

Organizational futurity

- a hermeneutic phenomenology of organizational strategic being

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Abstract

What does it mean for organizations to *be* strategic? This question of the relation between organization and strategy is central in the field of strategy theory and is a matter of high practical significance for organizations. Yet, this relation has not been treated thematically in *ontological* terms. In theory, strategy is universally understood as an accidental property of organizations and is thus not accorded ontological significance. On the other hand, in practice, strategy is ubiquitous among organizations and is generally understood as normatively and existentially necessary, albeit in an unthematized way.

It is in understanding organizations as temporal that brings out most clearly that they incorporate an inherent engagement with the future. Approaching strategy as inherent to organizational being entails a shift from only thinking about organizations *being strategic* in behavioural terms, to admitting the possibility that organizations are *strategic beings* in ontological terms. Thinking along this line of questioning leads to the focal question of this study: *what is the nature of organizational strategic being as an ontological unity?*

This question is addressed in a hermeneutic phenomenology of organizational strategic being. Heidegger's analytic of Dasein is aimed at interpreting the full-fledged temporality of human being and is thus an ontological analogue for interpreting organizational strategic being in terms of its distinctive and equally full-fledged temporality. It is also an alternative to the prominent Whiteheadian-inspired and Weickian process perspectives, which also espouse the temporality of organizing as a central tenet. However, whereas these *retrospective* process perspectives lead to the relegation of strategy to epiphenomenal status, hermeneutic phenomenology is eminently suited to giving a *futural* processual account which takes strategy seriously in ontological terms.

In this study I develop, defend and explore the implications of the theses that *organizational being* (*sein Gefragtes*), as temporal, is an inherently strategic kind of being, and therefore, that *organizational strategic being* (*ein Befragtes*) is an ontological unity that is constituted in its distinctive temporality: *organizational futurity* (*das Erfragte*).

The interpretation of organizational futurity discloses a productive new perspective at the intersection of organizational ontology and organizational strategy theory. Organizational futurity is a conception that helps us to better understand the gap between strategy theory and practice, and avails a new basis for theorizing that might help to ameliorate this persistent gap. The descriptions of organizational futurity, and especially of its modes, will be practically relevant to organizations that exist as strategic beings under the contemporary condition of higher-order contingency. However, it also avails more incisive potentials for the critique of both strategy practice and theory in an age of organizational strategy.

Zusammenfassung

Was bedeutet es für Organisationen, strategisch *zu sein*? Diese Frage nach dem Verhältnis von Organisation und Strategie ist im Bereich der Strategietheorie von zentraler Bedeutung und für Organisationen von hoher praktischer Bedeutung. Bisher wurde diese Beziehung jedoch thematisch nicht *ontologisch* behandelt. In der Theorie wird Strategie allgemein als zufällige Eigenschaft von Organisationen verstanden und erhält daher keine ontologische Bedeutung. Andererseits ist Strategie in der Praxis in Organisationen allgegenwärtig und wird allgemein als normativ und existenziell notwendig verstanden, wenngleich auch auf unthematisierte Weise.

Es ist das Verständnis von Organisationen als zeitlich, das am deutlichsten zeigt, dass sie eine inhärente Auseinandersetzung mit der Zukunft beinhalten. Strategie als etwas zu behandeln, das dem organisatorischen Wesen innewohnt, bedeutet eine Verlagerung von der bloßen Überlegung, dass Organisationen verhaltensmäßig *strategisch sind*, hin zur Anerkennung der Möglichkeit, dass Organisationen in ontologischer Hinsicht *strategische Wesen* sind. Das Denken entlang dieser Fragestellung führt zu der zentralen Frage dieser Studie: *Was ist das Wesen des organisatorischen strategischen Seins als ontologische Einheit?*

Diese Frage wird in einer hermeneutischen Phänomenologie des organisatorischen strategischen Seins behandelt. Heideggers Dasein-Analyse zielt darauf ab, die eigenständige Zeitlichkeit des Menschen zu interpretieren, und ist somit ein ontologisches Analogon für die Interpretation des organisatorischen strategischen Seins hinsichtlich seiner unverwechselbaren und ebenso eigenständigen Zeitlichkeit. Es ist auch eine , Alternative zu den bekannten von Whitehead inspirierten und Weickschen-Prozessperspektiven, die auch die Zeitlichkeit des Organisierens als zentraler Grundsatz unterstützen. Während diese *retrospektiven* Prozessperspektiven dazu führen, dass Strategie in den epiphänomenalen Status verwiesen wird, eignet sich die hermeneutische Phänomenologie hervorragend, um eine *zukünftiges* prozessuale Darstellung zu geben, die Strategie in ontologischer Hinsicht ernst nimmt.

In dieser Studie entwickle, verteidige und erforsche ich die Implikationen der Thesen, dass das *organisatorische Sein* (sein Gefragtes) als zeitlich eine grundsätzlich strategische Art des Seins ist und dass das *organisatorische strategische Wesen* (ein Befragtes) daher eine ontologische Einheit ist, die in einer ihr charakteristischen Zeitlichkeit besteht: die *organisatorische Zukünftigkeit* (das Erfragte).

Die Interpretation der organisatorischen Zukünftigkeit offenbart eine produktive neue Perspektive an der Schnittstelle von Organisationsontologie und

Organisationsstrategietheorie. Organisatorische Zukünftigkeit ist eine Konzeption, die uns hilft, die Lücke zwischen Strategietheorie und -praxis besser zu verstehen, und eine neue Grundlage für eine Theoriebildung bietet, die dazu beitragen könnte, diese anhaltende Lücke zu schließen. Die Beschreibungen der organisatorischen Zukünftigkeit und insbesondere ihrer Modi werden für Organisationen, die als strategische Wesen unter den gegenwärtigen Bedingungen der Kontingenz höherer Ordnung existieren, praktisch relevant sein. Es eröffnet jedoch auch präzisere Möglichkeiten einer Kritik sowohl der Strategiepraxis als auch der Theorie im Zeitalter der Organisationsstrategie.

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Abbreviations

BCG	Boston Consulting Group
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
GAAP	Generally Accepted Accounting Practice
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPO	Non-profit organization
NRF	National Research Foundation (South Africa)
OB	Organizational Behaviour
OT	Organization Theory
PROS	Process Organization Studies
ROA	Return on Investment
ROI	Return on investment
SAP	Strategy-as-practice
SARB	South African Reserve Bank
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
VSM	Viable System Model
VUCA	Volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity

Abbreviations for Heidegger's texts

The following approach to abbreviating the English versions of Heidegger's texts is used for ease and clarity of referencing.

BT	Being and Time (1962)
QCT	The question concerning technology (1977)
AWP	The age of the world picture (1977)
IM	Introduction to metaphysics (2000)
TCT	The concept of time (2007)

Chapter 1

General introduction

There are many challenges that we face in looking for ways in which to organize our lives on this planet over the coming decades and centuries but one of the major issues is: how are we to cope with the growing corporatization of our world?

Pettit, 2015

1.1 The motivations for this study

It is said that we now live at the confluence of a “risk society” (Beck, 1992), a ‘VUCA’¹ world (Bennis and Nanus, 1985), an age of “global environmental crisis” (Buell, 2003), the age of “the great acceleration” (Colville, 2016), among other signifiers of the times. Closer to the context of this dissertation, it is also said that we live in an age of organizations (Meyer and Bromley, 2013) and in “the age of strategy” (Carter, 2013) by which Carter means to refer specifically to *organizational* strategy. The proliferation of such apt world pictures, albeit a testimony to Heidegger’s (1977/AWP) diagnosis of the age of representation, calls for a reckoning between and across these pictures as one would in trying to gather a story from a collection of photographs. It is *among* these partial representations of the age that we find the “extra-ordinary questions” (Heidegger, 2000/IM) of our time. To ask and wrestle with such questions is the broad philosophical impulse to investigate the relation between organization and strategy.

