opportunities better (not just faster) than their competitors. Hence, although they seem like pure opportunists, they have speed as a durable competitive advantage. Each of the strategic changes Telles and his successors have made—all the consumer inventions, factory and process improvements, the distribution network, and so forth—conferred minor benefits but collectively, over the course of a decade, they made the company four times more valuable than its closest rival Antarctica and positioned it for the global consolidation that was on the horizon. The mergers with the European brewer Interbrew and North American Anheuser-Busch, built upon the cash generated by their performance, were timed in part to continue to offer further opportunities for all these high-performing managers to continue to make their name and develop their personal wealth within the company. Brahma’s pre-eminent success and the role of the iterative method and performance culture in securing that success can be verified by the fact that, after the merger campaign, Brazilian executives took chairman, CEO and 90% of the senior executive roles in the newly formed AB-InBev. Today, under Telles’ successor Carlos Brito, the method and culture have been continued and extended to leave AB-InBev 40 percent larger than its closest brewing competitor and the low-cost producer in most of the markets in which it operates (Zook & Allen, 2012, p.101).

## Demonstrating the Adaptive Style: The Case of Boston Beer

The “magic” of brewing thus doesn’t just happen; you need to create the right conditions first. [...] Fermentation is magical and mysterious.

(Jim Koch, Founder of Boston Beer Company, 2016, p.12, p.120)

So, is there a limit to such a perfectly flexible system? For a hint of the limitation of the system, compare AB-InBev’s ingenious liquids and dramatized drinking occasions with drinking a locally brewed real ale with friends after a hard day’s work. If AB-InBev succeeds by eliminating magic from brewing and replacing it with iterative method, The Boston Beer Company has succeeded by returning magic to its centre. In the former, the production of the drink is concealed, the drink itself transformed into a device for delivering alcoholic liquid refreshment, and the drinker’s enjoyment relieved of any demand for engagement, discernment, and skill. In the latter, complex beer is a thing that engages skilful drinkers in a meaningful practice that enhances their gustatory skills and discernment and embeds the drinker in a community, a landscape and a tradition. The problem with the agile style is not that it is too inventive. Mine is not an argument from nostalgia. The problem with the agile style is that its invention ignores the mystery of beer and of beer drinking (or any other product or thing at all) as essential to meaningfulness at all, and the wonder felt at the recognition that it is one’s own sense-making skills, one’s own history and locality, and one’s relationships with a community of drinkers, brewers and hop farmers that ground all and any meanings. It is as though an abstract belief in an unlimited power to make anything at all matter has temporarily displaced the reality that some things actually matter more than others. Therefore, the agile style tends towards absurdity, a confrontation with the nothingness – no roots in traditions, skills, communities, or materials – that can disorientate all meaning and identity. In the face of such absurdity,



one faces a choice. One can either attempt to posit new meanings and values that reinvent a commodity over and over again in further attempts to stabilise oneself and the world. But in the name of what would one attempt this? Nothing that matters! Or one can be jolted into a resolve to take over and make one's own an existing thing and its supporting practice that, at the same time, preserves and transforms an already existing culture and identity. To help us better understand the distinction, we can look to the difference drawn by Heideggerian philosopher Albert Borgmann between devices supplying commodities and focal practices guarding things.

Commodities, in comparison with focal things, are highly reduced entities and abstract in the sense that within the overall framework of technology they are free of local and historical ties. Thus they are sharply defined and easily measured. Focal things, on the other hand, engage us in so many and subtle ways that no quantification can capture them. As with social phenomena, it is not the case that things are imbued with mysterious unquantifiable properties. Rather their significance is composed of so many, if not all, of their physically ascertainable properties that an explicit quantitative account must always impoverish them greatly.

(Borgmann, 1987, p.81)

I have argued that the attempt to posit values leads to an infinite regress and endless turbulence that becomes literally unendurable. However, another style of managing, which I have been calling *adaptive*, is being borne of this confrontation with absurdity and nothingness. Adaptive management simultaneously preserves and transforms meaningfulness by focusing on a simple thing and cultivating the practices that preserve the depth and integrity of that thing and its meanings. The thing that gathers meaningfulness is termed a *focal thing* and its supporting practices, *focal practices*. This adaptive management of focal things is already being pursued by companies. At present, it is being adopted mostly by smaller companies though one need not be small to adopt it. Patagonia, Illy, Interface, and Whole Foods Market adopted it. One might argue that Disney adopted it. Many other well-known companies

have either preserved it or turned to it. But, to stick with beer, I will set out this strategy by turning to craft brewer The Boston Beer Company (BBC), which has successfully established itself as a serious competitor to America's Big Beer brands. It has accomplished this by concentrating on beer as a focal thing and beer brewing and drinking as the focal practice that gathers what matters to its practitioners. As BBC's founder Jim Koch writes,

Done right, business is a noble pursuit well worth our energy and passion. In business, you have to create value for other people before you can capture any value for yourself. [...] When I launched The Boston Beer Company, I knew what I wanted: freedom, personal growth, connectedness with others, and to do something that mattered, [at] least to me. [...] I've had a chance to give the world something simple that matters to me: a better glass of beer.

(Koch, 2016, p. 386-87)

In the adaptive style, the truest entity is the focal thing. The focal thing offers deeply resonant and manifold meanings as well as the promise of further, still-concealed meanings. This rich and fertile meaningfulness, which is borne by its interconnection with a deep, material and historical moral context, can be opposed to the shallow, explicit, and narrowing meanings of a commodity cut off from its moral context (Borgmann, 1987). The Boston Beer Company's focal thing is beer. It offers what it calls "challenging" craft beers, such as their original Sam Adams, to compete with the simplistic and codified associations and meanings of a Big Beer commodity such as Budweiser. Discovering and choosing the truth of one's focal thing involves, not so much analysis aimed at certainty nor creative wilfulness, but rather the letting go of certainty and an attitude of tuning in to anomalies that are there already. In the mid-1980s, when he was in his mid-thirties, married, and a father to two small children, Jim Koch recognised that while he was successful his work was not meaningful, he liked his job as a management consultant but he did not "love it" (Koch, 2016, p.9).

Koch resolved to start a new life and began to consider ways he could run his own business in order to find something that mattered to him. Drawing on his own experience of starting again, when he dropped out of an elite Harvard graduate degree to take up a life as an Outward Bound wilderness instructor, Koch was not perturbed by the prospect of failing in order to find his “true self” (*Ibid*, p.12). Importantly, Koch recognised the crucial role of mood and of an openness to mystery in the discovery of one’s focal thing.

Business ideas are like radio signals. They’re out there, and in fact, they surround us. The trick is to turn your receiver on so you can tune in. Once my receiver was turned on, I was almost overwhelmed with possibilities, opportunities, and ideas (p.15). [...] When I read Thomas Kuhn’s writings on such ‘paradigm shifts,’ it struck me that we only *think* we know what we know, and that most of our assumptions at any point in time are wrong and will be revised (p.19). [...] Most [consultants] looked and saw the general rule, but I liked to observe and wonder at the weirdness of the outliers. Everybody already knew the general rule—that’s why it was the general rule (p. 20). [...] Even if the solution to a problem didn’t come to me immediately, I knew that if I hung in there, I would find it. I just needed to be in the right frame of mind to see it. Doing something you love isn’t the only reason to start a new life. You could also do it to *find out* what you love, or to prevent yourself from moving too far down a track you suspect isn’t for you (p.11).

(Koch, 2016, pp. 11-20)

In contrast to the aggressively calculating and controlling mood of the agile style, Jim Koch’s style is attuned by a mood of composure or *Gelassenheit*, which as we saw in Chapter 3 is a simultaneous saying “yes” and “no”. It is the mood of composure that opens actors, in this case brewers, bar-tenders and beer drinkers, to the mystery that a particular beer means so much to them and of how the brewing and drinking practices make possible and hold open these meanings but ultimately lie outside of their control. Despite its explicit sales zeal, Koch’s own description serves to demonstrate why beer as a focal thing, rather than a commodity, can still draw on scientific, even technological, thinking while escaping being defined by such narrow thinking. For a thing, there is always a mysterious remainder. The beer reveals ever

more of itself and unlike AB-InBev is not completely consistent. Koch's descriptions reach, through language, to reveal more and more of these phenomena, more and more of the real, and, in his reference to "alchemy", even a hint towards the mystery, but the overall impression is that neither can be exhausted.

I love watching it come out of the tap. I love the thick, muffled sound of the liquid cascading into the glass. There's this alchemy of physics, chemistry, and mathematics—the dynamics of bubbles and aromas. As I look at the glass, I notice a slight, veil-like haze in the liquid comprised of proteins from the malt. The color is amber, with overtones of golds and reds, almost like looking into a candle flame. The aroma is slightly floral, sometimes a dab of red fruit like cherry or raspberry. That first sip wakes up my palate, leading to a three- or four-second parade of the body and sweetness from the malt, followed by spiciness and nuanced bitterness from the hops—not sweet like white sugar, but like caramel, biscuit, toffee with just a slight roasted note. And then that noble hop aroma and taste with pine, grapefruit, and softer fruits like orange and tangerine, followed by a lingering bitterness at the end that brewers call the "hop signature" of the beer.

I've related on television and radio what I taste when I drink Samuel Adams Boston Lager, and the hosts sometimes think I'm crazy going on and on like that about beer? Am I overdramatizing it? Actually, I'm not. [...] After so many years and all the beers I've tasted, Samuel Adams Boston Lager just never gets old for me.

(Koch, 2016, pp. 40-41)

Codify, simplify and, eventually, reduce the beer and its brewing into just those features that can be manipulated to maximise options for productivity and the meaningfulness dissolves. Indeed, ultimately, our paradigmatic case shows that a thing, in this case craft beer, is centrally important compared to a commodity, because it opens and preserves a connection to divinity, as an ultimately mysterious origin of meaning.

Koch himself cites poet Nikki Giovanni's poem praising the sacredness of Utopia, one of The Boston Beer Company's beers,

And now that I've found Utopia, I am at peace.  
 I have Utopia, and if I were Egyptian I would be buried with it.  
 I use it to start conversations and make friends.  
 It is not for mortals. Or Americans. Utopia is for the gods.

(Giovanni, 2013, p.3)

In the early days of The Boston Beer Company, Koch sensed that, while beer was not yet a focal thing, it could become one.

It's not like I had always been obsessed with beer. Sure, beer was a fairly strong presence in our family life when I was growing up; I visited breweries with my father on many occasions and, in keeping with our German heritage, we kids were sometimes given a little beer with dinner. But that didn't translate automatically into an irresistible business idea.

(Koch, 2016, p.15)

Koch's father drew his attention to the partial success that Fritz Maytag, of the washing machine family company Maytag, had had with a small-scale brewery in California. Koch's father also helped his son think through his early business plans, donated the family archive of brewing recipes going back to 16<sup>th</sup> century Germany, and was an early investor in the small start-up. Gradually, beer and brewing began to gather into a thing that Koch loved and that mattered to him. We have already seen the importance Koch places on adopting the appropriate "tuning in" attitude of a practitioner to the revelation of important truths and meaningfulness and yet, at the same time, the preservation the mystery of a beer. An account of BBC's focal practices will reveal that Heidegger's description of dwelling, as the way that things gather and transform meaningfulness, characterises well the way that BBC's focal practices work

to preserve the depth and integrity of a beer by maintaining a connection and tension with a background context.

From his earliest conversations with his father about brewing history, Koch was aware of the importance of history, setting, provenance, and skills to bringing out the meaningfulness of beer. With regard to the practice of brewing, the first recipe that Koch brewed up adhered to German purity laws dating from 1516, its recipes depended upon so-called noble hops supplied by a German farmer Peter Barth whose farm had existed since 1792, and it drew on traditional brewing methods like kräusening, decoction mashing, and dry hopping. Just as AB-InBev built a business culture on the thinking of a guru, engineering professor-turned-consultant Vicente Falconi, so Koch also found a scientifically-educated professor and built a business around his insights. However, in BBC's case, the foundational professor was also an expert in beer. Joe Owades, who died in 2005, had a PhD in Biochemistry but he was also a brewmaster with decades of industry experience brewing beer and inventing recipes. Koch collaborated with Owades to develop the original BBC beer, which was to become Sam Adams Boston Lager. Unlike AB-InBev's collaboration with Falconi, their work did not begin by nullifying the traditional practices, the "magic," of the existing craft brewmasters. Instead, Koch and Owades experimented with both traditional and contemporary methods, contracting with established breweries to brew their beer in small batches, and adapting fermentation equipment to allow for older methods like decoction mashing. While Koch retained and still brought to bear his process consulting skills to raise efficiency and profits.

Sixty-five percent of revenue went into the cost of the packaged beer, and my other costs were about 25 percent, so there was 10 percent left.

I decided to look at every place we spent money. I found money everywhere! It was like opening all the drawers in your house and finding a pile of cash in every one. Occasionally, it was as simple as asking for a lower price. Usually, it required that I

be a better customer. For example, I had sixty-day terms with our contract brewery because I needed extra time to pay, but once we were profitable, I asked for and got a 5 percent lower price by paying in five days. I found a way to use lighter-weight bottles of equal strength, and that saved 15 percent on bottles. We got our wholesalers to contribute twenty-five cents a case to help support the salespeople we put in their market. The list went on and on, and a year later we were making twenty cents on every dollar of sales. (p. 65) [...] We figured out that on about 80 percent of our trucks we could fit twenty-seven pallets of beer instead of twenty-six. That one little change saved us four cents on a case of beer. Doesn't sound like a lot until you consider that we were shipping 16 million cases every year. We're talking hundreds of thousands of dollars of savings from one adjustment. In another instance, we saved \$200,000 a year by using excess space of our trucks to ship coasters to distributors from our breweries rather than from our warehouses.

(Koch, 2016, p. 65; pp. 177-178)

However, these efficiency measures had their limits and Koch was clear that the thing and its quality must always take precedence and that the existence of a network of focal practitioners sustained or depleted the thing.

Wholesalers in turn got good at playing a game I called "hide the beer," whereby they found an out-of-the-way retailer and sold them beer that was about to expire at a discount. [...] No outright deception was taking place when it came to freshness; rather, all of us were playing an elaborate and collective game of pretend. *Pretend* to stand for something. *Pretend* to care. *Pretend* you're giving drinkers fresh beer. You see this all the time in business, most often when you're dealing with big companies. [...] Nobody calls out the bullshit. The result is cynical disenchantment throughout the system.