¹ VUCA is a popular acronym for volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity.

Organization and strategy coincide, either overtly or in the background, of the prevalent representations of our time and world. This conjoined sense of global significance is clearly indicated empirically by the pervasiveness of organizations and by the ubiquity of strategy among organizations. Thus, organization strategy is implicated in the understandings of our time as volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous, as permeated by the sense of acceleration, increasing risk and deepening ecological and social crises as the ominous signs of the times. However, organization strategy is also implicated in more propitious understandings of our times as the ‘best of times’, of the triumph of the nexus of democracy-and-markets, of the wonders of new technologies, of gigantic yet ‘cool’ organizations that give us what we want, and of the promise of the entrepreneurial spirit. In this contemporary milieu, characterized by the shift from Aristotelian in-principle future contingency to higher-order contingency, organizational strategy has reached a significance that justifiably underwrites a world picture dedicated to it. The phenomenon of organizational strategy² calls for critical attention in its appearing as bound up in so many of these ambivalent signs of the times.

² In this study, the term *organizational strategy* is preferred to the term *corporate strategy* to signify the phenomenon of interest. Johnson, Scholes and Whittington (2008), in a textbook titled “Exploring Corporate Strategy”, clarify what they mean by corporate strategy:

This book uses the term ‘corporate’ strategy for two main reasons. First, because the book is concerned with strategy and strategic decisions in all types of organisation – small and large, commercial enterprises as well as public services – and the word ‘corporate’ embraces them all. Second, because, as the term is used in this book, ‘corporate strategy’ denotes the most general level of strategy in an organisation and in this sense embraces other levels of strategy. Readers will probably come across other terms, such as ‘strategic management’, ‘business policy’ and ‘organisational strategy’, but these are all used to describe the same general topic.

However, other authors (for example, Porter, 1980, and Bower, 2008) use ‘corporate strategy’ to signify *business* strategy. The usage of the term organizational strategy has the advantage that it avoids this ambiguity and in that it explicitly includes such organizations

Drawing on this broad impulse, a more specific impetus for this study arises from the recognition that strategy is definitively involved in the interplays between organizations and world and the Earth. In being strategic, organizations formulate, execute and revise on an ongoing basis, their purposes, their goals, their interactions with their environments, their performances, their failures, *and their futures*. And in so doing they come to act upon the world in which we too must live and upon the Earth upon which we too depend. It is not only that we live *in* organizations and risk becoming “Organization Man”, but also that we live *among* organizations whom we tend to relate to as powerful others that have their own stakes in the future. As Pettit (2015) says especially of business organizations:

As things stand in most countries, corporations are not only economically well-resourced, they are also legally privileged, politically powerful, and democratically uncontrolled. Such titans raise a challenge for us as individuals insofar as we coexist with them in our neighbourhoods, seek employment by them in their workplaces, purchase the goods and services they provide, compete with them in open markets, and deal with them as plaintiffs or defendants in the courts. And they raise a challenge for us as communities insofar as they often have a stranglehold over our politicians, whether by virtue of the permanent threat of moving elsewhere or by dint of the capacity to exercise electoral patronage and extract payback.

Contemporary organizations more generally (including the business “titans” that Pettit highlights), constitute a primary force in the world that is powerfully involved in bringing about the future of the world and the futures of every locale in the world. The more one thinks about it, the more one realizes how intensively organizations are imbricated in just about every aspect of the world and the Earth, and crucially of what may yet *become* of them. What lines of questioning then should we pursue to try to address the deep ambivalence

as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other public benefit organizations (PBOs) that are not ordinarily called *corporates*.

about organizations in both the most forbidding and most redeeming features – and *futures* - of the world in which we dwell?

In corporate law, organizations have legal personality bestowed upon them that is grounded in the legal personality of natural persons. In law, corporate bodies are made in the image of Man. Much extant critique of social organizations is *hindsighted* due to a principle of justice which must by law be applied to organizations as juristic persons. The same temporal principle of the just critique of a natural person also applies in scholarly works which prepare the conceptual grounds for the critique of organizations. For List and Pettit (2011), for example, the *attribution of blame* to an *identifiable corporate agent* are the two cornerstones of corporate responsibility. In this way, List and Pettit posit that “corporate bodies are fit to be held responsible in the same way as individual agents and this entails that it may be appropriate to make them criminally liable for some things done in their name”. Thus, the corporate agent is described as a distinctive kind of holistic, “performative” being that is blameworthy for its past actions - for what has been *done* - however, it is not understood as a full-fledged *temporal* being that is also oriented towards and engaged with the future. Although we correctly critique organizations in terms their past doings, we do not have sufficient conceptual grounds for critiquing organizations as beings that are engaged now *with the future*. We do not have the means to properly critique organizations and organization strategy as inherently *futural* phenomena.

Therefore, it is necessary to question organizational strategy not only as a phenomenon of significance *in these times* but also in virtue of the ways in which it impinges upon *the times to come*. The critique of organization strategy cannot be based entirely on a present reality understood in terms of its past conditions. Rather, a comprehensive critique must also account for organizations as temporal beings that are oriented towards the future *prior to any strategic behaviour*. This involves a radical shift in emphasis from an

epistemological focus on organizational strategic behaviour to an ontological focus on the nature of organizational strategic being. Hence, at the very outset of this study, organizational strategic being is approached as an ontological unity that is irreducible to micro organizational phenomena. In this regard we heed List's and Pettit's (2011) warning against reductionism:

Swaddled in the glib conviction that the only social agents are individual human beings, we can look right through the organizational structures that scaffold group agency and not see anything there. We can live in an illusory world in which the comforting mantras of individualist thought make corporate power invisible.

The call for renewed critical attention (Carter, 2013; Carter and Whittle, 2018) is all the more urgent because the current rigorous, scientific treatment of the phenomenon organizational strategy is out of kilter with the concrete, everyday manifestation of organizational strategy. A more fundamental kind of questioning is called for that is not directed, in the first instance, towards the aims of normal science if this only reproduces the assumptions which undergird the field. Rather, it is these very pre-theoretical assumptions upon which the field of organization strategy theory³ is erected which need to be brought out and problematized. This task is not one that can be carried out in the scientific attitude – it requires a philosophical attitude which allows us to go back to the basic question which animates both the theory and practice of organizational strategy: what does it mean for an organization to *be* strategic? Proceeding from this point of confluence we may follow the divergence of the theoretical and practical construals of the relation between organizations and strategy.

³ Organization strategy theory refers here to all *scientific* theories of the phenomenon of organizational strategy. This includes theories of strategic management which Sminia (2017) says are “about making an organisation perform, and building an organisation’s potential so it can continue to perform.” In this sense, strategic management theories are theories that focus on managerial behaviour in pursuit of organizational strategies.

The means for a more full-fledged critique of organizational strategy cannot amount to something like a *foresighted* critique as the antidote to the *hindsightness* of extant critique. The temporality of organizations, which is an ontological characteristic, cannot be dissected and balanced out epistemologically in this way. Contemporary organizations struggle to foresee their own futures, let alone the possibility that they may be foreseen by critical futurologists. The possibilities of foresight are severely curtailed under the condition of higher-order contingency. We see this in the strategy frameworks (which are not rigorous theories) which have been widely taken up in practice, such as scenario-based strategy and the dynamic capabilities framework, which eschew the idea that the future is amenable to predictive foresight.

The critique in mind here is not of a kind which depends on the fidelity of seeing and knowing what lies ahead. Rather, it is a kind of critique which emphasises *aheadness* as an ontological characteristic of organizational being. It is in this vein that the “*vorfrage*” of this study is posed: what does it mean for an organization to *be* strategic?

We need a new line of questioning that attends to the currently elided *ontological sense* in which we may understand what it means for organizations to *be* strategic. This line of questioning is foreclosed in the rigorous theorization of organizational strategy as a behavioural phenomenon. Yet, the ontological sense of what it means for organizations to be strategic is admitted, albeit unthematically, in the ubiquitous practice of strategy; and, it arises as a worthy line of questioning in a conceptual investigation of the *temporalized* relation between organization and strategy.

Organization and strategy⁴ are brought together in the field of organizational strategy theory. The significance of organizational strategy is attended to and

⁴ Organization and strategy are typically theorized as fundamentally different kinds of phenomena and even as opposed to each other in terms of their characteristics. Organization is typically represented as a structured, stationary, bounded and identifiable

attested to in this diverse, large, and still burgeoning field of research. Strategy theory is a thoroughly contemporary scientific field which has grown rapidly in the last five decades. Indeed, it is the proliferation of organizations and the upsurge of overt strategic behaviour among and within organizations over this period that lent cogency to the pursuit of *generalized*⁵ theories of organizational strategy. However, whereas strategy in practice spurs the growth and diversity of strategy theory, the converse effect has not transpired. That is, the increasing number of strategy theories has not been a factor in the ubiquity of strategy in practice since such theories are rarely, if ever, taken up in practice.

The disjunction between strategy theory and strategy practice is surprising given that the practice of strategy has become so pervasive among organizations. Why, in an age of increased risk, uncertainty and complexity, when organizations of every kind have apparently turned to strategy in order to cope, have they not turned to strategy theory? Instead, a notorious “rigour-relevance gap” (Kieser and Leiner, 2009) prevails such that theory follows past organizational practice in order to explain it, but organizational practice does *not* follow theory. In this one-sided relation, rigorous strategy theory is belated

social assemblage. Whereas strategy is typically represented as distinctive *behaviours or traits* of and within organizations that involves the *movement and change* of an organization towards a desirable future state.

⁵ A distinction is drawn between *general* theories which are applicable to all social organizations, and *special* theories which are only applicable to a subset of social organizations. Special strategy theories are often categorially qualified as theories of business strategy, military strategy, public-benefit organization (PBO) strategy, personal strategy, marketing strategy, and so on. This explains the great quantity and diversity of special theories and the much smaller number of general theories. Prominent examples of general theories of organizational strategy are those by Ansoff (1965, 1987), Ackoff (1972), and Mintzberg (1973, 1978). Throughout this study, the emphasis is more on general theory, and references to strategy theory should be taken in this sense unless stated otherwise.

and relegated to practical irrelevance, and the critical potential of strategy theory is thus severely curtailed.

This assessment points out *that* there is a pronounced rigour-relevance gap in organization and management theory broadly speaking, but it does not address *why* this gap prevails. The question about *why* there is a rigour-relevance gap has also not been explicitly addressed in the field of strategy theory and this calls for more attention. Responding to this call is a motivation to study the gap from outside the field of organizational strategy theory; that is, from a philosophical vantage point. The study of organizational strategy that is undertaken here does not belong in the field of strategy theory since it does not involve any scientific treatment of organizational strategy nor is it aimed at coming up with a new theory of organizational strategy. Rather, this study belongs in that part of organization studies that treats organizational ontology⁶, and within that indistinct disciplinary demarcation, it belongs among the process ontologies of organization. More appropriately though, if we put the extant disciplinary categories aside, this study is a contribution to *the philosophy of organization theory* which is still in its nascence as a demarcated field of academic endeavour.

⁶ Organizational ontologies are normally taken as belonging in the field of Organization Theory (OT). However, this is an uncomfortable fit if one understands OT as a scientific field wherein epistemological matters are emphasised. What OT refers to is also not standardised. According to Tsoukas and Knudsen (2003), Organization Theory in North America refers to the study of “macro organizational phenomena” such that the organization as a whole is the object of research, whereas in Europe the name Organization Theory is used interchangeably with organization studies and refers to “the academic field specializing in the study of organizational phenomena (both micro and macro)” (Tsoukas and Knudsen, 2003). In North America, the separate field for the study of micro organizational phenomena is called Organization Behaviour (OB). In this study, the broader demarcation of the scientific field of Organization Theory is used.

1.2 The structure and flow of the dissertation

This dissertation has 10 chapters divided into an introduction, two parts, and a conclusion.

Introduction

Chapter 1 is a general introduction in which the main themes and motivations for undertaking this study are discussed.

Part I

Part I comprises four chapters (2 to 5) and deals with the explication of the ontological question of *organizational strategic being*, the critique of the elision and relegation of this question in rigorous theories of strategy and in process theories of organization, which is contrasted to its admission in the everyday practice of organizational strategy.

In Chapter 2, the basic idea of strategy is derived from a conceptual history of major undertakings as a precursor to setting out the focal question to be pursued, the hermeneutic phenomenological way by which this question is to be addressed is described in broad terms, and the significance and delimitations of this study are treated. In Chapters 3 and 4, organizational strategy theory and the everyday practice of organizational strategy are considered critically as divergent responses to the question of what it means for organizations to be strategic. This discloses the ontological possibility of organization as *inherently* strategic which is elided in the field of strategy theory, but which is decisively, yet unthematically, pointed to in the everyday understandings of organizational strategy. In Chapter 5, two prominent process ontologies of organization are considered which take the temporality of organization seriously. It is shown that these extant process ontologies, in according primacy to the past-ness and presence of organizational phenomena, are not fitting approaches to the question of the *future-ness* of organizational strategic

being. Heidegger's early hermeneutic phenomenology is presented as a more fitting approach to understanding the primarily futural temporality of organizational strategic being as an ontological unity.

Part II

Part II comprises four chapters (6 to 9) and deals with the interpretative description of the futurity of organizational strategic being as the ontological basis of organizational strategy using Heidegger's analytic of Dasein as a schematic analogue.

In Chapter 6, Heidegger's early analytic of Dasein is considered in more detail as a basis for a new ontology of temporal organizational being as inherently and primally a strategic kind of being. Heidegger's notion of the futurity of Dasein is analysed as a schematic precursor to the interpretation of organizational strategic being. In Chapter 7, this leads back to the analytic of Dasein's being-in-the-world as an ontological analogue for describing *organizational* being-in-the-world. In Chapter 8, Heidegger's treatment of Dasein's totality is used as a schema for describing organizational strategic being as an ontological unity. On this basis, the temporality of organizational strategic being is interpreted and described in the conception of *primordial organizational futurity*. In Chapter 9, which departs from Heidegger's analytic schema, organizational futurity is further interpreted in terms of its modes along the dimensions of organizational telic end-ing and organizational being-towards-ending in dissolution. These modes are combined and illustrated in conceptual portraits of the futurities of Amazon, the Catholic Church, and the South African Reserve Bank.

Conclusion

In the final Chapter (10), a summative description is given of organizational futurity as the ontological basis of organizational strategic being as an

ontological unity; we link back to the motivations for this study; implications are considered for the field of organizational strategy theory, for Organization Theory, and for a nascent philosophy of organization theory; and; unresolved issues and limitations are considered, and further research possibilities are explored.

Part I

The explication of the ontological question of organizational strategic being and the critique of its elision and relegation in rigorous theories of strategy and organization in contrast to its admission in everyday practice

Chapter 2

Approaching the question of organizational strategic being

One can determine the nature of entities in their Being without necessarily having the explicit concept of the meaning of Being at one's disposal.