(Koch, 2016, p.127)

Turning to the beer drinking practice, Koch downplayed marketing in favour of encouraging and leading the face-to-face selling of beers to bartenders. The conversations in which he, and now BBC's sales teams, engaged with bartenders allowed him to educate their palate to discern the particularities of a beer and enable the bartenders in turn to educate beer-drinkers on how to appreciate it. These aspects of beer brewing and drinking each in turn show how, in contrast to agility's communication of propositional truths in a system of information, dwelling works to disclose truth by conditioning a Heideggerian fourfold as a dynamic interplay. The

fourfold, introduced in Chapters 3 and 6, describes the way that a thing relationally and dynamically gathers and transforms meaningfulness in an interplay between mortals, divinities, earth and sky. In his account of dwelling and the fourfold, Heidegger describes how some humble entity, a thing, (he talks of a peasant jug, we will talk of beer) calls people (the mortals) to take up a form of life, a particular identity and appropriate action such as drinking a beer, against a dynamic background context of meaningfulness. At the same time, the beer draws upon and is conditioned by a sense of what is intrinsically good to this form of life—one's ultimate concerns such as ecological gratitude and social conviviality in the case of beer. These ultimate concerns manifest as moods which, recalling the Homeric gods, act as divine messengers of the Godhead and call us to a form of life. The moods connect us to the mystery of the source of meaningfulness, an aspect lying beyond wilful human control. The simple beer also sensitises the drinker to the earth, the stream of time, of cultural history and practices, and of the particular materials, the yeasts, sun-ripened malt and hops, and mineralised waters that are woven in to the beer but are not present here and now. Finally, this particular occasion, the associations and memories that are conjured up and skilfully imbricated into the drinking of this beer right now (sky) enable the drinker to take up their place and savour the depth and integrity of the thing.

Recalling Chapter 1 and 3's discussion, we see how, by engaging with the 'tiniest spheres' of a focal practice, an individual can generate a sensibility of the way that their "focal awareness" sits within a background agile style *as a moral context* conditioning Western life to treat all entities as resources or commodities. Revealing the agile style and holding it in tension with beer, as the deeply meaningful thing, prompts the drinker to take up the human's role as a linguistic being, a maker of meaningful value. It is this interplay between focal thing and contextualising world that



allows the thing to be neither economically nor morally commoditised (Borgmann, 2010, p. 29). Dwelling with beer allows both the thing to be “the locus of the full corona of liminal meanings” conditioned by the fourfold and the focal practitioner to sense that their “zone of focal awareness is surrounded by a corona of potentially articulable meanings, corridors that I might explore” (Taylor, 2016, p.95). Thus, dwelling with focal things and practices both preserves and meaningfully transforms truth and freedom by allowing the practitioner to think. Thinking, you will recall from Chapter 3, requires that a practitioner holds a dominant style lightly and allows other marginal styles to become manifest. Thus, the agile style, with all its productive and creative benefits, can be retained and deployed appropriately alongside other, more meaningful and perhaps even sacred, liminal meanings that co-exist but are marginalised by technology.

Koch resurrected the beer drinker’s conversation with the knowledgeable bartender as a focal practice that might explore these “potentially articulable meanings” among its drinkers. Just as we saw Koch doing in his description of a beer to radio and television stations, Boston Beer Company salespeople educate bartenders to educate their customers in the art of appreciating complex beers (Koch, 2016, Chapters 12-17). Koch and his subsequent salespeople would arrive at a bar equipped with ready cooled beers to share with a bartender. They would describe the beer’s ingredients, its hand-selection of those ingredients, arcane brewing practices, human-based timing of the addition of hops to the brewing beer, and the CEO’s personal tasting of small batch brews and point out the contribution each practice would make to the nuances of the beer’s flavour. This kind of sales involves a high level of linguistic facility as a poetic and expressive skill—one is not simply conveying messages efficiently when expressing

liminal meanings opened by the fourfold of a thing—but above all it requires the skill of listening.

It takes skill and attention to listen to someone, to notice what they're really saying. We tend to think communication is just rhetoric—words strung together in persuasive ways. But people also communicate between the lines. They seem to be saying one thing when in fact they're saying four different things, talking about their fears and joys and hopes. I'd much rather hear it with my own ears and puzzle it out rather than trust the job to someone else. It takes artful listening to arrive at any useful insight.

(Koch, 2016, p. 83)

The education of the BBC employees to sensitise them to these skills is equally distinctive and it is here that different use of the communicative and revelatory views of language between AB-InBev and BBC become apparent. AB-InBev's new employees are inculcated into a communicative view of language for propositional truth by being taught the “main commandments of the Garantia Culture Management Handbook” (Correa, 2013, p.170) and encouraged to make Falconi's method their “mental management model” (Falconi, 2013, p. 51). For them, language is communicative and secular, restricted to enabling them to make propositional truths and coordinate action in the existing world. In contrast, Boston Beer's new employees spend a few hours with the founder of the company being taught how to appreciate beer. Koch spends two hours at the start of the day introducing the company to the employees. At the end of the day, Koch returns to the group and personally shows them how to drink beer mindfully and intelligently, pointing out, revealing, and naming phenomena in the beer and fostering the naming skill.

Of course we have a whole training manual on how to taste beer, but I want to teach them myself how to do it, walking them through each beer one-by-one [they drink twenty-five in two-ounce tasting cups], and pointing out the key flavors, talking about elements like mouthfeel, appearance, and aftertaste. I'll describe what flavors come from what ingredients, and what to look for in the beginning, middle, and end of a taste experience. Are the flavors in balance? Does one overpower another?

(Koch, 2016, p.220)

In contrast to AB-InBev which rides turbulence, Koch's kind of management makes a venerable practice for drinking beer more resonant in the West's already volatilised world. This resonance reduces the turbulence by providing an already-existing and real foundation for creating value. The practice of personally listening and talking to a bartender is a dying art. One might speculate, and empirically observe, that the art of conversation is dying more generally in an increasingly digitised world (Turkle, 2015). Yet, Jim Koch brought artful conversation back to life, as a spiritual practice that fosters a certain kind of truth, that of a thing thinging, and preserved a brewing focal thing and practice among a wider culture that has become the foundation for its business' success. The adaptive management style transforms by continually re-gathering its original mood of composure and the meanings of the brew and, as beer drinkers' worlds change, re-articulating them with those developments, whether agile innovations in production or packaging or in the core product itself.

### **The Unthought of The Boston Beer Company Case**

The Boston Beer Company case relies substantially on autobiographical and journalistic accounts of successful strategic action by a single leader or management guru. It has been well described how business leaders, management gurus, and journalists interact to shape the cultural discourse in such ways that existing dominant discourses are reinforced and the stature and wealth of dominant groups of all three actors are raised among the wider community and critical voices depressed (Thrift, 2005, 2008; Phillips, Sewell, & Jaynes, 2008). In particular, management memoirs tend to facilitate leadership celebrity rather than critically examine their actions or the role their elevation plays for the wider community (Guthey, Clark, and Jackson, 2009). In

this case, it is plausible that Jim Koch develops an account of his own leadership that positions him as a saint and Big Beer leaders as corporate cyborgs (Alvesson & Spicer, 2011, pp. 51-75; 138-161). Sainly leaders encourage and mentor others to attain a “moral peak” in their actions (*ibid.*) Koch’s stories of how he mentors employees’ tastes and “artful listening” and disparages Big Beer’s pretence of caring, contrast clearly with Big Beer’s cyborg leaders who valorise superhuman levels of individual productivity, and thus supports his overall differentiation strategy. Similarly, management consultants are adept at sensing and exploiting emerging managerial fashions and fads that may last only a few years (Abrahamson, 1996). Did Jim Koch, as an ex-consultant, whether cynically or not, merely anticipate and exploit the coming generations’ taste for nostalgia and authenticity? As the BBC matures and grows, will Koch and the firm fail to adapt in ways that remain meaningful? As profitable growth flattens out, will they also follow Big Beer and abandon face-to-face selling, uproot the provenance of their ingredients, and turn to ingenious “new liquids” and “packaging solutions” to drive growth? It is possible and, notwithstanding my observations about the weaknesses of Cartesian scepticism and unmasking critique, these remain important questions to be addressed by empirical studies of both the historical development of BBC and of its actions in future.

However, I think there is a deeper question to pose of the case study, a question that focuses on what is unthought in Koch’s account. Recall Marcel Telles’ research to identify the next sector into which he would invest. He asked in which sectors the richest people in each South American country made their money. He discovered, in each case, that it was beer and decided upon that sector. Now recall how Koch made the same move. Both Telles and Koch could be considered highly skilled practitioners in the technological style. Telles as a securities trader, Koch as a process management

consultant. Telles answered the question by simply navigating to the most recent sector where fungible capital growth was being generated. Only the iterative cycle of capital as power mattered. By contrast, Koch discovered something in his past, a focal thing that mattered. It didn't dominate or organise his life at that time but it made sense that it might in future. Both people shared the broader technological clearing but only Koch sought to make meaning in ways that would not foster greater uprootedness. This is one way to describe experiencing the truth of one's own appropriated clearing – the last god, the sacred to be sheltered and adapted so that it commands authority over one's life – and it is still left unthematized in Koch's account. Left unthematized and undeveloped, it leaves his account vulnerable to charges of cynicism, an ossified nostalgia and bogus authenticity, charges which, as we will see, he is having to defend against in recent years. It also leaves undeveloped the question of how to develop the capacities for receptivity to the sacred and the kind of adaptive strategic to which it leads.

## Adaptive Management

If I am to defend this adaptive form as a generalizable remedy for an absurd contemporary strategy, I must convince the reader that the essence of human being is meaning making, that contemporary economic life threatens this essence, and that post-agile thinking puts right what is endangered by today's style. My argument rests upon the Heideggerians' account of how to remedy the loss of the ontological skills of meaning-making in the agile age. I turn first to an account of the human being as a meaning maker who relies, for a life lived well, upon an understanding of how its practices are changing and responding to those changes rather than, as postmodern thinkers are inclined to argue, on simply accepting and working those contingencies *ex nihilo*.

Drawing on Chapter 3's distinction between instrumental and existential meaningfulness, I can sharpen and modify my account of the dangers of technology. Heidegger claims that the agile style generates its own anomaly. In the agile style, nothing really matters, and yet we have seen how, for the experience of beer drinkers at least, some things really do and, if we abandon those things, the way of making sense of the world dies along with our abandonment. Heidegger names this shocked realisation—that some things and not others really do matter to particular selves even in the age of technological flexibility—the shock of the last god (Heidegger, 2012b, p. 14, pp.321-30). Now, I can elaborate on this claim by drawing on Wrathall's account of the twin anomalies of *despair* at the loss of the sacred and of *frustration* at the loss of freedom. Building on these I can cash out the work of this thesis and say more about why *Disclosing New Worlds'* avoidance of the question of the sacred and of mood is so deleterious to its attempt to address the dangers of technology.

To re-iterate, technology is the style of thinking that un-conceals all entities as only a standing reserve of resources. Resources are co-optable, interchangeable and reconfigurable and, as such, they need not be respected, preserved or revered. In the agile style, nothing matters existentially, there is nothing sacred. Resources are pure instrumental entities and matter only with a thin instrumental importance as options. In contrast, durable sacred things gather lives around them and convey importance and a sense of worth to those lives they gather. To the extent that we live with nothing sacred, we lose a place for ourselves in the world that provides a sense of things and of our lives mattering.

The more we attune ourselves to agility, the more we make every entity available everywhere and at all times and at minimum burden. And, the more we deconstruct and de-contextualise entities, so that their many different aspects and complex goods are always at hand as singular goods, the more we diminish the call of any particular thing or locale upon us. Thus, we noted how AB-InBev's executives configure and reconfigure every option of their products to "drive purchase intent and persuasion" and "relevance". If any aspect of the beverage configuration proves even fleetingly irrelevant to this intent, even if only temporary, a more agile brewer will replace and reconfigure it. One can be sure that if tradition, locality, and authenticity is shown to be relevant, then these aspects will quickly be deconstructed, quantified and manipulated into just the right formulation to "drive purchase intent and persuasion". But in so doing, the agile brewer will eliminate just those qualities that were first sought after. As Heidegger writes,

A mere change of attitude does nothing, just as all of what now stands in the distanceless as objects are never able on their own to transform themselves into things.

(Heidegger, 2012a, pp.19-20)

One cannot just co-opt traditionally meaningful aspects as resources and, at the same time, preserve their meaningfulness. Why not? Because the mood in which they are co-opted is already a technological one in which all such meaningful aspects lose their sacredness and show up only as resources to be co-opted. In the agile mood, nothing really matters, always and already.

Heidegger's solution to the loss of the sacred in the age of technology is to recover a sense of place and the existential, religious call that certain things place upon human beings as mattering beyond their instrumental worth. It is in this call to the divine that we can pinpoint the weakness of the solution recommended by Dreyfus and Spinoza in *Disclosing New Worlds* (1997) and, in their essay of the same year, *Highway Bridges and Feasts*. In their accounts, anomalies abound in the world and, equipped with language as the ultimate flexible commitment coordinator, we can flourish in an agile age if we can only learn to enjoy living flexibly and to relish its thrills. On Dreyfus and Spinoza's account we must celebrate ourselves as endlessly flexible disclosers of new worlds. However, for Heidegger, Wrathall, myself and, even later Dreyfus, such a life of seemingly endless freedom, is neither humanly feasible nor free. As countless literary examples show, from *Citizen Kane* to Pip in *Moby Dick*, as well as my brewing example, AB-InBev, a life of freedom separated from tradition, community, and biology is an un-liveable life that leads to madness and absurdity. Worse, it also covers up that one is not free. Instead, one is condemned to seek ever greater excitement, novelty and other affects that most Heideggerians see as covering up a profound boredom and sickness. It is a perverse freedom to be homeless, a homesickness in which we are continually wandering<sup>lii</sup>. While Dreyfus and Spinoza offer joyful flexibility as a consolation in an age of technology, a more durably meaningful solution is available if we can find a way to develop the ontological capacities we have lost in



losing existential mattering and to develop a way of life in which things can again have worth in themselves. As we have seen, in Heideggerian terms, the last god is the god that counters any style and reveals it as the necessarily contingent way that things make sense, one that is only preserved to the extent that we preserve it as it takes care of us. The last god is that god that shocks the human into an experience of this contingency, that a style may only be temporary, our identities temporary, and all of them dependent on events outside of our control. As I have argued throughout this thesis, this is what Heidegger argues the divinities, as uncontrollable moods, make possible in general, and that the last god, as the particular god that discloses technology, as only one of many styles is precisely the part of Heideggerian philosophy that *Disclosing New Worlds* omitted to make explicit.