Of course 'Being' has been presupposed in all ontology up till now, but not as a concept at one's disposal – not as the sort of thing we are seeking. This 'presupposing' of Being has rather the character of taking a look at it beforehand, so that in the light of it the entities presented to us get provisionally articulated in their Being.

Heidegger, 1962/BT

In this chapter, the conceptual grounds, question, approach, and significance of this study are set out. In section 2.1, the basic meaning of strategy is interpretatively derived from a conceptual history of strategy as a precursor to posing the focal question of this study in Section 2.2. In Section 2.3, the hermeneutic phenomenological approach taken to address this question is described. The significance of this study is discussed in Section 2.4.

2.1. The significances and meanings of strategy: a conceptual history

Organizational strategy inherits a sense of historical significance from the word strategy which may be traced back to antiquity (Bracker, 1980). The historiography of strategy is typically told along this etymological thread as the story of the changing meaning of strategy over the conventional eras of recorded history: antiquity (about 500BC – 400AD), late antiquity (about 400

– 1500), early modernity (about 1500 – 1800), late modernity (1800 – 1945), and contemporary (1945 – present).

Although contemporary notions of strategy may be traced etymologically to the ancient notions of the *strategos* and *strategia*, they are also so different from these notions as to be regarded as “recent invention[s]” (Carter, 2013). The ancient writings of Onasander for example, which deal explicitly with the notion of the *strategos* – literally, the one who addresses that which is laid out and referring quintessentially to the general of an army (Bracker, 1980) – emphasises the role and tasks of the leader of an army and often read like guides to good housekeeping in a situation of war. The early notions of *strategemata* (associated with Frontinus) and *strategia* (associated with Emperor Maurice) bear more resemblance to what would be regarded nowadays as the practicalities of skirmishing and the tactics of waging small-scale battles than to what we understand as strategy. The historiography of strategy, told etymologically, is thus not the record of a stable, trans-historical concept. Modern and contemporary understandings of strategy differ substantially from each other and from those of antiquity and late antiquity. This finding bolsters Carter’s (2013) conclusion that contemporary notions of organizational strategy are best approached as peculiar accomplishments that have little in common with the ancient notions of the *strategos* and *strategia*. However, this conclusion relies too heavily on a nominalist historiography which ignores the possibility that for our predecessors the notion of strategy *as we now understand it* may have gone by other names. To dismiss the history of strategy on the basis of the discontinuity of its *signifier* is thus to risk missing that which is *essential* to the meaning of strategy. As Freedman (2015) says: “Even if the word was not always in use, we can now look back and observe how personalities engaged in activities that would later be called strategy.”

An alternative to an etymological historiography is Koselleck's (2002; 2004) methodology of *Begriffsgeschichte*, or conceptual history, which forms part of his hermeneutic theory of history. Such an interpretative approach to the conceptual history of strategy is in accord with the hermeneutic phenomenological approach (Section 2.3) taken in this study.

The conceptual history undertaken here is selective, depicted in broad strokes, and is a seeking after what is essential to and thus shared among the multifarious contemporary notions of strategy. The general significance of such research resides in a particular understanding of historical process which White (2002) describes in his introduction to Koselleck (2002):

... historical process is marked by a distinctive kind of temporality different from that found in nature. This temporality is multileveled, is subject to differential rates of acceleration and deceleration, and functions not only as a matrix within which historical events happen but also as a causal force in the determination of social reality in its own right.

Thus the conceptual history of strategy is undertaken here to discover what is essential to the meaning of strategy, and to grasp this basic meaning as implicated in how organizational strategy is theorized and in how it manifests in practice as a "causal force".

A conceptual history of strategy goes beyond the confines of an etymological historiography and reveals definitive aspects of a basic idea of strategy which continues to undergird the diversity of contemporary understandings of organizational strategy. A conceptual historical approach provides a wider purview: instead of only tracing from present to past along an etymological thread, a conceptual history allows us to also consider the past in terms of the *meanings* of present notions rather than only in terms of their signifiers. This wider conceptual purview helps us to find historically relevant precedents of the contemporary understanding of strategy which may have gone by other names. In reading from our present understandings of strategy to find their

conceptual simulacra in past epochs, irrespective of their etymology, we find those old notions, practices, institutions, languages, and events, that house what I tentatively call *the conceptual history of major undertakings*, which tells us what, if anything, is so basic to the contemporary notion of strategy as to have remained stable since the ancients.

Divination in antiquity

The ancients certainly made ‘big decisions’ and pursued ‘major undertakings’ which we would nowadays associate with grand strategy. That the ancient Athenians and Romans separated these aspects from the work and tasks of the *strategos*, does not mean that they were not strategic in the contemporary sense. The *strategos* was appointed only *after* a matter had already become strategic. The major historical undertakings, to wage war or to extend the empire, were in the first instance, not matters for the *strategos* to preside over. The *strategos* is thus not the beginning of grand undertakings for the ancients. Rather, such undertakings were decided among the ancient Greeks and Romans for the most part on the basis of divination (augury and haruspicy) which was the preserve of specially trained priests (augurs and haruspices) who were in direct contact with the heads of state. Thus, divination was to the ancients what strategy is to us.

According to Aeschylus, it was Prometheus who not only provided humans with fire stolen from the gods, but also helped them towards momentous discoveries such as “numbers”, “the combining of letters”, “brick-built houses” and “carpentry”, and “the ways of divination” (Howard, 1916). Walsh (2003) describes the myth in more detail:

According to the myth, the Titan [Prometheus] gifted humans with speech, prophecy, and fire, among other things. All of his gifts were really *technai* for controlling previously uncontrollable forces in the world. Aeschylus's Prometheus uses precisely this terminology when describing his gift of prophecy: And I marked out many ways by

which they might read the future, and among dreams I first discerned which are destined to come true; and voices baffling interpretation I explained to them, and signs from chance meetings. The flight of crook-taloned birds I distinguished clearly ... and initiated mankind into an occult art (*techne*). Also I cleared their vision to discern signs from flames, which were obscure before this.

The main aim of the ancient augurs was to discover whether a major undertaking was in line with the will of the gods by interpreting the flight and other behaviours of birds and by ‘reading’ the entrails of specially prepared animals (Brent, 1999). According to Smith (1875), divination was ubiquitous in ancient Rome as a precursor to highly significant undertakings:

no public act could be performed without consulting the auspices, no election could be held, no law passed, no war waged; for a neglect of the auspices would have been equivalent to a declaration that the gods had ceased to rule the Roman state.

Smith (1875) also points out that divination was practiced widely beyond the ancient Greeks and Romans:

All the nations of antiquity were impressed with the firm belief, that the will of the gods and future events were revealed to men by certain signs, ...

Walsh (2003) describes the strategic nature of what was brought to the Oracle at Delphi in ancient Athens:

In most of the cases when Athens consulted Delphi on official business, their messenger or *theoros* presented her with a plan or plans of action, sometimes etching the different alternatives on wooden or bone lots for the Pythia to select from on Apollo's behalf.

It is interesting that Walsh resorts to the personification of Athens, as a subject that is represented by the *theoros*, to describe Delphic consultation. It is not the *theoros* who consults, it is Athens ‘who’ is consulting. Walsh (2003) also points out that the matters brought to the Oracle indicate that her function was associated only with matters of high significance:

[The] oracle's ambivalent function both as a mouthpiece of *tuche*, fate dealt out by the gods, and as technical support for the arguments of statesmen debating the future.

According to Smith (1875), divination was the preserve of leaders and public decisionmakers and was thus also associated with matters of high significance in ancient Rome:

it is certain that in ancient times no one but a patrician could take the auspices, and that a plebeian had no power of doing so.

Divination was never about trivialities. Rather, divination was *only* for matters of high significance, the ‘major undertakings’ of private and public life. And, as is the case with contemporary strategy, divination was also ubiquitous among the ancients in their engagements with the contingent future. Thus, the *association with significance* is qualitatively central to both the meanings and the practice of ancient divination.

That divination is about the future in a definitive sense and involves a unique kind of future-oriented judgment is confirmed by Aristotle. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle classifies oracles among the “*atechnic pisteis*”, who are “witnesses”, “whose judgments are clear” (Walsh, 2003). However, Aristotle claims that while proverbs and the advice of theologians are reliable witnesses to past and present events, the “expounders of oracles [are witnesses] about future events”. Thus, in addition to the centrality of the association with significance, divination is first and foremost *about the future*.

However, ‘the future’ has since ancient times been thought as contingent and thus as epistemologically problematic. What is to come does not yet exist; thus, propositions about future events are indeterminate with respect to their truth or falsity. Taken together, these problems describe Aristotelian in-principle future contingency (Williams 2008) - the major implication of which is that there is no transtemporal principle of knowledge that holds equally to what has been and what is, *and* to what is yet to come. Hence, Aristotle’s distinction of oracular pronouncements from knowledge of the past and present. What is yet to come is not knowable in the same way as what is present to observation or

experience. Thus, divination involved an orientation to the future understood as ineradicably contingent.

From this brief treatment, we have identified three characteristics that are basic to the meaning of ancient divination: the association with significance, the primacy of the orientation towards the future, and its being a specialised way of dealing with future contingency.

The science of astrology in late antiquity

Divination was largely displaced in late antiquity by the science of astrology. According to Smith (1875):

The science of augury had greatly declined in the time of Cicero; and although he frequently deplores its neglect in his *De Divinatione*, yet neither he nor any of the educated classes appears to have had any faith in it.

The turning away from divination is marked by the demise of the Oracle at Delphi which “issued its last *chresmon*” (Walsh, 2003) around 300 AD. This shift is understood to involve the shift from *muthos* to *logos*, from the mythical to reason as the means to working out how to proceed into the contingent future. The turning away from divination was a turning to astrology. According to (Zane, 1994):

Beginning with the Assyrians 5,000 years ago, soothsayers were prized advisers. For lack of anything better, their art was considered good science -- Plato and Aristotle were practicing astrologers as were Copernicus, Galileo and Newton.

According to Von Stuckrad (2000): “In late antiquity astrology held a key position among the accepted and well-reputed sciences.” Thus, astrology displaced divination as a *science* by means of which matters could be made more tractable in the face of ineradicable future contingency.

Astrology is a concept of interpreting the quality of a given time, i.e. the essence of synchronically occurring events which are connected to symbols and meaning. ... Knowledge of those correspondences - astrology - leads to a deep understanding of future events. (Von Stuckrad, 2000)

Astrology was also associated with matters of high significance:

As ars mathematica closely connected with astronomy, it made its way into the highest political and philosophical orders of the Roman Empire and became the standard model of interpreting past, present, and future events. Von Stuckrad (2000)

Thus, astrology shares the three basic characteristics of divination: the association with matters of significance, its future orientation, and its being a specialised means for engaging with future contingency. However, whereas divination sought knowledge of the changeful wills of the gods, astrology was a scientific endeavour from the start which sought a surer knowledge of the contingent future in the regularities of the heavenly bodies.

Christian prophecy

According to Devine's (1911) entry on prophecy in *The Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Christian prophecy also involves the sense of an engagement with the contingent future. However, whereas astrology involves an empirical approach to knowing the future by observation of the heavenly bodies, prophecies are based on revelation and faith. As Devine (1911) says:

... we have here to understand by prophecy what is in its strict and proper sense, namely the revelation of future events. ... the prediction should concern things outside the reach of all natural knowledge, and have for its object future contingent things or those things which God alone knows.

Prophecies are not found out by the prophet by observation. Rather, revelations are *given* to the prophet. Such bestowals are accepted and shared on the basis of faith rather than reason. Nevertheless, prophecy shares with divination and astrology a definitive orientation towards the future which is also understood as contingent. Even divinely inspired prophecies do not remove the in-principle contingency of the future for humans. Although future events are revealed, a sense of contingency is retained in that the time and the details of the event remain shrouded in uncertainty.

Prophecy does not only involve heavenly matters but also earthly matters of high significance:

Some foretold things which would affect the fate of nations, as France, England, and Ireland. A great number have reference to popes and to the papacy; and finally we have many such prophecies relating to the end of the world and the approach of the Day of Judgment. (Devine, 1911)

Devine further confirms the association with matters of high significance when he says that Christian prophecy:

concern[s] something of a grave and important nature, that is something for the good of the Church or the good of souls. This ... will help to distinguish true prophecies from the puerile, senseless, and useless predictions of fortune-tellers, crystal-gazers, spiritualists, and charlatans. (Devine, 1911)

Thus, we find remarkable similarities between divination, astrology and Christian prophecy in that they are all associated with matters of high significance, are oriented towards the future, and are understood as specialised ways of dealing with the contingent future.

Military strategy in the 19th century

According to Freedman (2015) “the word strategy only came into general use at the start of the nineteenth century” and the modern concept of strategy may be traced to the works of this period by “Baron Henri de Jomini and Carl von Clausewitz” on military strategy. The early 19th century understanding of military strategy is also important as it marks the point at which strategy first becomes an object of study in the newly established military academies in Europe.

Moreover, it is at this juncture that we find a decisive break with the ancient notion of *strategia* as a tactical and logistical function attached to the role of the *strategos*. According to Freedman (2015) the modern concept of strategy was first distinguished from tactics in the late 18th century in the works of Guibert and de Maizeroy. This distinction is important in that matters of high

significance are thereby attributed to strategy whereas the less significant ‘operational’ details are attributed to tactics. Whereas the ancient notion of the *strategos* had more to do with means, the modern concept of strategy is understood to involve the interplay of means and ends of high significance.

Clausewitz is famous for coining the phrase “the fog of war” to describe the “veil of uncertainty” (Kornberger, 2013) that shrouds the conduct of military strategy. For Clausewitz “war is the province of uncertainty”. Thus, Clausewitz offers a theory of military strategy that does not “[entertain] any absurd claim to communicate the secret of victory”. Here again we find that 19th century understandings of strategy are imbued with the sense of the ineradicable contingency of the future.

Thus, from this brief survey, we find sufficient confirmation that the modern understanding of military strategy is underpinned by the characteristic associations with matters of high significance and the orientation towards the future which is taken to be contingent in principle.

Contemporary business strategy and strategic management

An important historical juncture on the way to contemporary notions of strategy is the advent in the early 20th century of business policy which was first taught at Harvard University from as early as 1912 and which is the forerunner of contemporary corporate strategy (Bower, 2008). According to Leontiades (1982): “Business policy is a case in which theory developed to explain practice.” That is, business policy came into being as an academic field in the 1960’s in response to the need of businesses for “systematic methods of dealing with an unfamiliar and uncertain environment” (Leontiades, 1982). For Bracker (1980), “the first modern writers to relate the concept of strategy to business were Von Neumann and Morgenstern [1947], with their theory of games.” According to Nag, Hambrick and Chen (2007), it was Schendel and Hofer (1979) who “rechristened the field of business policy as strategic

management”. For Schreyögg (2013): “Strategic Management” refers to the discipline which seeks “to explain and guide the domain definition and competitive manoeuvring of business and corporations”. From these beginnings, strategic management has become a burgeoning contemporary academic field.