To remind you, the Heideggerian fourfold of earth, sky, mortals and divinities is intended to explicate how focal things and practices work to create the most intense and worthwhile existence, what Heidegger called dwelling. To the extent that we dwell, we live in such a way that we allow each aspect of this fourfold to condition and be conditioned by each of the other aspects. Divine things, practices and places put in play this conditioning whereas an informational, agile age tends to diminish the sense of context, banish the divinities, and thin out the conditioning effect of the fourfold. As we saw, Heidegger's name for this happy or "apt" mutual conditioning of one aspect to (or *ad-*) another is *Ereignis* or *adaptation*<sup>liii</sup> (Wrathall, 2013, and personal communication). If one allows oneself to be conditioned by the fourfold then one breaks the grip of technology to the extent that this conditioning reveals a technological background style to the world as just that, a style of a world. One can set this conditioning by the *earth* in play by allowing the physicality of one's locality to condition one's actions rather than attempt to dominate the locale. One destroys this

conditioning for instance if, when the noble hops grown by the same farming family on the same German fields for centuries are deconstructed and re-created in laboratories. One is conditioned by the earth if one preserves these relationships with the German hop farmers, and restricts beer production to volumes that can sustain crop outputs. One is conditioned by the sky if one allows its seasonal, cyclical and diurnal rhythms to influence one's activities – drinking beers at times that respect seasonal availability of ingredients and family rituals, work cycles, weekends and holidays. One does violence to this conditioning if one smothers those rhythms by drinking any beer “anywhere and anytime”. One allows oneself to be conditioned by one's *mortality* by recognising one's ongoing learning and maturing, preserving and transforming one's cultural and historical traditional practices, and allowing one's healthy capacities and infirmities to condition one's actions so that one takes account of one's finitude and eschews instant gratification. Thus, one might drink different beers with different people at different times of one's life and always affirming the community of growers and brewers who brought the beer to the table. Finally, one allows the divinities to condition one's life by respecting a culture's holy festivals, practices and places and giving thanks for its affordances and upholding the mystery of the beer's brewing. One covers over these divinities to the extent that one ignores or routinely observes such occasions and such magic.

Such a practice of dwelling may seem odd, particularly from within the secular agile age that dismisses the importance of anything in itself. It is this difficulty that answers the final question of why one needs a God for such a worthy life. Surely, one could simply develop focal practices and allow oneself to be conditioned by the fourfold? However, if one is both to embark on such a dwelling and not to do so in the agile or world-picturing styles, optionalising, quantifying and controlling one's

dwelling activities and so forth, one must also be shocked into the authentic recognition of the always already operation of any such style. Heidegger calls such a shock or *jolt*, which invites participation rather than commands a further stylised action, an encounter with the last god. Recall, from earlier in this chapter, how gods *counter* us out of any one particular style and a counter-mood moves one from one style to another, the last god is the surprise that shocks us to recognise the groundlessness of any one style, refuses to replace it with a new style but instead reveals to us the mystery of style itself and of our participatory, thoughtful role in bringing meaning and meaningfulness to everyday life. If the last god, as the revelation of our existence as the finite and mortal thrown-open clearing, is required for the worthiest kinds of life, the question remains of what capacities we must bring to agile strategic management to ensure its worthy practice. Thus, it is to the elucidation of adaptive strategic practice and the capacities required to support it that I turn in the final chapter.

## 8. Discussion and Conclusion: On Adaptive Strategy

In Chapter 7, I explored and tested the agile and adaptive styles with two paradigmatic cases of practice drawn from the beer industry. I compared AB-InBev's agile style, in which everything appears as a resource in an ever-changing world, to Boston Beer's adaptive style that finds a focal thing, beer, that gathers what matters in life in practices that preserve and transform it. This adaptive approach is becoming so successful that it is challenging Big Beer's dominance as well as demonstrating sustained success in other sectors. In the final section, I explained the Heideggerian idea of the essence of human being as meaning-making and, building on this, in this chapter I return to the Boston Beer case study to distil and set out an adaptive strategic management practice, propose the ontological capacities required to practice it, and then conclude this thesis by summarising its argument and considering its limitations and future research directions.

### The Adaptive Strategy Loop

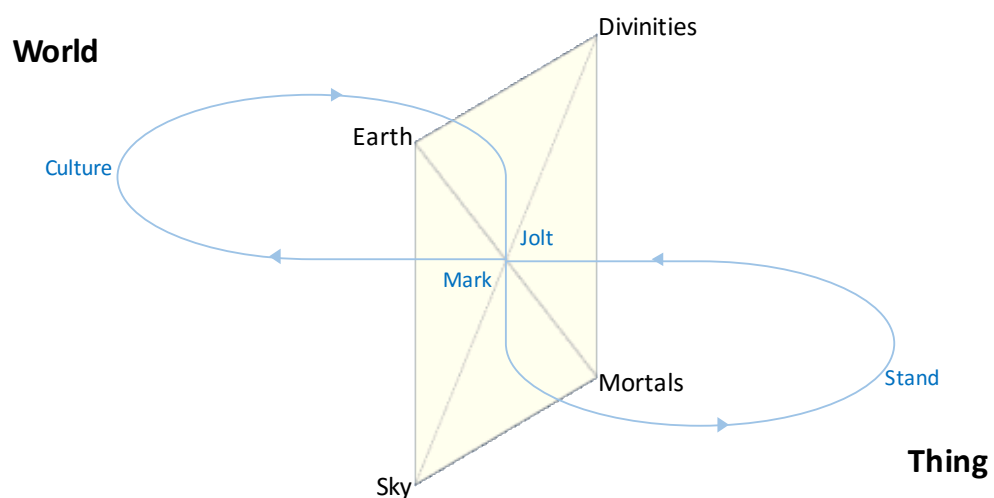
The Boston Beer kind of meaningful strategy depends upon leaders preserving a set of practices that hold open the fourfold context necessary for producing and consuming their products through the ups and downs of the markets and their background cultural context. Preserving these practices requires understanding the thrown style of the community that comes together to make a product and make its use matter to people when they live at their best. At its most admired, beer drinking requires preserving practices of friendship, good humour, mutual support, and temperance so that everyone can get home safely, and the homeliness of a pub setting. At its best, it also includes a local brew, whose ingredients are drawn from a known location, perhaps whose owners or master brewer are known, and where even some of the farms serving

the brewer are known. One wants to feel that the craft that goes into the beer came out of a community of other people. Drawing on my earlier description of *focal practices*, I describe adaptive strategy making as one that centres around preserving and transforming a focal thing and its focal practice, such as beer drinking, that (1) inspires the sacred foundational mood of composure even if we are not at the present time engaging in it, as well as the specific mood of the particular practice such as the conviviality of beer drinking, (2) has evolved since our youth and that of our forebears and thus keeps a thrown-open clearing of meaning alive, (3) gives us a clear role with clear actions when we engage in the practice, for instance, a friend who takes care of other friends and supports them in their need to wind down, and (4) draws us to preserve the practice by evolving it as it is threatened by new cultural values, for example, by appointing a designated driver to take more care so that friends can get home safely when public attitudes towards drink-driving change.

Under the generalised cultural pressure to perform in an agile way, while many managers may recognise the existence and importance of such focal practices, they have not been able to stick to them or make them the heart of their businesses. In the following section, I provide a framework for adaptive strategy and show how Jim Koch innovated in this authentic way to gather rather than fragment a community.

My framework for adaptive strategy has four key phases: (1) managers are jolted into an awareness of the fourfold that reveals the clearing as the space for meaningful action that is held open by practices; (2) the managers take a stand to preserve that clearing in a focal practice; (3) find ways to publicly mark the commitment to the focal practice; and (4) work to strengthen and adapt to the background cultural world that supports and calls for adaptation of the focal practice (Figure 5). As well as the political leaders and civic activists who lead the way in which

the members of a community make sense of and adapt their lives, we typically think of focal strategies in commerce as the work of founding entrepreneurs. Founding entrepreneurs do indeed tend to bring such vision, sense of purpose and cultural innovation. But there are many hugely successful adaptive strategy organisations including Whole Foods Market, Illy Coffee, Patagonia, Disney, Google and Linux. Michael Eisner, who transformed Disney by going back to its focal practices in animated movies and wholesome television shows for kids, showed that you do not need to be a founding entrepreneur. I will set out the adaptive strategy style by turning back to brewing to recall how the founder of The Boston Beer Company, Jim Koch, first discovered what he loves but then how he twice experienced the tension between the focal thing and its contextual world and twisted back toward his focal practice to preserve and transform a business that builds both financial and ethical value.



**Figure 5: Adaptive Strategy**

## Jolt

Adaptive strategy-making starts with an affective jolt out of a complacent forgetfulness of the clearing and into an awed awareness of one's responsibility to hold open and take care of this background meaningfulness through one's everyday actions. This jolt is the revelatory experience of the fourfold brought by the last god. Because the actor experiences their actions as justified ultimately by their committed appropriation of their own contingent past, present and future, the jolt inspires intense commitment in actors to take ownership of their actions that preserve and transform the clearing. This jolt may come from reading the founder's statements or from older employees giving accounts of the feel of their older way of working and comparing them with the present day, remarking upon what is missing. Or it may come from talking with new, perhaps younger, customer-enthusiasts and noticing the disconnections between their practice and love for the product and that which currently prevails among the company's own employees. Instead of looking to create a map of all the current anomalies, adaptive strategy starts with a jolt of dismay that re-attaches managers to the focal practice sustaining the clearing that is the background of the company. I call this an "inward turn", because it is a turn away from surface events back towards the heart or essence of the practice, the first twist in the adaptive agile loop (for an example of an exercise that can help create this kind of jolt, see Spinoso, Hancocks & Glennon, forthcoming).

As we saw, in 1983-84, Jim Koch felt a calling back to his roots (Koch, 2016, pp.9-21). At the time, he was a successful manufacturing consultant for the Boston Consulting Group earning \$250,000 per year but he reported feeling that something was missing from his successful life<sup>liv</sup>. When he looked at himself and his colleagues, they all looked the same. What was missing for Koch was his connection to the clearing

that was his family's 150 years of brewing. As an ambitious student, Koch had turned his back on brewing as irrelevant to the modern world. However, when he read of how Fritz Maytag was re-creating all-malt steam brewing in San Francisco, Koch saw that brewing was not just a relic of his past. If Maytag could find a way to take brewing back then brewing could also be Koch's future. Koch was a home brewer already and knew brewing well (Koch, 2016, p.16). It was his family's cultural background. His father and grandfather had both been brewmasters in Cincinnati. As the industry consolidated under the giant brewers Anheuser-Busch, Miller and Coors, the Koch family and other local brewers' flavourful, challenging beers were swept away by the cheaper, simpler, long-life beers. The big cost advantages and broadcast advertising campaigns of the giants undermined the distinctive position of producers of local, interesting and fresh beers.

Koch saw an opportunity but he also felt a shock. As a successful consultant, he had often helped businesses dominate markets by eliminating competition from smaller businesses. Still, he felt intensely the frustration that drinkers of imported beer felt when they tried to find an alternative to the bland, inexpensive US beers. He felt that those people were his own community and he wanted to give them something better. His distant and his recent past were clashing in the present.

Working with his father, Koch dug around in the family recipe box and brewing magazines stored in his family attic. His father recommended an old family recipe for all-malt beer from the 1860s (Koch, 2016, p.3). Koch bought the hops and brewed up a small batch in his own kitchen. When he tasted it, he knew he had something special. With that taste, the jolt was complete. He had successfully engaged in brewing a difficult family recipe.



## Stand

Managers deepen their personal commitment by developing a stand for the focal thing and practices that preserve what they have re-discovered about the truth of the way people are using the product.

Koch could see from the niche popularity of import beers and the distinctiveness of his new home brew that he had a beer so superior that it would, by itself, create new customers in a market that seemed to be a closed shop. He invested \$100,000 of his own money and raised a further \$150,000 from friends and family to start his own company (Koch, 2016, pp.25-28). He perfected his recipe and rented part of a disused Boston brewery to brew and bottle the first batch of his beer – Samuel Adams.

He made his first sale by taking a case of his new beer to a local bartender and engaging him in a poetic conversation that created the language in which the truth of the new beer could be articulated and make sense. He invited the bartender to join with him in lamenting the decline of the local brews and the dominance of Big Beer. He pointed the bartender toward the flavour notes of his new beer and invited him to taste it. He reminded him of the popularity of imported beers and painted a picture of those drinkers who he knew would love and buy Koch's beer. The manager sniffed and drank the beer, nodded appreciatively and straight away ordered twenty-five cases. The success of this one moment reinforced Koch's antipathy to traditional marketing and his distinctive conversational practice has become renowned within Boston Beer Company and the wider industry. Koch still spends time visiting bars, testing ideas with passengers sitting next to him on planes, and directly pitching new brews face-to-face to small groups of customers. Koch took a stand for the face-to-face creation of communities who loved challenging beer. As he said,

If more CEOs had to go out and sell their products, day in and day out, they'd pay more attention to what they are making. When you are out there selling, face-to-face with your customer, there's no place to hide.

(Hill & Rifkin, 1999, p.235)

## **Mark**

Adaptive strategy leaders create a signal, historic event that appeals across generations of customers and employees and marks out a territory to which others can gather and begin transforming the wider cultural common sense. These followers re-experience the jolting contrast that the manager felt at the beginning between the thing (the craft beer) and the wider cultural world (the stylised context of agile Big Beer). In this sense, the third step doubles back and repeats the first, this time finding a way to bring an articulation of the fourfold and its focal thing to bear upon the world. That is why the adaptive loop is twisted in contrast to the iterative agility loop.