According to Bracker (1980), Hofer’s and Schendel’s (1978) comparative study of modern business strategy theories emphasised the differences between them but “failed to discuss the commonalities in the concept of business strategy”. Desirous of consolidation in the field, Bracker (1980) identifies the common elements of extant theories of business strategy and strategic management which he sets out as follows:

... business strategy has the following characteristics: an *environmental* or *situational* analysis is used to determine a firm’s posture in its field, and then the firm’s *resources* are utilized in an appropriate manner to attain its major *goals*. (emphases in the original)

The major importance of strategic management is that it gives organizations a framework for developing abilities for anticipating and coping with change. It also helps to develop the ability to deal with uncertain futures by defining a procedure for accomplishing goals.

The contemporary academic notions of business strategy and strategic management show that strategy is commonly understood as involving matters of high significance which are framed as “basic long-term goals” (Chandler, 1962), “the company’s purpose” (Cannon, 1968), “long-range objectives ... that affect the system as a whole” (Ackoff, 1990), as the “basic objectives of the enterprise” (Glueck, 1976), and as a pattern in the organization’s “important decisions” (Mintzberg, 1973; Miles, Snow, Meyer and Coleman, 1978).

It is also clear that contemporary corporate strategy and strategic management are understood as oriented towards the future which is taken to be contingent in principle. Indeed, strategy is undertaken in order to cope organizationally

with in-principle future contingency. Organizational strategy is thoroughly imbued with a sense of contingency and organizational strategic action is indelibly marked by uncertainty and ambiguity (Lindblom, 1959; Mintzberg, 1973; March and Olsen, 1976; Weick, 1995; Orlikowski, 2015; Czarniawska, 2003). As Leontiades (1982) points out, the birth of business policy was in response to a shift in the needs of businesses from “tactical planning geared to short range concerns” to the need to “anticipate and plan long-range for the entire firm based on the best current evaluations of future events.” We also see this emphasis on the futural orientation of strategy in descriptions of organizational strategy as “based on a longer view into the future” (Ackoff 1990), as “shaping the course of an organization” (Hickson and Pugh. 1995), and as being about the “long-term direction of the organization” (Johnson, Scholes and Whittington 2008). Thus, a prospective orientation underlies the otherwise multifarious contemporary notions of strategy.

Contemporary organizational strategy theory, which includes corporate strategy theory and strategic management theory, carries the same basic meaning of strategy as involving matters of high significance in the face of in-principle future contingency.

The basic idea of strategy

Contemporary strategy theorists conceptualize and aim to explain the phenomenon of strategy from multifarious perspectives that involve a diversity of methods. However, “what strategy is” (Rouleau, 2013) and what strategic management is (Nag, Hambrick and Chen, 2007) remain open questions. There are two ways of reading these questions: as broader conceptual questions of what *strategy* and *strategic* mean in general, and as more specifically theoretical questions of what *organizational strategy* and *strategic management* are as phenomena. These are quite different questions aimed at different things which are often conflated in the literature of organizational

strategy theory. The bewildering plurality of conceptualizations and theories of organizational strategy (Barnett, 2016) militates against the possibility of a singular *theoretical* answer to the question of what organizational strategy is. Organizational strategy theory is a pluralistic field of manifold conceptualisations of the phenomenon of organizational strategy.

As a scientific question, “what is strategy?”, is also problematic if it is presumed that organizational strategy can be apprehended exhaustively in terms of its *presence*. That is, if we understand strategy as a temporal phenomenon, then the description of what it *is* as a present actuality will not give us the whole story of the phenomenon of strategy. This aspect of the critique of strategy theory, in terms of the problematic curtailment of the *temporality* of strategy, turns out to be pivotal for this study and is treated in more detail in Section 2.2.4 below.

In this section we continue to pursue the conceptual question of “what strategy means” rather than that of “what strategy is”. Obtaining a sense of the essence of strategy, if only a partial and banal one, is a crucial task in this study. Having a sense of the essence of strategy supports the aims of this dissertation to bring out, to question, and to better understand the nature of organizations *as strategic beings*. After clarifying the basic notion of strategy we will be in a position in the next section (2.2) to bring the question to be pursued in this study into sharper focus.

The conceptual history of strategy that is offered here should not be read as a *progression* of phases which replace each other, nor should it be read as a *progressive development* from less to more sophisticated notions and practices. For example, although the practice of divination has all but disappeared, astrology and Christian prophecy have remained alongside contemporary strategy as prevalent ways of making sense of major undertakings in the face of the contingent future. Neither the advent of organizational strategy nor

Futures Studies, for example, has led to the demise of astrology. This is what Koselleck (2004) refers to as the “contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous”. Moreover, divination, astrology, prophecy, modern military strategy, and contemporary business strategy all share the characteristics of being highly developed bodies of knowledge and sophisticated practice. Indeed, all these manifestations of strategy have exercised the greatest minds and incorporate what was regarded as the highest forms of knowledge available in each historical epoch. The conceptual history of strategy, which we read through a history of major undertakings, reveals basic elements which remain remarkably stable from antiquity through to the highly codified contemporary notions of strategy. These are the essential elements of the basic idea of strategy.

The first basic characteristic of strategy is that it always involves matters of high significance. Strategy has indeed attained a contemporary significance by its ubiquity among organizations which are also pervasive features of our time. Strategy is not only becoming more widespread among organizations of every kind, it is also becoming more widespread within organizations. “Nowadays, nearly everything seems to be strategic” (Schreyögg, 1994). Moreover, organizational strategy theory is a burgeoning field of research (Laamanen, 2017). This is a sense of significance by dint of sheer practical pervasiveness and theoretical productivity, of a quantity and proportion as to represent something of epochal contemporary significance.

However, strategy involves another, deeper sense of significance which belongs to the very meaning of strategy. This is a qualitative, conceptual kind of significance, rather than one of degree or by association. As the conceptual historical sketch above suggests quite clearly, strategy always involves that which was deemed to be of high significance. What is entrusted to the office of the *strategos* are not trivial undertakings. What was brought before the Oracle at Delphi, and the College of Augurs at Rome, were not trivial matters

but questions of the highest significance for the asker. This did not change in the turning away in late antiquity from divination to astrology and to prophecy. Strategy attends to the significant both in terms of working out what is of significance, and in terms of working out whether and how significant endeavours are to be approached.

The association of the meaning of strategy with significance, does not thereby exclude the *minutiae* of the *praxis* of strategy in its manifestations as divination, astrology, prophecy, and now as organizational strategy. However, the study of the praxical dimension of strategy belongs to the *elaborations* of the basic idea of strategy which we find in strategy theory and strategy in practice. A comprehensive theory of organizational strategy cannot do without some elaboration of praxis. Each of the historical manifestations of strategy undoubtedly included an elaborate and *distinctive* praxis shaped by institutionalised practices. Since the aims of this study do not include offering a *scientific* theory of organizational strategy, these elaborations are not brought into the foreground. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that it is taken in this study that the different kinds of praxis and practices of strategy are all conditioned by the essence of strategy as always directed towards that which is of high significance. That is, the association with significance is prior to and conditions the praxis and practices of strategy.

The second basic characteristic of strategy, is that it always involves an orientation towards the contingent future. It is clear from the conceptual history of major undertakings that the temporal orientation of being directed towards the future is definitive of strategy. Being strategic is a futural orientation that involves projection, anticipation, expectation. Moreover, the future - what is yet to come - is always understood as contingent *in principle*. Contingency is understood in various ways. In this study, we adopt the Aristotelian notion of in-principle future contingency (Williams, 2008) which

refers to the non-necessity of future events. In-principle future contingency is an epistemological principle which states that our knowledge of what is yet to come is tenuous in that future events may turn out in unforeseen ways, and are thus not the domain of the surer kind of knowledge we can have of past events and present objects which are available to experience. Echoing Aristotle, Koselleck (2004) says:

The legibility of the future, despite possible prognoses, confronts an absolute limit, for it cannot be experienced.

This notion of future contingency must be distinguished from the meaning of contingency that underpins the contingency perspective of organization strategy (Ginsberg and Venkatraman, 1985). In contingency theory, contingency means something like ‘it depends upon the circumstances’. Thus, for example, it is held that organizational features are contingent upon environmental factors. This meaning of contingency is one which relates dependent organizational variables to independent circumstances in the sense that they are beyond organizational control (Van de Ven and Drazin, 1985).

For the ancients, the purpose of divination was not to predict the future but rather to find out whether their prospective undertakings were aligned with the will of their gods, or not. The will of the gods, however, was not equated with the certainty of outcomes since the gods themselves also quarrelled about the future. That is, the in-principle contingency of the future is never removed through divination, but only ameliorated by knowing, somewhat tenuously, on which side of the will of the gods one stands towards the future. The shift, in late antiquity from divination to astrology, represents the desire to place knowledge of the contingent future on a more reliable scientific basis as opposed to basing it on the caprice of quarrelsome gods. In this shift, what does *not* shift is the understanding of the ineradicable contingency of the future as the condition of strategy - as its *sine qua non*.

If the future is not approached as contingent, if instead it is approached as determinable, then there is no need for strategy at all. When future events are approached as largely predeterminable, as is the case with the mechanical models of classical physics, there is no need for strategy. Future contingency – that is, not knowing in advance whether future events will occur or how they will actually turn out - is a condition of strategy and is thus an essential characteristic of strategy as the orientation towards *the contingent future* for the sake of the significant.

What is the quality of this orientation? From the foregoing: strategy is seen to involve an active orientation of *engagement* with the contingent future. This engagement is dynamic and may take different forms. However, an orientation of complete indifference – of *disengagement* - towards the future is antithetical to the meaning of strategy. This engagement is indicative of a concerned looking ahead, of planning, of wishing and hoping, and of expectation more generally. Without this futural engagement, strategy is inert and makes no sense. One approaches the Oracle or reads astrological signs because of this engagement with what is yet to come which is steeped in significance. It is in and by this engagement that the contingent future is addressed in terms of what is significant in the present.

The basic idea of strategy is a synthesis of the common aspects distilled from a conceptual history of the notions of divination, astrology, Christian prophecy, 18th century military strategy, and contemporary theoretical notions of organizational strategy. These common features of strategy: the tight coupling to matters of high significance and the active relation of engagement with the contingent future, are essential elements of the idea of strategy *as the engagement with the contingent future for the sake of the significant*.

The conceptual history of ‘major undertakings’ reveals essential elements of the meaning of strategy: that strategy is for the sake of the significant, and that

strategy involves an engagement with the future which is understood as contingent in principle. Taking these elements together as basic to the meaning of strategy gives us a sense of the essential meaning of strategy. Having such a sense is crucial in this study - we must begin with some idea of the thing we are talking about.

The essential elements of strategy are interrelated in a particular way. The engagement with the future is *for the sake of* what is significant now but may only be actualised in the future. The directedness of the engagement towards significance gives to strategy its *telic* character such that the engagement is always understood as directed towards significant ends, even if it is not always clear what these specific ends might be. If this projected engagement is *for the sake of* the significant, it is *in the face of* future contingency. Significant ends are contingent possibilities *because* they lie in the future, and the engagement which is for the sake of these ends is a coping in the face of ineradicable future contingency.

This description of what is essential to the meaning of strategy does not come with any claim to being a *comprehensive* conceptualisation. Strategy *as such* does not ever appear as an independent phenomenon in the world. The synthesis here of basic elements of the meaning of strategy should be understood as a *minimal* interpretative description rather than as an exhaustive definition. The basic idea of strategy is a minimalist construct which is *formally* indicative (Heidegger, 1962/BT) of the ways in which *strategy* is theorised and practised. It is an open-ended sort of indication of the form of strategy which nevertheless underlies the many different ways in which strategy may be actualised and elaborated.

The basic idea of strategy holds together what is discerned as essential to the meaning of strategy. As a minimal description, it is such as to be taken as unproblematic. In this sense, it is the banal, taken-for-granted point of

departure for the manifold theoretical and practical elaborations of organizational strategy. Thus, it is a point of confluence between strategy theory and practice which are otherwise separated by a “rigour-relevance gap” (Kieser and Leiner, 2009).

2.2. The question of organizational strategic being as an ontological unity

The question posed at the outset is: what does it mean for organizations to *be* strategic? In this section, this line of questioning is followed to the focal question of this study. Firstly, the problem of the rigour-relevance gap in organizational strategy theory is considered. This reveals the field-wide assumption that strategy is *accidental* to organizations. This pre-theoretical assumption is then problematised by contrasting it with the everyday construal of strategy as normatively and existentially necessary to organizations. The theoretical understanding of strategy as accidental is questioned further in the light of *the necessity of a ‘subject’ of strategy* for any actualisation of strategy. Here, organizational being is identified as the necessary *subiectum* of organizational strategy. Firmer ontological grounds for approaching strategy as *inherent* to temporal organizational being are then considered. Approaching organizational being as a totality, leads to the focal question of this study: *what is the nature of organizational strategic being as an ontological unity?*

2.2.1. The problem of the rigor-relevance gap in organizational strategy theory

This study is motivated by the rigour-relevance gap as a persistent disjunction which afflicts the field of organizational strategy theory. Why is it that the rigorous theories of strategy which appear in academic journals (Nicolai and Seidl, 2010) are hardly ever taken up in practitioner-oriented journals (Daft and Lewin, 2008) nor in the ubiquitous and challenging practice of

organizational strategy? More specifically, what is it about the theorization of organizational strategy that renders rigorous strategy theories irrelevant to everyday organizational strategy?

The large body of academic literature which attends to the rigour-relevance gap, for the most part, treats it at the level of organization and management studies and emphasises the cross-cutting epistemological and methodological issues involved at this general disciplinary level. In organization studies, the rigour-relevance gap (also referred to as the theory-practice gap, and as the academic-practitioner gap) is a major, long-standing topic of concern (Rynes, Bartunek and Daft, 2001, Daft and Lewin, 2008; Kieser and Leiner, 2009; Rasche and Behnam, 2009, Nicolai and Seidl, 2015). Some scholars are less worried by the gap; for Markides (2011), for example, the gap is not the primary problem since much research is indeed relevant but has not been properly translated and presented to practitioners as useful knowledge. Some see the gap as unavoidable in principle (Kieser and Leiner, 2009; Daft and Lewin, 2008). However, most scholars are more positive in their diagnoses of the problem and so offer various suggestions to ameliorate it (Rynes, Bartunek and Daft, 2001; Van de Ven and Johnson, 2006; Gulati, 2007; Hodgkinson and Rousseau, 2009; Rasche and Behman, 2009; Nicolai and Seidl, 2010; Bartunek and Rynes, 2014). Suggestions for bridging the gap have been about making theories more accessible to practitioners and about using methodologies which involve practitioners through “engaged inquiry”, in “collaborative engagements”, “hybrid fora” (Heracleous, 2011) and “action research” (Kieser and Leiner, 2009). However, these “descriptive” diagnoses and “programmatic” (Kieser *et al*, 2015) suggestions have produced few results and the gap remains wide. Daft and Lewin (2008) reflect on “the lack of impact of academic organization studies on management practice” which was a motivation in 1989 to start the journal Organization Science (OS). However,

despite this emphasis over a period of 16 years after the founding of the journal, the gap has remained wide and the editors' mood of resignation is palpable:

Despite our plea for relevance in previous essays, the reality is that direct practical relevance has not been realized. For example, out of 1,731 citations to articles published in OS in volume year 1992, only 48 were cited in practitioner-oriented management journals and none were cited in HBR. A similar analysis of 1,593 citations to articles published in AMR in 1992 identified only 7 citations in practitioner-oriented management journals, and none were cited in HBR. The odds are extremely low that an academic article will have direct or immediate practical relevance.