Six months after founding the company, Koch and first employee Rhonda Kallman, a former bartender, made their mark. They took the beer to the Great American Beer Festival in Denver, a small three-day festival with almost a thousand craft beer drinkers sampling over 100 craft beers from breweries from across America (Koch, 2016, p.90). While most breweries sent sales people and press kits, Boston Beer sent the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive to tell stories and engage personally with drinkers. Koch and Kallman threw themselves into telling the story of Sam Adams and mentoring the samplers to appreciate their beer just as they had done with bartenders (Koch, 2016, p.90). At the end of the festival, Sam Adams was voted best beer and, at the airport on their way home, Koch and Kallman cycled through telephone call after call to the Boston press. In their taxi home from Boston's airport they heard the news on the radio, "Local Boston Beer is the Best Beer in America!"

They had made their first historical mark: they were the ones who made and explained meaningful beer.

### **Culture**

When they have made their mark, instead of revising their commitments and reinventing themselves, adaptive strategy moves to adjust the prevailing regime of truth or style of the wider world. Adaptive strategists preserve and intensify a wider culture that will sustain their own practice. Over time, they build the cultural structures that the community of users, producers, partners, and other actors will need for the focal practice to flourish<sup>lv</sup>.

The Boston Beer Company was America's Best Beer four years in a row. When, in the face of suspicion and pressure from other craft brewers, the beer awards moved away from a single award to multiple categories and to blind tasting, Sam Adams still won three gold awards in the first year under the new arrangements. Now was the time for Koch to turn to build a stronger beer-making and drinking culture among US beer drinkers. Koch had always focused on challenging recipes and selling by mentoring. To compete he wanted those to remain his distinctive marks. Now he needed to add something to the culture of beer drinking more generally. He turned to freshness (Koch, 2016, pp.126-129). One of his main complaints about Big Beer, which he shared with craft beer fans, was their use of additives and preservatives to extend the shelf life of beer. Big Beer's bottle and cans might be on the shelf for four or five months, and the taste of the beer suffered from both its preservatives and staleness. In 1987, Koch contracted with a local West Coast contract manufacturer to promise that beer would be on the shelf within 24 hours of being brewed. He became the first US company to print a sell-by date on the bottles and promised that any bottle would also be taken off

the shelf as soon as its sell-by date had passed with Boston Beer buying back the stale beer from distributors and retailers. Fresh beer was highly successful and the response from customers to the sell-by date has been such that the competition, including Big Beer, now routinely prints sell-by dates on their products. “Freshness” has become the common sense for the entire industry, and it plays into The Boston Beer Company’s contract manufacturing model. Koch takes the long view of customer loyalty despite short-term costs. In the early 1990s, when BBC began the buy-back programme, it bought back and destroyed beer valued at around \$100,000 in lost revenues. By 2016, this figure had grown to \$6 million annually (Koch, 2016, p.129). In 2010, they reinforced their stance by launching the Freshest Beer programme to re-engineer the supply chain and cut the time wholesalers hold beer by half (Mickle, 2016).

### **Round and Around the Twisted Loop**

Koch’s story might sound like that of any founding entrepreneur who, one day in the future, will fall prey to agile practices and the agile companies, like AB-InBev, which pursue them. However, in adaptive strategy, companies such as Koch’s only fall prey to technology if they forget themselves and the clearing that sustains them. It almost happened to Koch.

By 1998, Jim Koch and Boston Beer had refined the American beer drinking public’s idea of drinking to the extent that craft beer was breaking out of being a niche product. He and Kallman believed that Boston needed to re-position itself to succeed with the emerging generation of beer drinkers who loved novelty rather than rootedness. Koch reluctantly accepted that his own face-to-face methods might hinder this re-positioning and agreed to appoint a professional brand marketing executive with a background in Big Beer. The executive assembled an expensive marketing team and

invested large sums in marketing research, focus groups, consultants, and broadcast advertising. However, his efforts fragmented rather than intensified the identity of the brand (Hill & Rifkin, 1999, pp.245-247). His newly hired team had no relationship with Koch, no connection with the brand, and they did no face to face sales. They never tried to sell a beer to one of the new generation of potential customers. Koch was horrified when he discovered that, in an effort to attract younger customers, they had resorted to packaging gimmicks like snowmen and sailboats, un-related promotional gifts like satellite dishes, and radio ads of a “guy slurping beer off the floor, another playing spoons” (Hill & Rifkin, 1999, p.246). Unsurprisingly, those gimmicky initiatives failed to increase sales and, worse, they had nothing to do with Sam Adams beer. Had he let the marketer continue, I believe Koch would then have fallen victim to agile Big Beer. But Koch’s response was to go back to the key practices that underpinned success. He fired the brand marketer, brought the slimmed down marketing team under his direct control, and returned to the face-to-face selling and personal marketing that was necessary to educate a new generation in how to love a challenging beer (Koch, 2016, pp.32-34; pp.147-48; pp. 210-15).

In 2008, Koch returned to going cultural. At that time, there was a drastic shortage of aromatic hops. Koch, turning away from the more generic social responsibility activities his management team were conducting, made a move intended to sustain the community that in turn sustained him. At the time, global supplies of hops were greatly reduced and prices rising sharply. Most small craft brewers were desperate for hops and could not afford to buy them on the open market, Boston Beer had a surfeit. Its scale was such that it could buy hops years in advance and command lower prices. Koch held a lottery for small craft brewers to buy all of Boston’s excess at cost price (Koch, 2016, p.229). In the same year, Koch continued with this style of

building a wider culture to change its common sense by setting up the Samuel Adams micro-loan scheme to support other smaller craft food and drink manufacturers and hospitality entrepreneurs to start or grow their business (Koch, 2016, p.226).

On 3 October 2013, the share price of Boston Beer Company was such that Jim Koch was now craft beer's first billionaire. Personally, becoming a billionaire is not the point of the story, it merely serves to illustrate that adaptive strategy is not an approach that best suits small-scale hobby businesses but can also support large-scale business enterprises. Koch's success is still rooted in having the focal thing of having the best "challenging beer" and the focal practice of face-to-face selling. Koch still visits hop fields in Germany and England, he still goes to small craft beer fairs and sells his brews, and he still occasionally goes to bars and pubs to invite them to taste his newest recipe and learn how to sell it. In multiple daily actions, in his moods, and in his conversations, Koch is still religiously holding open the meaningful space of craft beer.

### **Limits to Koch's Strategy: Back Round and Around the Twisted Loop.**

As suggested in Chapter 7's brief discussion of Jim Koch's unthought, although Boston Beer Company serves as a paradigmatic case of adaptive strategy in practice, it is not without challenges. In the last few years, some of those have appeared, the company's rise has slowed and a backlash begun in the social media world and among beer consumers (Crouch, 2015; Mickle, 2016). BBC is clearly the most successful craft beer in the USA but its growth rate has slowed dramatically and craft beer *aficionados* have begun to decry its claims to craft beer authenticity. In the last twenty years, the craft beer market in the US has grown dramatically. In 1999, there were 1,564 breweries whereas, in 2016, there are 4,200 with two breweries being opened every

day in recent years (Mickle, 2016). However, despite the growth in demand, the rise in ultra-local, hipster beers as direct competition has meant that BBC's growth has fallen from regular 20% annual volume growth to just 3.6% in 2015 (*ibid*). Among beer drinking aficionados, Koch and the BBC have begun to attract criticism as being closer to the giant brewing corporations than to an authentic, local craft brewer (Crouch, 2015; Mickle, 2016). Koch's personalised, story-based and conversational approach has been attacked as merely clever but manipulative marketing, the historical roots of the original Sam Adams recipe portrayed as an exaggeration given that it was developed by technical brewer Joe Owades, and his brewing approach criticised for a lack of localism and authenticity (Crouch, 2015). The younger craft beer drinker who is driving the market growth seeks authenticity, "more so than any other generation that we've seen before. Millennials can see right through insincerity and they're actually looking for it" (Strategic marketing executive, Michelle Snodgrass, quoted in Crouch, 2015). These newer drinkers want beers that are even more local, even more artisanal, and with an even more visible connection to the farms and community of farmers that grew the hops and malt. For this generation of beer drinkers, "Sam Adams has a coolness problem. And the company knows it" (Crouch, 2015). These criticisms of Koch and the BBC are significant and serious challenges to the business' strategy but they do not, as they stand, represent a fundamental challenge to adaptive strategic management itself rather to Koch as an exemplar of it.

Adaptive strategy accepts that the worldly context is always changing. The adaptive strategist must recognise the tension between the focal thing and its practices and the dynamic background context that conditions them and deems them relevant or not. The task for Koch's thinking is how to make sense of the current challenges in ways that preserve what is most resonant in BBC as a craft beer brewer but take account

of the threats to its existence. Koch's initial response suggest he is only partly grasping the adaptive challenge. He appears to doubt whether this emerging segment of beer drinkers really is seeking authenticity or whether indeed it is itself merely evidence of a deepening nihilism that demands the same response from a brewer focused on something that matters. In the past, Jim Koch's approach has drawn on modern and agile strategic management styles to improve quality and freshness and reduce costs but always focused on the meaningfulness of brewing and drinking beer. The rise of a new generation of beer drinkers poses new challenges for the company but not one that calls for a straightforward response. Rather than being a seeker of authenticity, another veteran craft brewer has characterised the new drinker as having an "annoying young hipster attitude toward beer. It's the same sort of attitude that you find in music. 'Oh that brewery was so last year.' People want to try new stuff all the time" (Dann Paquette, cofounder of Pretty Things Beer and Ale Project, quoted in Crouch, 2015). Paquette is describing the nihilistic, agile self who seeks endless novelty and, for whom, authenticity is just another form of novelty. Koch himself appears to agree, "You can't meet the needs of every hipster bar" (Jim Koch, quoted in Crouch 2015). However, Koch's task as an adaptive strategist is to accept the genuine inconsistencies in the authenticity of his business while also adapting to the growing nihilistic demand for novel authenticity, which could threaten his company. It remains to be seen whether he can go back around the twisted loop to transform his focal thing once again to adapt to another contextual world, and do so without sacrificing what matters.



## **An Education in Thinking: ontological capacities and developmental practices**

In Chapter 3, I began to describe the role of education in developing the sensibility among practitioners of the kind that allows for skilful sense-making to accomplish results reliably in a situation and that yet also preserves the mystery that allows for truth, freedom, and meaningfulness.

Heidegger characterised the selves called into existence by the age of technology, in which reality is accepted as essentially chaotic, as ones marked by conflict between doubt and confidence, and especially, by boredom in the face of an abyss of meaning (Heidegger, 2003, pp.89-91; Thiele, 1997, p.507). Dreyfus and Kelly named the predicament facing selves in the agile age as the “burden of choice”, the necessity, in a godless age, of making choices based on “nothing at all” (Dreyfus & Kelly, 2011, p.6). We have seen how the kind of agile self that is emerging to deal with uncertainty can be seen as the purification of the “will-to-power” in an incarnation of pure “will-to-will”. This joyful *active nihilist*, one lacking a gathering centre of meaningfulness to life other than the circulation of power, wills simply for the sake of continuing to exercise the will. For the nihilist in general, entities are no longer even objects distinct from a subject but simply a “standing reserve” of resources available for ordering and re-ordering and in pursuit of no purpose other than the continuation and accumulation of power and the will. The self itself becomes such a resource, values are posited and can be taken back, and nothing has any purchase beyond the will-of-the-wisp chasing after whims. Hence, the agile-self, as an active nihilist, welcomes uncertainty, is gloriously vigorous and endlessly flexible but is unable to distinguish more from less worthy choices. All ends are equally valuable to the extent they accumulate power. The active nihilist sees alternatives everywhere but denies the

burden of choice and, by making no distinctions of the worthiness of ends other than the joyful accumulation of power, gets enslaved to flux and to novelty itself.

In the age of technology, one is called to maximise the availability of all resources, posit values ever-afresh, and actualise these ever-changing values in aesthetically-satisfying ways, before doing it all again. Borgmann described this as the device paradigm for which one makes all resources ever-more available, by unbundling, standardising and making them universally, frictionlessly connectible one to another. Any friction encountered is not encountered as an externality to be respected but as a technical challenge to be overcome (Borgmann, 1987). In the case of the New Age religions, even the gods can be reduced to such flexible, frictionless resources. The exemplar of the agile style is the Internet-enabled life parodied in contemporary novels like *Super Sad True Love Story* by Gary Shteyngart or Dave Eggers' *The Circle*, which describe lives of mobile technology-enabled total financial performance, mood assessment, and performance promise-keeping.

Recall from Chapter 3 how, for the Heideggerians, the agile age also containing the seeds of its own overcoming. As Wrathall and Lambeth argue, the misery and instability commonly experienced in the age of *emergence* was the anomaly that led to a receptivity to monotheism and metaphysics and the age of *Machenschaft* (Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011). Similarly, they argue that the *despair* felt at the loss of anything that really matters, the loss of the sacred as that which we cannot laugh at, and the *frustration* felt at the way optionalisation co-opts our freedom into the freedom simply to obey the demands of a system become the twin anomalies of the age of technology (Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011, p. 177).). Together these twin anomalies spark a third anomaly that forms an existential crisis that the Heideggerians consider sufficient to open up a new third mega-epoch. Having described the current agile style of

understanding and suggested how it is destroying the possibility of a flourishing life, I turn next to describe the key elements of the Heideggerians' remedy for the danger of the agile age.

So far, we have seen that the constitution of meaning is volatile. Both contextual networks and the entities they constitute are changeable and without fixed essence. We have also seen how there has been no foundational entity, whether a God or a human with a fixed essence, to serve as the stable ground of substantive meaning for all worlds over time but, rather, stable worlds of meaning and mattering tend gently to gather by *Ereignis*. According to Heidegger, it is humans who play the central role in *Ereignis* of stabilising the meanings of a network and its entities. While the most un-anthropomorphic Heideggerians including the speculative realists and materialists such as Bruno Latour argue for all entities as meaning-constituting actors or disclosers of worlds, none would argue that humans do not play an important role (Morton, 2013, p.23). Heidegger argues that the human is distinguished by being the only entity able to disclose its role as a discloser, that which receives and responds to the potential meanings of a situation. This is the human essence, not an essence of particular qualities but a minimal essence as the being able to disclose its role in disclosing being or meaning. Thus, humans can be mindful or mindless of their participatory role as disclosers. To the extent, that they are mindful or reflective of this role, he describes them as authentic. Recovering this role for humans as participants stabilising meaningful relational networks is the Heideggerian key to remedying the shortcomings of technology.

As we saw, the agile era is different not just because there is uncertainty but because today agile Western selves live in a unifying understanding of being *as* infinitely flexible. Flexibility is so total as to even encompass the gods, those

traditionally divine sources of legitimisation that we have relied upon as the ultimate bases for our choices<sup>lvi</sup>. Even the gods can be chopped and changed, deconstructed and re-combined in an ironic justification of any position. For Heidegger, the agile Western self is estranged from the hidden source of meaning and sees only the endless productions of its own will as justification enough for action. On this basis, it feels homeless because if any home will do, no home is truly a home. Heidegger's remedy for the agile self's state is to cultivate its spiritual way of being to be able to participate in the gathering of meaning, *Ereignis* or *adaptation*.

This description of the twist from the pre-metaphysical to the metaphysical raises the question of how to accomplish a further shift into a post-metaphysical age. This is precisely what Heidegger considered we are currently entering into by virtue of a twist out of the age of planning. As we have seen, in Heidegger's thinking, the metaphysical twist and its subsequent 2,500 years of variations on a theme of stability and correctness, came at the cost of a gradual estrangement of human being from the wonder of its fitting together with a sending of a style of being. Heidegger's view is that the current agile epoch fosters an experience of absurdity that can be the ground for a twist away from the *Machenschaft* styles. The problem with the flexible age of technology is that all creations tend again to be sacrificed and transformed, nothing is worth keeping, all are made again into options for consumption. While it may, on the surface, feel like freedom, after a time it begins to appear as an ultimate, near-perfect trap, in which we are always subject to a metaphysical law to turn everything into an optionalised resource to be organised for maximum productivity, a contemporary example of the Chinese finger trap in which every effort made in order to free oneself only leads to further entrapment. The imperative to optionalise actually reduces our capacity to respond to that which surrounds us. To take one seemingly absurd example,

who today working in a sawmill making roof timbers could treat each piece of incoming timber as an ensouled being to be venerated and released to a carving process that releases its highest potential, perhaps as a wheel, a sculpture, or a pepper-pot? If the first twist was prompted by the anomaly of the lack of stability, Heidegger argues that the twist out of experience will be prompted by two anomalies that lead to a third (Wrathall & Lambeth, 2011, p. 177). Our *despair* that we have lost the divine will push us to seek things and practices that “push back” on us and give us the experience of something that really matters (*ibid*). And our *frustration* that we are not free from the flexible, commoditising style will push us to listen to particularities rather than simply obey the demands of the agile style—the market system (*ibid*). However, Heideggerians have speculated about how these twin anomalies appearing in the ultimately flexible age of technology leads to a third and most crucial anomaly, the experience of a last god. As described earlier, rather than jolt us into a new substantial and singular style, the last god is the one that shocks us back into a recognition of the groundlessness and instability of *any current style*, whether by refusing to provide a historical ground, or future goal, or contemporary completeness to any current style, and that opens us up to a new *ontological capacity*, a kind of receptivity that allows things to matter and make demands upon us, and yet the last god refuses to bestow any single substantial style either. Thus, we encounter the last god only in a refusal of the contemporary style to offer up its grounding (either from the past, the present or the future) and in “hints” and “intimations” of a new style—invitations to explore liminal meanings not yet articulated in the situation. The last god shows up in anomalous experiences between a thing and its shifting contextual background and opens up unforeseen ways that we can go on together. The last god is not a supernatural entity that will arrive from out of the skies to save us but is an encounter with an aspect of something already there in our things

and practices but concealed, namely the agile style. It is the experience of the remainder, of resistance or refusal in our practice (*ibid*, p.178), when something refuses to be optionalised, a gnawing doubt for example about how one is treating an employee, a natural resource, or a skilled practice by codifying and optionalised its explicit economically commodifiable nature. The sense that, for all one's brilliance at technologisation, one is not getting at what really matters. The conversation I had with a senior UK retail executive in which he said, "We measure and manage bloody everything except for what really matters! We keep losing that." This would be an example of the hinting and winking passing by of the last god – the momentary penetration into thought that there are things, events, moments that "really do matter" but not because they are options.

Heidegger considers that the twist to the age of *Ereignis* will be led by a few individuals, in earlier writings he calls them forerunners but I will retain his later term thinkers, with the ontological capacities for these contextual hints and winks to take root. In his latest writings reviewed in Chapter 3, he suggested an educational practice to develop the ontological capacities and practices that these thinkers will have that will enable this rooting to take place. Following suggestions from Heideggerian scholars in particular Mark Wrathall<sup>lvii</sup>, I describe three ontological capacities that can be developed as ways of being for thinking managers and that make possible or condition an adaptive strategic management. As already described, if one is to be attuned to a last god, one must first have a sensitivity to the sacred as something that resists us and our wills, that sets in play a gathering of mutual adaptation, and that bestows a profound happiness. For this ontological capacity, I prescribe a disciplinary, apprentice-based education in the "tiniest spheres", in other words in a focal thing and focal practice.

<b>Anomaly</b>	<b>Ontological Capacity</b>	<b>Educational Practice</b>
Despair	Tiniest spheres: experience the sacred	Focal Things and Practices
Frustration	Sensibility: abandonment by being	Metapoietic Education
Openness	Composure: reticent courage	Education in Thinking

Secondly, these individuals must have developed a sensibility, the “calm, self-possessed surrender to that which is worthy of questioning”. As we saw, disciplinary mastery brings instrumental skills to deliver results within a currently prevailing clearing or way of making sense of things ordinarily. However, the human essence is to be a receiver and discloser of meaningfulness *per se* and not only of one set of meanings. Thus, Heidegger speaks of the necessity of an abandonment by being that throws in to question the reigning cultural style and personal identity that was hitherto unquestionable. This disruption of confident action within a regime of meaning sensitises one to *Ereignis*, the relational and dynamic gathering of a style in itself, rather than to any particular settled configuration of meaning. On a collective level, the death of the Crow nation’s culture and the reticent listening for new possibilities by its leader Plenty Coups has been described in Jonathan Lear’s *Radical Hope* (Lear, 2006). On the individual level, the death of an identity is also depicted in the transformation of master sergeant Galoup in the movie *Beau Travail* (Denis, 1999) and in Robert Stolorow’s psychotherapeutic account of the facing up to the death of one’s personal identity following the physical death of a spouse in his book, *World, Affectivity, Trauma* (Stolorow, 2011). Thus, an education for thinking must have built on the disciplinary mastery that brings awareness of the sacred and facility in the focal practice, to allow the thinker to develop the sensibility of the many ways that meaning has been configured over the course of human history and is configured across humanity in the present day. The thinker must have experienced that any particular

style is contingent, its survival is precarious and its dawning and its destruction precipitous. Thus, sensibility reveals that existential meaningfulness requires active participation by people to gather and preserve it in the face of further contingencies. Thus, a sensitivity to the history of meaning and the requisite modesty towards any particular configuration, and an openness to other configurations, must be in place.

Finally, the thinker must have the *composure* to withstand the questioning of current ways of making sense and yet resist the urge to retreat into optionalising, theorising, calculating, or some other metaphysical style. The reticent courage to think resists the reactionary tendency to reduce a thing to a commodity for the sake of co-opting it for management. Instead, the thinker will remain resolute, diffidently or shyly listening out for and gently developing new possibilities. My contention is that this foundational mood is only experienced at the highest levels of skill with a focal practice in the contemporary epoch. Hence, its appearance comes only after development of the other two capacities and disclosure to oneself of the fundamental attunement of our contemporary epoch—the “busy-bored-whatever” affect.

Based on this analysis, I prescribe three recommendations for educational practice that interact to develop these three ontological capacities. The prescriptions align to each of the capacities though they interact and their effects are multiplicative. Their effect is to create strategic thinkers able to disclose themselves as disclosers, listening and responding to the particularities of the situation rather than applying some universal style to it.

For sensitivity to the sacred, I prescribe discovering and dedicating oneself to an apprenticeship in a focal thing and practice that connects with the sacred from the outset and that, as one develops one’s disciplinary skilfulness and sense-making to higher and higher levels, opens a sensibility to the un-groundedness of the style of the



practice itself and a mood of composure or *Gelassenheit* that allows for its courageous and mindful development. As we saw, a focal practice is a practice that encourages a thing to become closest to human practice, rather than be set at a distance for the purpose of correct ascertainment or co-optation. Speaking against the context of the technologically-mediated world, Borgmann offers four propositions for the affirmation of a focal practice: (1) there is nowhere I would rather be, (2) there is no-one I would rather be with, (3) there is nothing I would rather be doing, and (4) I will remember this well (Borgmann, 2007). Developing one's skill in the focal practice opens the next two ontological capacities, hence a pre-requisite is that an executive has a focal practice connected to the core of the business. Affirming information engineering or financial engineering as a focal practice is seen as problematic as the material at their centre, signs and money respectively, are understood as fungible means and measures of ends but in their fungibility are disconnected from context and hence inadequate for supporting a focal thing (Borgmann, 1987, pp. 216-217; 2000, pp. 210-11).

Sensibility emerges as one's own disciplinary skilfulness in a focal practice reaches the highest levels of facility. At higher levels of capability in the "tiniest spheres", one discovers that one has adopted a style from one's teacher and, that this style can be swept away by another quite different style. For example, if one learned to play piano with a teacher with a formal, classical style of playing and has reached the highest levels of technical capability one might initially be devastated as the teacher turns you over to another teacher, one with a fluid, jazz-inflected style of playing (Dreyfus, 2008a, 2008b). While one's technical facility (the playing of scales and so on) remains, the experience is of having one's world and one's identity washed away is an experience of existential death. For the development of sensibility to styles and to *Ereignis* as adaptation, I prescribe Dreyfus and Kelly's *metapoietic* general education

practice alongside, and at later stages of, the disciplinary apprenticeship in a focal practice. This programme develops sensitivities to the various configurations of meaning that have held sway and then passed away across human history. Metapoietic education would also educate a practitioner in the skill of reading for mood of an individual at a moment in time, then for the mood of a general style, such as that of a teacher, and eventually to the attunements that have dominated historical epochs and that still exist even if only at the margins of our contemporary world. This awareness both expands the repertoire of possibilities for responding to the affordances of different situations and sensitises one to the most fundamental attunements necessary for adaptation (Dreyfus & Kelly, 2011).

The development of sensibility and especially of this last sensitivity to adaptation is necessary to support the third prescription, a programme of *education in thinking* aimed at the character development to foster and support composure necessary to invent new and meaningful responses in the face of the existential death of one's historical culture and personal identity. Such educational programmes are in their infancy but parallels are clear between Dreyfus' stages of the transformations of intelligibility with higher levels of expertise and the various transpersonal developmental frameworks and practices (Kegan, 1982, 1985; Kegan, Laskow Lahey, Miller, Fleming & Helsing, 2016; Rooke & Torbert, 2005; Dreyfus 2008a, 2008b)<sup>lviii</sup>.

Koch's story illustrates all these aspects.

First, in the jolt at the start of his story, Koch re-dedicated himself to recovering the family focal practice of craft brewing fresh and challenging beers that he had personally marginalised and inventing a new one of conversational selling as mentoring. He apprenticed himself, first to his father and subsequently to brewmaster Joe Owades, and he continues to apprentice new recruits to BBC by personally

educating them in the focal practice of making and drinking beer. With each subsequent twist in his loop, he re-dedicated himself to these focal practices, drew upon scientific and agile practices such as efficient production and mass marketing, but always swerved away from being co-opted by them. He did not argue so much for the commercial sense of this practice as for its meaningfulness in the traditions of his family and in his own identity. The focal thing and practices carried intense existential mattering rather than merely instrumental worth. Above, I described Borgmann's simple questions to help in locating one's own focal practice. These discovery practices contrast with the more typical mission and vision kinds of inquiries of agile practitioners that risk turning an existential discovery into rational cost-benefit analysis. For instance, Sull's examples of "inescapable" and "reinforcing" commitments are littered with examples decrying people's inability to properly calculate the costs and benefits of their existential commitments (Sull, 2009, Chapter 4, especially pp. 70, 75). It may even be the case that technologists have a religious moment too, albeit a diluted one. It may even have been that Sull missed the one truly religious moment that founded AB-InBev. In his earlier account of the inception of AB-InBev's agile strategy, Sull & Escobari (2005) reports how new CEO, Marcel Telles, fired their strategy consultants and hired Vicente Falconi and who fervently declared AB-InBev's anti-spiritual article of faith that underpinned its crusade and its future success, "Beer is not magic, beer is process"<sup>lix</sup>. The next years will see how many zealous followers this faith can attract.

Secondly, Koch demonstrates not only a disciplinary mastery of one style of thinking and management but a sensibility of his own and of others. He is an enthusiastic scholar of styles of thinking in addition to today's *modern* and *agile* and particularly of those non-*Machenschaft*, mythical styles seen in the pre-Homeric

Greece of Homer's *Odyssey* or the mystical science fiction of George Lucas' *Star Wars*. Rather than only learn and repeat the formulae of TQM or of Harvard marketing classes, Koch uses *Star Wars* metaphors and notes Luke Skywalker's humble return to feel the Force (Koch, 2016, p. 4, p.183). In addition to Deming's *Out of the Crisis*, he also recommends reading Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Argyris and Schön's *Theory in Practice*, and Borges' "magical realist" *Collected Fictions* (Koch, 2016, pp. 245-248). Elsewhere, Koch recommends turning to *The Love Story of J. Alfred Prufrock* to discover what we find empty and abhorrent in modern management science and to Homer to re-awaken our sense of enchantment in business:

If you want to understand [why I believe good management lies not in marketing texts but in metaphor], you might as well go to the first four chapters of The Odyssey and find out what was in Telemachus' head when he set out to find his father. Or read Eliot's The Love Story of J. Alfred Prufrock and find out what makes Prufrock unappealing to us. Yes it's esoteric. But you are not going to figure out why people started smoking cigars again by thinking rationally. It's metaphorical. So you go to people whose stock in trade is metaphor, not marketing.

(Hill & Rifkin, 1999, pp.247)

Koch may consider his advice to be esoteric, and to the extent that esoteric implies specialist knowledge appropriate only for a few, he is right. However, this term surely also obscures the sensibleness of what he is advocating. Koch is not a mystic or literature professor but a Harvard graduate in government, law and business and a brewing and manufacturing expert. In his advocacy of literature from the distant and near past and present, he is only drawing attention to the human being's many different historically actual and currently possible ways of understanding other than modern management science. The metapoietic curriculum for disclosing described above is explicitly intended to serve the same purpose—the development of sensibility.

Finally, note the contrast between a youthful Koch and his older counterpart. The younger Koch, fresh out of Harvard business and law schools, fluent in Boston

Consulting Group's manufacturing sciences, was driven to re-conceive clients' manufacturing operations as inefficient value-creating systems. As the authors of *Radical Marketing* recount, Koch saw more than just a business opportunity when he tuned in to beer, "he felt a calling" (Hill & Rifkin, 1999, p.232). It is obvious that he felt rather more than that. He also felt and withstood an abandonment by being. His previous existence, identity and style as a rational manufacturing consultant was shattered by this calling. Shattering is the word. Koch uses the term "blow it up" to describe both the experience he felt when the Harvard life became meaningless to him and he became an Outward Bound instructor and later when the life of a management consultant also died for him and threw him into a new unknown identity as a re-inventor of old recipes and a face-to-face salesman. He drew on his manufacturing skills but never returned wholly to the management scientist identity. Such a transformation hints at our third ontological capacity and developmental practice. Koch's character developed from the conventional way of making meaning that is typical of young managers whether modern or agile, what Dreyfus calls the average, everyday intelligibility stage of meaning making, and toward the kind of composure that characterises a primordial, authentic or freely historicising way of making meaning shown by thinkers whose conventional way of being has been thrown in to question (Dreyfus, 2003, 2008b). Koch's move away from the Ivy League-educated consulting professional to a passionate advocate of a focal practice can also be conceptualised as a developmental process. It first describes the dissolution of the inauthentic identity of an elite American business executive living within but not questioning their convention. It then describes the emergence of a resolute but existentially humble identity. While this latter identity no doubt has its bravura aspects, it is clearly devoted to bringing a more meaningful culture, one that acknowledges technology but finds a

source of meaningfulness that puts technology in its place as a servant rather than master. I conclude this thesis by summarising its argument and contributions to the field, and noting its limitation and making connections to other studies with a view to suggesting further lines of research.

## **Conclusion: Retracing the Argument of the Thesis**

At the core of my research are the questions of how the agile style has depleted meaningfulness in business strategy and how agile strategic management can be modified to foster greater meaningfulness. In particular I asked: Why is agile strategic management so unsatisfying? What resources do Heideggerian scholars provide that shed light on the root of this dissatisfaction? How do Heideggerians, who witness the changes in today's commercial culture, understand the emerging meaningfulness? What strategic management practices can I propose for the future?

In the Preface and Chapter 1, I introduced and situated the question of meaning and meaningfulness both personally and in the wider domains of professional strategic management practice and its scholarly literature. I provided a brief autobiography of my own strategic management consulting career working in both world-picturing strategic planning and agile strategic management styles. I noted what each style enabled and made possible as a consultant but also an important anomaly: that despite their proclamations of meaningfulness and particularly of freedom, both styles led increasingly to an empty-feeling, purely technical pursuit of profitable economic growth. Moving on from the autobiographical experience, I turned to an account of the wider phenomenon of meaninglessness in contemporary Western culture and briefly set out Heidegger's analysis and remedy for this phenomenon. I then gave an account of how strategic management has developed from its earliest forms that sought timeless success factors made in conscious strategic decisions guided by rational thinkers towards a dynamic, relational, emergent and largely non-conscious process. I briefly reviewed the contributions to this development of game theorists Pankaj Ghemawat and Donald Sull and of the strategy-as-practice scholars Robert Chia, Haridimos

Tsoukas and Charles Spinosa. Chapter 1 also set out the conceptual, analytical, methodological and practical contributions and structure of the thesis.

In Chapter 2, I set out and defended my transformative disclosure methodology and materialist literary reading method. The transformative disclosure methodology is a Heideggerian methodology first described by Kompridis (2000, 2006). Simply put, transformative disclosure first aims to disclose the way a thinker makes sense to themselves, what is sensible to them, before then moving on to an immanent critique of that way of thinking through a consideration of what it misses or fails to think on its own terms. Following Kompridis, I distinguished transformative disclosure from its principal alternatives, scientific scepticism and unmasking-critique, noted their tendency to disable positive action and promoted transformative disclosure on the basis of its greater relevance to incumbent practitioners and greater productiveness for future action. Consistent with other Heideggerians' advice for social sciences, the transformative disclosure I developed is conducted through a process of prototypical or, better, paradigmatic case study (Dreyfus, 1986; Flyvbjerg, 2001, 2006; Borgmann, 1987). Paradigmatic case method elucidates and illustrates clear cases of a general style that can serve as scaffolds upon which to compare and construct other more specific cases. In this thesis, I developed three such paradigmatic cases: modern, agile and adaptive strategic management. I detailed the materialist literary reading utilised on the paradigmatic cases to reveal their style. I elaborated on the way that, in contrast to classic discourse analytical methods that in some way still remain in the realm of the conceptual, the emerging literary materialist methods attempt to analyse how the real, in the form of tone, syntax, and written marks on a page, act affectively and directly upon a reader's body to trigger meanings in the reader. Finally, I set out the warrants of ethical, valid and reliable research for this study.



In Chapter 3, I set out the full Heideggerian argument for the loss of meaning in contemporary agile life. I introduced the Heideggerian notion of the human being as a practical copier within an already existing world. I showed how the human gathers a particular sense of their own selfhood by taking up available roles and ways of thinking in that world and introduced authentic or freely historicising action as possible to the extent that one holds existing ways of making sense as question-worthy. Finally, I drew upon Heidegger's suggestions for how to think in the face of the question-worthy in order to construct an account of education of authentic strategic managers able to manage their business in such a way that they combat the meaninglessness of contemporary economic life.

In Chapter 4, I showed how strategic management has moved a certain kind of instrumental meaning to the centre of its understanding but has marginalised the question of meaningfulness *per se*. First, in the world-picturing style exemplified by Michael Porter's work, entities are understood as stable and natural kinds and represented in cause-and-effect relationships that allow for predictable planning of profitable growth. The second style, is that of technological agility in which all entities, including the strategist herself, are seen as resources to be co-opted in an endless cycle of positing and re-positing of value and wilful reconfiguration of the world to meet promises for performance. I showed how, in both styles, all entities that are encountered come ready-freighted with the meaning of profitable opportunity, and how this overarching *Machenschaft* meaningfulness of "reaching for ever-greater certainty" eliminates the possibility of the nasty surprise that these ways of making sense themselves are contingent and not total. Paradoxically, it is the nasty surprise, that brings awareness of the ungroundedness of all meaning, which can lead to authenticity. As the nullity that reveals the lack of any firm grounding or null basis for any particular

form of meaning, the nasty surprise can act as the last god who reveals the human being's unique role as authentic thrown-open meaning-makers.

In Chapters 5 and 6, I showed how various post-agile strategic management scholars have recognised the nihilism underlying modern and agile business practice. In Chapter 5, I described how researchers in the Strategy-as-Practice school, particularly those influenced by Heidegger, have begun to demonstrate how a focus on practice can restore our essential role as meaning makers in an adaptive agile strategic management. In Chapter 6, I closely read *Disclosing New Worlds*, a seminal text in the Strategy-as-Practice school and revealed how its failure explicitly to address the loss and recovery of the sacred leaves it fatally flawed as a remedy to the loss of meaningfulness.

In Chapter 7, I set out the cases of AB-InBev and The Boston Beer Company as the paradigmatic practical cases that characterise agile and adaptive strategic management practice respectively. As paradigmatic practical cases, the two accounts can serve as clear cases of how strategists practice both agile and adaptive strategy. Finally, in Chapter 8, I defined and deepened my illustration of an adaptive strategic management practice, and suggested educational practices for thinking that can help develop three ontological capacities necessary for such an adaptive agile strategic management practice.

I am now in a position to summarise my answers to my research questions: Why is agile strategic management so unsatisfying? How do Heideggerian scholars shed light on the root of this dissatisfaction? How do Heideggerians, who witness the changes in today's commercial culture, understand the emerging meaningfulness? What strategic management practices can I propose for the future?

Agile strategic management is dissatisfying because, while it brings things into the economic sphere, at the same time, it also undermines the meaningfulness of those things and hence of their worth. Underlying this answer is an argument advanced first by Heidegger and later developed by Heideggerian scholars. The simplest form argues that bringing things into the economic domain of the market tends to result, not only in their economic commodification but also in their moral de-contextualisation and the closure of possibilities to the impoverishment of human life (Borgmann, 1987, 2010). As ever-more things and features of things have been progressively co-opted and rendered instrumentally meaningful for productivity so those things have been increasingly torn from their historical, material and social contexts and become existentially meaningless. This sundering of things from context may have led to the enhancement of their instrumental meaning but this has been to the detriment of their existential meaning. However, I argue that this win-lose situation is not a necessity and, with the paradigmatic case of The Boston Beer Company, I show how it is possible for a company to choose and create both economic and moral value. I simplify the situation and the stakes of the choice in Figure 6 below.

		Economic Co-Optation	
		No	Yes
Contextual Detachment	No	<p>Family Health Public Goods People</p> <p>Surrogacy Organic Trading Public-Private Partnerships Perma Temps &amp; Gig Economy</p>	<p>Food and Drink Music and Books Gadgets</p> <p>The Boston Beer Company Sam Adams</p>
	Yes		<p>AB-InBev Budweiser</p>

**Figure 6: Strategic Choice for Economic and Ethical Value**

Bringing entities into the productive cycle of the market has the great benefits of making them more accessible to more people at more times and, by exposing them to competition, making them potentially cheaper, easier to use, more reliable, and higher performance. All else being equal, these are undoubtedly benefits—who would want medicines that are not any of these. However, bringing all of these benefits while maintaining the complex, dynamic and relational connections with the material, cultural, and historical contexts that make those things worthwhile also makes possible invention in ways that retain the profound worth and integrity of those things. Heideggerians argue that putting the agile genie back in the bottle is an unrealistic ideal. As Heidegger himself wrote in 1957,

Many, even most, indications are that the devastation of Dasein into an always merely calculative thinking will continue to increase. To imagine that nihilism would be overcome is probably the fundamental error of the present age.

(Heidegger, 2012a, p. 126)

Given that unrealistic hope, the choice facing strategists is whether to think, question and reform technological thinking itself or accept it as complete and either celebrate it or seek consolation in joyous nihilism. The stakes of that choice are of pursuing purely economic value or creating both economic and ethical value. Putting that choice even more starkly, one can choose to build an economic enterprise that lacks a focal thing and creates mere affluence or to build deep and ethical wealth by enabling lives worth living. In this thesis, I have described a Heideggerian adaptive strategic management that creates both economic and ethical value by inquiring into the tension between a focal thing and its shifting world context.

The role that the focal thing and the fourfold play in both adaptive management practice and scholarship will be central to unlocking its ethical potential. For instance,

adaptive strategic practitioners can work with people in a business to challenge the dominance of financialisation among the power hierarchies of the firm. Financialisation, as the penetration of the logic of financial capital into all aspects of a firm in a way where capital is entirely fungible and uprooted from any context, is a quintessential example of the agile style (Clegg et al., 2012: Chapter 11). Developing methods to demonstrate the contextual roots of a firm's value through the explication of its focal thing and the aspects of its fourfold that connect its meaningfulness, and hence value, to the shifting background world can support a strategic management framework that can combat the increasing abstraction of information-based economies (Borgmann, 1987, 2007, 2010) and return a robust ethics and plural realism to management (Dreyfus & Taylor, 2015). For instance, does the firm inspire commitment to a focal thing that has the authority to bring consistency to its practices or is it a purely financialised abstraction? Does the firm's excellence at the focal thing gather a community around itself or are stakeholders only fleetingly connected? Does the effort for complete clarity of management (sky) dominate or is there always a sense of tension with inexpressible history, culture and language that remain out of reach of management techniques but bring meaning? What mood prevails and, if it is one of boredom, routinised novelty, or neutral detachment, how can it be transformed by a counter-mood that brings meaningfulness? For strategy scholars, operationalising the epochal styles and, particularly, the fourfold into research methodologies can provide normative and empirical methods for evaluating the outcomes of different styles of firms' strategic management. For example, it is an empirical question whether the adaptive firms that I identify, and which I am contending will multiply in number and size, do reduce worker despair and frustration and raise the sense of well-integrated worthwhile work. Fleming reported how attempts by firms to make work more free,

playful and authentic are better viewed as technological manipulation for productivity (Fleming, 2009). If the adaptive style successfully accommodates but resists nihilism then adaptive management will evade such manipulation.

## Contributions

I claim that I make four key contributions in this thesis.

Conceptually, in Chapter 3 and 8, I built on the work of Heideggerian strategy-as-practice scholars (Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997; Chia & Holt, 2006, 2009; Tsoukas, 2010a, 2010b) to develop an adaptive strategy capable of instrumental agility and existential meaningfulness. I developed and applied a framework of the key Heideggerian terms that can be used to analyse the historical style or kind of meaningfulness at work in different strategic management styles. Each style enables a certain kind of truthful action and, at the same time, obscures other kinds of truth. I contrasted this framework with a comparable history of being analysis (Cummings, 1999, 2002, 2008). I criticised Cummings' conceptual analytical framework for its lack of a justification for the categories of analysis that it draws upon. The Heideggerian framework I propose identifies the necessary and sufficient aspects of a style that serve as the conditions for one kind of truth making over others. It can be further refined and utilised to support empirical work to understand the meaning-making style at work not only of management texts but, perhaps more importantly, of actual management thinking "in the wild" with management practitioners. Informed by this framework, I set out the various *disciplinary* styles of strategic thinking that underpin modern and agile thinking and an *austere* style of adaptive thinking that gathers itself around a meaningful focal thing and its supporting practices and that can draw on, interweave or transform the other, narrower styles of disciplinary thinking as a situation demands.

Conceptually, I also outlined a theory of adaptive strategic thinking, which builds on Chia and Holt's strategic blandness and wayfinding (Chia & Holt, 2009), to deepen its Heideggerian account of the preservation of existential truth or meaningfulness as well as radical change. In the course of developing this adaptive strategy I identified the neglect by Chia, Holt and Spinoza of Heidegger's thinking of the interplay between moods, the sacred and focal things in the preservation and transformation of any particular style and the truth that the style conditions. I drew on this thinking to develop conceptual resources for strategy practice in the shape of ontological skills and pedagogical practices for their development. Surfacing the possibilities and constraints of the particular style of thinking serving as a background to a manager's strategising can help managers to be more reflective of their own style and avoid egregious blunders and irresponsible decision-making.

Analytically, I drew on this initial conceptual framework to analyse and illustrate the basic styles of strategic thinking at play in particular strategic management texts. I demonstrated the prevalence in contemporary strategy theory of two kinds of disciplinary thinking, the modern and the agile, and identified how the loss of meaningfulness and freedom for radical difference in these two forms was diminishing the worthiness of the life they conditioned. I also analysed the post-agile strategic thinking that is emerging among Chia, Tsoukas and Spinoza to identify their common neglect of the sacred as a significant weakness in their accounts of how their work can lead to long-term, sustainable strategic success. I illustrated the agile and adaptive strategy with paradigmatic cases of strategic practice. I showed how AB-InBev's pure technological agility led to economic success but, at the same time, undermined the meaningfulness of its products to its own customer base and led ultimately to an experience of absurdity. I contrasted AB-InBev's technological agility with The Boston

Beer Company's adaptive strategy. The BBC's adaptiveness also drew on agile and modern strategic methods but always gathered itself around beer as a focal thing and brewing and drinking beer as focal practices that showed its brewers and drinkers who they were at their best. The BBC's adaptive strategy drew on and deepened its own ever-changing material, social and historical context to develop economic value as it deepened existential value. This analytical contribution serves as an immanent analysis by a practitioner of his own field of practice and can complement more objective discourse analytic methods. This analytical work has already been extended with a paper delivered to the Critical Management Studies conference presenting the stylistic origins of influential strategic management texts by Osterwalder and Pigneur, Mintzberg, Johnson and Scholes, and Roos (Hancocks, 2013) and a second published paper on structural moods at work in businesses to which the current author contributed substantially (Spinosa, Glennon & Sota, 2014).

Methodologically, I set out a transformative disclosure strategy based on paradigmatic cases and materialist literary reading method that further develops a style of research proposed as most appropriate to the human sciences. The use of paradigmatic cases and close literary reading method approaches the kinds of thick description and "near-documentary stance" recommended to ensure the relevance and quality of strategy practice research (Chia & Holt, p.132). The disclosive critique approach that has an existing practitioner conduct an immanent reading of an unthought of his or her own practice further builds this relevance while also addressing criticisms of the non-transformational, uncritical nature of practice research (Carter et al., 2008). Finally, the purpose of the foregoing is to improve a field of human practice with which I am directly concerned, and so, based upon the theory of adaptive strategy that I outline, I propose ontological skills for strategists and pedagogical practices for their



development in support of the practice of adaptive strategic management. This methodology and method has already informed two additional studies into the role of mood and management and two forthcoming studies of time and thinking in management (Hancocks, 2013; Spinosa, Glennon & Sota, 2014; Spinosa, Hancocks & Glennon, forthcoming; Spinosa, Hancocks, Glennon & Flores, forthcoming).

Finally, the purpose of the foregoing is to improve a field of human practice with which I am directly concerned. Accordingly, I have proposed an adaptive alternative to agile strategic management. Adaptive strategy making takes account of the neglect of the sacred discovered in my analytical work of existing post-agile strategy, whether Tsoukas' modes of strategy, Spinosa, Flores and Dreyfus' history making or Chia and Holt's bland wayfinding. I also suggest pedagogical practices to develop the kinds of ontological capacities required by adaptive strategists. Further empirical work to practice and develop this adaptive strategy is underway in my ongoing consulting work and ongoing collaboration with the originators of the commitment-based management approach. Some of the outcomes of this practice are to be published in the papers already cited in these paragraphs but considerable additional work remains to be done. For instance, of what do the revelatory and listening language practices described in the thesis consist? While the difference that they lead to in terms of existential rather than simply instrumental meaning may be clear, how does one develop the skills of listening for an unthought or an ultimate concern? How does one bring these inchoate intuitions into language that expresses but does not alienate people conditioned into current everyday practice? Or, on a quite different front, how does one construct an economic commodification that does not thin out and diminish the moral context? How does one hold the two discourses together with different communities of practice that might value one but not the other?

Jim Koch has skilfully built bridges between economically-oriented investors that want to bring things into the market and social and environmental activists who want to preserve their connection to material, social and cultural, historical contexts of meaning. But generalising and building on Koch's success (as well as addressing its limitations) into a strategic management practice and educational programmes both within business and in business schools is a further task that remains to be done.

### **Connections, New Directions and Limitations**

I have described two kinds of strategy-making that are both successful today. The agile approach thrives on turbulence and indeed creates its own turbulence but undermines the meaningfulness of the communities upon which the business depends. The other approach, adaptive strategy, decreases turbulence by deepening its roots and the meaningfulness of the lives it fosters. The agile approach depletes meaning but builds economic value while adaptive strategy grows and preserves both.

My analysis is broad-reaching but preliminary. It connects to and builds on other work in the strategy-as-practice field particularly the Heideggerian accounts of Chia, Holt, Rasche, Spinoza, and Tsoukas. My account makes three contributions to those different accounts. Firstly, it highlights the role of the sacred in management practice and develops a plausible role for a business practice that provides not only instrumental meaning but also existential mattering to strategic management practice. Clearly, this direction can influence strategic management practices in ways that I have described but it can also be extended to include the Heideggerian, strategy-as-practice grounded critique and reconceptualisation of contemporary economics. I briefly introduced the shape of this reconceptualisation in my consideration of economic and moral commodification but its further development is evident in the ongoing work of

Albert Borgmann (2000, 2006, 2010), and also Todd Mei (2011), Catherine Malabou (2011), and Krzysztof Ziarek (2012). Their critical work has begun to outline an economics, not of rents and the privatised capitalisation of entities, but of the communal participation and happy adaptation of human and other material beings and their practices to one another and to being itself. Their work begins with an inquiry into ontological capitalism, and the perverse freedom to capitalise every entity, and continues into the consideration by Mei (2011) of the givenness of land (earth) and thus of human beings' already existing indebtedness to that gift. Such an indebtedness lends itself to recognition of the commonness of public goods and to the inappropriateness of the collection of rents from the commons.

This broader Heideggerian economic critique remedies a significant shortcoming of the strategy-as-practice field. As described in Chapter 2, the SAP field has been criticised for being overly descriptive, lacking broad social and historical perspective, and critical and creative edge (Cummings, 2002; Carter, Clegg & Kornberger, 2008; Stacey, 2010, Vaara & Whittington, 2010). My account sets out an adaptive strategic management practice along with three ontological management capacities and supporting practices that complement the advice given in *Disclosing New Worlds* and other SAP accounts and remedy their potential nihilism. In so doing, I address the concern held by other Heideggerian SAP scholars, such as Chia and Holt, that their indirect action approach, inspired by the 'strategic blandness' of Francois Jullien, still requires engaged practices to avoid pure quietism and to enable more radical, world changing action (Chia & Holt, 2009, pp. 252-254). By working to critique and transform a domain of practice from within, the Heideggerian approach of adaptive management that I develop here will connect with and address the concern for criticism and meaningful creativity held by Cummings, Carter et al., Stacey, and Vaara

and Whittington while avoiding the unmasking critique described in Chapter 2 that seeks to critique from outside the regime of meaning and hence risks leaving workers alienated from their own lives.

Finally, the account of fundamental, historical moods developed in the current study complements and elaborates on the accounts of mood presented by Holt and Cornelissen (2014) and Shotter and Tsoukas (2014). Their studies are the first to highlight the effects of moods on firefighters' understanding of a crisis and a physician's dealing with a case of sexual harassment and propose the positive role of mood to deal wisely and swiftly with such challenging situations. My study extends and situates their accounts of moods within a broader historical consideration of different fundamental moods and the kinds of strategic management that they open up. I proposed composure as the specific mood that is missing from the bored and distressless moods of agility and that can counter its overwhelming generation of novelty.

My thesis also has significant shortcomings and limitations. Two empirical limitations seem especially prominent to me. The first is that because the study deals only with published, though generally first-hand, texts it necessarily leaves empirical observations of real strategic management practice, even my own practice, outside of its scope. Secondly, such studies are also retrospective accounts of practice and non-comparative. Future studies would engage in twinned case, action research studies of both agile and adaptive strategic management practice in order to develop assessments of both of their efficacies.

Conceptually, one might also read Koch's accounts and wonder about both their sincerity and also the extent to which his beers and brewing practices are truly a radical transformation of ordinary technological capitalism. For the first limitation, one would ask to what extent is Koch's story-telling and proud presentation of his own story an

accurate reflection of what really went on and still goes on? It is true that I have relied more heavily on Koch's own recounting of the history and practices of The Boston Beer Company than I did in the case of AB-InBev, although Falconi's account of AB-InBev's practices is also first-hand. I drew heavily on Koch's account because it is the richest and most recent of such accounts. It would surely have been perverse not to and I have tried also to point out where Koch's sales-style is noticeable. In the final section of Chapter 7, I noted the existing literature questioning the role played by management memoirs and guru literature (Thrift, 2005, 2008; Guthey, Clark & Jackson, 2009; Alvesson & Spicer, 2011). These criticisms are significant and further research would be needed both in the cases cited and in other sectors to evidence and support my argument. However, despite the fact that there have been conflicts and challenges in that journey with both co-founder Rhonda Kallman and principal corporate adversary AB-InBev, I also found nothing substantive in several newspaper and internet searches that contradicts Koch's account of The Boston Beer Company's history or practices. Clearly, future studies would want to interview many more people involved along the course of its history and observe and interview those people engaged in the practices of its business today. Regarding the second limitation of whether adaptive practice is truly radical, while I agree with Heidegger's cautioning about the forlornness of the hope of doing away with technology in entirety, even so, our paradigmatic exemplar Jim Koch still uses many agile practices and his American beers, still substantially using German hops, cannot truly be called local. Has he engaged in an almighty "Authenticity-wash"? Again, further primary research could inquire in to the actual on-the-ground practices and further inquiry into the transformed kind of economics discussed above would undoubtedly assist in this addressing the question. But I would also issue one word of caution, the weakness of the unmasking critique, described in

Chapter 2, is that it leaves practitioners fatally under-confident and disabled from taking further action. I would recommend continued transformative disclosure as an affirmative way to build on Koch's accomplishments and open up further truly radical strategic management that build economic and ethical value.

## Postscript: The Role of the Strategy Consultant

I began this thesis with a description of my own frustrating and despairing experiences as a strategy consultant promising strategy that was meaningful and liberating while, in actuality, inexorably tightening the grip held by the cycles of narrowly financial productivity. The reader of this thesis might wonder whether the thinking it sets out has made any difference to the strategy practice of the author. Throughout this research project, I have continued to work actively as a strategy consultant and my research work and my strategic practice have, of course, informed each other. It would require a quite different research project to report on and analyse what I have discovered in the practical setting but, remembering Clegg's admonishment of the Strategy-as-Practice school's neglect of practical engagement (Clegg, 2011), I think it is appropriate to report briefly on three observations from my actual practice that suggest that adaptive strategy can make a contribution to relieving despair and frustration and to building economic and ethical value. The observations line up with the three ontological capacities: cultivating the sacred, sensibility, and composure and suggest a particular role for the adaptive strategy consultant.

Firstly, I have observed from working with senior executives to reveal and commit to a focal thing and practice is both rewarding and critical to those who are particularly skilled and well-disposed to the financial aspects of strategy. My experience has been that attending to and declaring the focal thing and its practices, that around which a company's creation of value is organised, is a highly controversial, politicising and meaningful activity. For some, it appears to bring a sense of relief that necessary financial conversations no longer float free but are now connected to making a contribution to a wider community. It also appears to liberate them to do more of the activity that personally resonates with them, whether it be energy engineering,

workforce solutions or insurance. However, for others, it also sets up a kind of levelling or *deflationary* opposition that seeks to deflate the importance of the focal thing by levelling it down simply to the circulation and accumulation of capital as a source of power. My experience suggests that this opposition comes down to a politicising stand about realism and power. Whereas, in my view, those strategic leaders who adopt the focal thing widen and enrich their appreciation of reality, their conversations appear more grounded in material and historical realities, more pluralistic, and thus, truer, the deflationary leaders level out the complexities of reality to a simpler financial thread while arguing that the focal realists are naïve and that it is they who have the best grip on the reality that matters most. Holding a position for the focal requires a political and existential stand about one's grip on reality given that the "reality that matters most" depends on choices as to who matters most, in other words, political questions of power. I argued earlier that the CEO strategists themselves have a choice as to the strategic styles they adopt. I argued that only the adaptive kind of strategic management creates both ethical and economic value and hence creates a good life for the many. In contrast, the agile strategy rips strategists from their roots and enters them into a race for continual reinvention that leads to absurdity. I have found that presenting the simple grid, laying out the stakes of the choice as to what is sacred, and working through this choice with a CEO or other strategist is a helpful way for them to frame and make that choice, with at least a modicum of freedom.

This last point brings me to my second and third observations. I suggested that, in order truly to think, one needed to develop sensibility to one's own and other styles and the composure to think in the face of paradox. In my practice, I have found that working with a business to reconstruct and explore the different epochal styles at work across the business' management, industry, and political-economic world history is a



valuable exercise in opening the space for greater freedom. I have conducted interviews with staff past and present, document analysis of strategy documents, and various kinds of cultural analysis of, for instance, industry advertisements to support conversations that reveal the style of understanding at work today and those that have held sway in the past. Mixing conversations with old and new employees, especially those present in the company before the de-regulation and privatisation era of the 1980s, makes more resonant the thought that a current common sense may not last for ever and sharpens the existential choice for its preservation or transformation. Similarly, I have used adult development assessment tools to support a conversation with strategists as to how composed thinking can be cultivated among individual executives, leadership teams, and a wider organisational culture (Kegan, 1982, 1985; Kegan, Laskow Lahey, Miller, Fleming & Helsing, 2016; Rooke & Torbert, 2005; Dreyfus 2008a, 2008b). In these theories, individuals and collectives develop their capacities to make sense of situations from a *conventional* sense-making that habitually follows the orthodox style of thinking or convention at play in a world to a *post-conventional* sense-making that holds the convention in question as it works within it and blends in other ways of making sense of a situation. The post-conventional stages resemble the composed thinking that I described above. My experience has been that bringing the historical and the adult development inquiries together in the context of the choice as to the style of strategic management seems to raise the degree of freedom brought to the question of the meaningfulness of a company's strategic management work.

So, yes, the despair and frustration I experienced as an agile strategy consultant has been ameliorated and adaptive strategy work can return meaning and freedom to a nihilistic economic world. But the role of strategy consultant is different too. In my preface, I described the role of the strategy consultant as the detached, scientific,

“quant”, the playful, artsy and informal creative, and the agile commitment Viking. All these roles might still be appropriate at one time or other in a consulting relationship. However, I follow Wrathall (2011b) in proposing a more fundamental role for the philosophical, adaptive strategy consultant. If our guiding *telos* is to stimulate strategic thinking then, just as for the original philosopher Socrates, our role must be to be a “corrupter of the youth” – so that strategists too can have a free choice again.

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## Notes

<sup>i</sup> For an overview of the approach see <http://www.fastcompany.com/32920/group-genius> and Pergamit & Peterson, 1997. For a critical account of such management consulting approaches see for example, Fleming (2009) and Clegg et al. (2012).

<sup>ii</sup> For example, Winograd & Flores, 1987; Goss, 1996, Spinoza, Flores & Dreyfus, 1997.

<sup>iii</sup> It is appropriate to say something at the very start of this thesis about the difficult question of Heidegger's active and un-recanted Nazism. Heidegger was, of course, a well-known Nazi. He was appointed Rector of the University of Freiburg in 1933 where he developed Nazi-influenced educational policies and was also publicly put on trial after the war and banned from teaching. However, publication of his private notebooks and private family correspondence reveals him to have been both a fervent supporter of Hitler and his National Socialism from as early as 1931 and a convinced anti-Semite (Gordon, 2015; Zielinski, 2016). Was Heidegger's thinking tainted by, even intertwined with his Nazism? Is it possible to retain Heidegger's thinking and separate it from his Nazism? The question troubles me enormously, even at the end of a programme of PhD study. I take heed of, and hope I work within, the careful separation of Heidegger's philosophy and his Nazism by scholars such as Thomas Sheehan and Iain Thomson both of whom argue that the core of Heidegger's thinking was in place before his support of Nazism and that his later work must be thought through meticulously to sift out the philosophy from the Nazism (Thomson, 2005; 2011; Sheehan, 2015). I also accept Alain Badiou's argument for the importance to think through the good philosophy from the bad in even the most terrible of situations, "As long as Nazi thought is not itself thought through it will continue to dwell among us, unthought and therefore indestructible" (Badiou, 2007, p.4). However, in the end, the task is exceptionally challenging and I look forward to interacting rather less with Heidegger in the years to come.

<sup>iv</sup> Henceforth, for simplicity, I will use "agility" and "agile" interchangeably with the more Heideggerian "technology" and "technologically" and most often use the more familiar management terminology of "agility".

<sup>v</sup> For an overview of such ana-theistic re-imaginings of the sacred, see Kearney & Zimmerman, 2016.

<sup>vi</sup> Retrieved 24<sup>th</sup> May 2016 from <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2012-10-25/the-plot-to-destroy-americas-beer>

<sup>vii</sup> See for example, various essays, especially those of Dale Jacquette and Michael Lynch, in Hales (2007). See also Gray (2015); Rail (2012); Roth (2015).

<sup>viii</sup> For instance, see Mitchell (2015, p.206).

<sup>ix</sup> I must acknowledge the careful, insightful and vigorous assistance of Charles Spinoza in helping me to construct this wide-ranging account of Heidegger's argument here and in Chapter 3 as well as of Hubert Dreyfus' teachings on Later Heidegger available in private recordings made at Berkeley in 2001 and the publicly available accounts of Mark Wrathall cited through the text.

<sup>x</sup> Heidegger calls it the *Spielraum* (Heidegger 1962, p.141)

<sup>xi</sup> The word "co-opt" derives from two Latin roots. "Com-" meaning "together" and "optare" meaning "to choose. Hence, co-opt is to choose to bring or gather together. The sense of co-opt meaning to "take over" that particularly pertains here is a recent twentieth century development.

<sup>xii</sup> Richard Rorty reportedly argued for years that Nietzsche's sole mistake was thinking the cost of the loss of sacred heavy (Charles Spinoza, personal communication). The extent to which agile practitioners experience the loss, consciously or subconsciously as heavy remains an empirical question, for further research.

<sup>xiii</sup> See Cummings (1999, pp.59-60) for a description of the grid as an apparatus or dispositif for analysing the episteme or understanding of being at work in a particular text.

<sup>xiv</sup> See Cummings (1999, pp.184-185) for an argument for the selection of "low-brow" texts that show the "'background noise', the taken-for-granted assumptions or 'murmur' that supports the formation of Management" rather than leading-edge and contested texts.

<sup>xv</sup> The materialist analysis of the mood of a text is primarily inspired by the developing literary field of reading for mood see Gumbrecht (2008, 2012); Morton (2009a, 2009b); and Ngai (2012).

<sup>xvi</sup> While the inspirations for reading for charged distinctions comes from Richard Rorty and Charles Spinoza, the methodical techniques are inspired by Lacanian Discourse Analysis in Psychology, Ian Parker *Theory & Psychology*, Vol. 15(2), 2005; *From the Conscious Interior to the Unconscious Exterior*, David Pavon-Cuellar, (2010); and the suggestions for a Heideggerian Discourse Analysis in *Truth and Unconcealment*, Mark Wrathall, (2011).

<sup>xvii</sup> This ontology of insertions and chains includes not only the explicit account of Heidegger's of worldhood but also inter alia of (1) skilfulness of human existence, (2) receptivity, (3) the history of

being, (4) world preservation and world transformation as respectively the maintenance and transformation of style, (5) commitment (6) history-making skills and (7) das Gestell and the Age of Technology

<sup>xxviii</sup> C. Roland Christensen describes the case method thus, “A terrain of which I have made a thorough, geodetic survey, not from a desk with pen and ruler, but by touch, by getting down on all fours, on my stomach, and crawling over the ground inch by inch, and this over an endless period of time in all conditions of weather.” (Christensen quoted in Flyvbjerg, 2001, p.133.)

<sup>xix</sup> For a revealing translation of the same passage, excluding the final sentence, see Sheehan (2010, p.83).

<sup>xx</sup> Heidegger calls it the *Spielraum* (Heidegger 1962, p.141)

<sup>xxi</sup> In *What is Called Thinking*, Heidegger calls it an *Entsprechung* (Heidegger, 2004, p.10.)

<sup>xxii</sup> For detailed accounts of virtuoso action without thinking see Dreyfus (2008a, 2008b). For a recent challenge to Dreyfus’ account of mindless expertise, see Montero (2016).

<sup>xxiii</sup> I follow Wrathall (2011b) in translating *Besinnung* as sensibility rather than reflection or mindfulness, firstly, to emphasise *Sinn* or sense in its etymology and also, in part, to avoid the connotations of Eastern and Western New Age mindfulness practices, which are quite distinct.

<sup>xxiv</sup> One may identify examples from the SM practitioner literature attuned to each of the various epochal styles that Heidegger described. For instance, the idealised business model approaches of Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010) seem to be a contemporary re-disclosing of the Platonic Greek *theoretical* style. Similarly, Mintzberg’s emergent approaches to crafting strategy that are always observing and measuring one’s organisation up to the affordances offered by the creation retain something of the piety of Christian *poiesis* (Mintzberg, 1987). For an extended account of these earlier styles, see Hancocks (2013).

<sup>xxv</sup> For instance, all except Sull are named in Harvard Business Review's 50 Most Influential Gurus (2011) (See <http://hbr.org/web/slideshows/the-50-most-influential-management-gurus/1-christensen>). Sull was named at No 5 in CNN's 2008 list of Ten New Gurus You Should Know see [http://money.cnn.com/galleries/2008/fortune/0811/gallery.10\\_new\\_gurus.fortune/5.html](http://money.cnn.com/galleries/2008/fortune/0811/gallery.10_new_gurus.fortune/5.html) . Both accessed on November 21st 2013.

<sup>xxvi</sup> For Batista see: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-24754636> and for Falcone see: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/financial-crime/10253622/Billionaire-Philip-Falcone-banned-from-financial-sector-for-five-years.html>

<sup>xxvii</sup> Recently, Sull has begun to consider the seeming contradiction between the different expertise required for preserving and transforming a world. He describes an “insider-outsider” leader dichotomy to explain the successful and failed transformations of Samsung and Daewoo, respectively. However, his explanation gives no explanation of how the dichotomy can be overcome only that in some cases it is and in others it is not. (Sull, 2015, pp.182-184).

<sup>xxviii</sup> Denning and Dunham, 2010, p. xxiii.

<sup>xxix</sup> Flores’ PhD thesis was the first integration of Heideggerian ontology of practical understanding, embodied mood and expressive-constitutive language and the speech act philosophy of John Austin and John Searle. (Flores, 1979).

<sup>xxx</sup> See Dreyfus & Kelly (2011, pp.220-221). Spinoza is a close associate of both authors and is acknowledged in the book for his ‘fascinating and instantaneous’ feedback that ‘often led [the authors] in new directions’ (p.225).

<sup>xxxi</sup> The Heideggerian terms are “disclosers” and “disclosing that they are disclosers”.

<sup>xxxii</sup> The final arguments of the book cite and rest upon a number of longer essays (Dreyfus 1992, 1995, 2005a, 2005b, 2008a, 2008b; Dreyfus & Spinoza, 1997, 2003).

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Spinoza, Flores, and Dreyfus (1997: p.172, p.206n.2).

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Spinoza, Flores, and Dreyfus (1997: p.168).

<sup>xxxv</sup> Spinoza, *private correspondence*.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Spinoza, Flores, and Dreyfus (1997, pp.6-7).

<sup>xxxvii</sup> *Ibid.*, p.67.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> *Ibid.*, p.51.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Wrathall and Lambeth, 2011.

<sup>xl</sup> See Carlos Brito CEO ABI presentation, 1 September 2015 Guangzhou, China. Downloaded on 19 December 2015 from <http://www.ab-inbev.com/investors/presentations.html> and “Our Business” overview downloaded on 19 December 2015 from <http://www.ab-inbev.com/investors/our-business.html>.

<sup>xli</sup> Chief Disruptive Growth Officer, Pedro Earp, took a BSc degree in Financial Economics at the London School of Economics (Downloaded 14th October 2016 from <http://www.ab-inbev.com/our-story/our-team.html>)

- <sup>xlii</sup> AB-InBev's disruptive innovation business is called ZX Ventures. Even in the space of craft beer skills the drive for technologisation is clear, see for instance <http://zx-ventures.com/journal-entries/2016/8/29/cicerone> (Downloaded 14th October 2016).
- <sup>xliii</sup> <http://business.time.com/2012/12/27/trouble-brewing-the-craft-beer-vs-crafty-beer-cat-fight/>
- <sup>xliv</sup> See <http://www.ab-inbev.com/go/innovation.cfm> cf. Heidegger's description, cited above, of the traditional woodsman versus the modern timber manager.
- <sup>xlv</sup> From: <http://www.marketingweek.co.uk/profile-ab-inbev-cmo-chris-burggraeve/4000900.article>
- <sup>xlvi</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>xlvii</sup> From: <http://adage.com/article/news/a-b-inbev-millercoors-losing-share-fix/244178/>
- <sup>xlviii</sup> Zook and Allen name these three OODA loops – “a closed loop learning system” (Zook & Allen, 2012, pp.137-160).
- <sup>xlix</sup> From: <http://money.cnn.com/2013/08/15/leadership/carlos-brito-inbev.pr.fortune/>
- <sup>l</sup> There is a deeper point to be made here. Heidegger is sceptical about quantification. He “associates our obsession with quantification (which ends up replacing quality with quantity) with the very nihilistic technological onto theology which he hopes to help us to transcend” (Thomson, 2011, p.37).
- <sup>li</sup> From: <http://money.cnn.com/2013/08/15/leadership/carlos-brito-inbev.pr.fortune/>
- <sup>lii</sup> Wrathall, 2011, pp.202-203.
- <sup>liii</sup> Drawing on Old English, “adaptation” carries connotations of being towards (ad-) happiness (-apt, as in fitting, a happy fit).
- <sup>liv</sup> Account re-constructed primarily from Hill & Rifkin, 1999, Chapter 12; Bamforth, 2011; Koch, 2016.
- <sup>lv</sup> Other examples include Illy Coffee's sponsorship of art events to engender aestheticism and symbolic value as cultural norms (see <http://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/magazine/277/article/sponsorship-revisited>) or Patagonia's development of business and campaigning tools to support environmental activism (see <http://earthtalk.org/patagonia-tools-for-grassroots-activists-book/>).
- <sup>lvi</sup> Again, “we” is used here to denote contemporary Western selves and for the sake of avoiding clumsy locution and repetition.
- <sup>lvii</sup> In particular, Wrathall (2011b, 2013, and personal communication) and Wrathall and Lambeth (2011a), as well as Borgmann (1987, 1992, 2006, 2007, 2010), Dreyfus (2008a), Dreyfus and Kelly (2011).
- <sup>lviii</sup> For an overview of the differences and similarities see the exchanges between Dreyfus and Michael Zimmerman an advocate of such transpersonal psychological approaches in Wrathall and Malpas (2000).
- <sup>lix</sup> Hill & Daneshku, June 15, 2015 AB InBev's hard-nosed kings of beer, Retrieved on March 10 2016 from <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/d6029592-0eb9-11e5-8aca-00144feabdc0.html#slide0>.