Kieser and Leiner (2009) are even more sceptical in that they understand the gap as “unbridgeable” on the grounds that science and practice constitute different “self-referential systems”, each with a definitive logic, and which are thus operatively closed off from each other.

Although there is a large body of work on the rigour-relevance gap in organization studies, there is little research that pertains specifically to the gap in the field of organizational strategy theory. The dearth of specific research on the gap in strategy theory is due to the framing of the problem as a general one which cuts across organization studies and which is thus taken to be properly treated at that ‘higher’ disciplinary level rather than at the level of specific fields. In terms of this framing, the extant research on the gap *in general* is taken to be applicable to the fields that fall under the rubric of organization studies, including the field of strategy theory.

However, although this division of academic labour makes sense because of how much social science methodology is shared across the fields in organization studies, it risks leaving out theory-practice incongruities which are peculiar to strategy theory and theories. As Shrivastava (1987) says: “It is presumptuous at best, and vacuous at worst, to speak of a single set of ‘standards’ or criteria by which the products of social science research may be evaluated for their scientific validity and practical relevance.” Thus, the large

body of research on the general gap in organization studies does not obviate the need to attend to the specificity of the disjunction between rigorous organizational strategy theory on one side, and organizational strategy in practice on the other side.

Rigorous strategy theories, despite the many that are available, are rarely taken up in practice (Shrivastava, 1987; Barnett, 2016). Even the rigorous theories developed from the academically fertile strategy-as-practice (SAP) perspective, which draws closest to what strategists actually do in practice, have by-and-large not been taken up in practice either (Splitter and Seidl, 2011; Carter and Whittle, 2018).

Yet, strategy theory cannot be described as completely estranged from practice. As the results of scientific endeavour, rigorous strategy theories are often based on close empirical studies of what goes on in practice. A wide range of methodologies for operationalising and apprehending the phenomenon of organizational strategy is available to theorists. Indeed, the methodologically sound collection of empirical data on concrete everyday organizational strategy is directly associated with theoretical rigour. In addition, theorists rely on practitioner-oriented journals such as the Harvard Business Review (HBR) as reliable secondary sources. According to Schultz and Nicolai (2015), academic articles frequently reference HBR articles:

According to our results, the HBR is not only a widely quoted scientific source, but also a significant influence on the scientific discourse in management research.

However, the converse does not transpire since Schulz and Nicolai (2015) “conclude that explicit references to scientific discussions within HBR articles are rather infrequent”: on average there are only 0,69 references to academic articles per HBR article sampled, whereas the HBR articles sampled were quoted 29,56 times in the academic articles.

On the other side of the gap, on the side of everyday practice, the gap does not seem to be very worrisome given the absence of HBR articles about it. One does not find the kind of “hand-wringing” about the gap in “practitioner-oriented” (Daft and Lewin, 2008) publications. It is plausible that practitioners for the most part are not even aware of this gap. The rigour-relevance gap in strategy theory is discernible and perplexing to theorists but seems to be of little or no consequence to practitioners. The upshot is that theory follows practice, however, practice does *not* follow theory. Thus, the gap could hardly be called a divide or a polarity which both connote a symmetrical disjunction. Rather, it is more precise to say that the field of rigorous strategy theory is unrequited in its pursuit of strategy in practice. Therefore, the problem of the gap is asymmetrical in that it is a problem *for* theory and *of* theory - it is not a problem *of* or *for* practice. Something about strategy *theory* must change if *its* rigour-relevance gap is to be ameliorated.

A consequence of the gap is that strategy theory does not fulfil its promise as an *applied* science which positively feeds back to and informs practice. Another consequence is that the critical potential of strategy theory is undermined especially in regard to the critique of practice. Thus, the motivation to address the rigour-relevance gap in strategy theory is entwined with the motivation to enhance its capacity to apprehend practice *critically*.

Paradoxically, however, the treatment of the gap *within* a field of theory may serve to reproduce the gap rather than ameliorate it. The “programmatic” literature on the gap emphasises methodological ways of bridging it, which Kieser *et al* (2015) find do little towards this aim even. As Barnett (2016) says: the problem in strategy theory is “more than a matter of reforming theoretical and empirical methods”. This comes across as a double bind of making strategy theory more relevant *without making it less rigorous*. Within the bounds of the “logic” of scientific rigour (Kieser and Leiner, 2009) the field of strategy theory seems doomed to reproduce its own irrelevance. The gap is a problem

of and for strategy theory, but it is one that cannot be fully addressed *within* strategy theory.

While there is much literature on the methodological aspects of the general gap, which are taken to be applicable to strategy theory, the gap has not been treated more specifically in terms of the *pre-theoretical assumptions* which underlie the field of organizational strategy theory. Since these assumptions are specific to strategy theory they are not treated in the literature on the general gap in organization theory. And since they are so deeply embedded and taken for granted within strategy theory, they also escape intra-field problematisation. In this way the field-wide, pre-theoretical assumptions which underlie strategy theory escape attention as implicated in the gap.

Admittedly, such assumptions are rare and hard to discern in the diverse field of strategy theory. Nevertheless, the problem of the gap is a *field-wide* problem and it is thus reasonable and promising to approach it in terms of the pre-theoretical assumptions that are at sway across the field. In the context of this study, the fruitfulness of zooming in to consider the gap in strategy theory resides in attending to the *pre-theoretical* assumptions that underlie the field, and to do so from a *critical* vantage point that is not beholden to those very assumptions. Finding out what must change in strategy theory to ameliorate the gap is not itself a theoretical task.

The line of questioning and the focal question of this study arise from a critique of one such assumption that is deeply implicit in the field of organizational strategy theory: *that strategy is accidental to organizations*. This pre-theoretical assumption is treated in more detail in section 3.1 in the next chapter. For now, it is the recognition of this assumption as indicative of a specific incongruence between strategy theory and strategy in practice that gives rise to the focal question of this study. To say that a phenomenon is accidental is itself an ontological pronouncement about the nature of that

phenomenon as something which is only actualised in another being but is not necessary, or ontologically inherent to that being. However, there are ontological grounds for questioning the universal assumption in strategy theory that the relation between strategy and organization is accidental.

2.2.2. The ontological necessity of the *subiectum* of strategy

The basic idea of strategy derived in Section 2.1, is a rare point of confluence between strategy theory and practice which allows us to consider the rigour-relevance gap from a shared understanding of what is essential to the meaning of strategy. However, the basic idea of strategy does not ever appear in the world as a phenomenon in its own right, nor is there a theory of *bare* strategy. Strategy *as such* is never concretely actualised or theorised *as* this minimalist idea. Rather, strategy always appears together with a *subject* of strategy as in *military* strategy, *business* strategy, *corporate* strategy, *strategic management*, *marketing* strategy, *Amazon's* strategy, the strategy of *the Catholic Church*, and so on. No moment of the history of strategy appears to us without a subject of strategy. When Croesus sought an audience with the Oracle at Delphi to pose the question of the prospects for his military campaign against a foreign power, he did so as a subject engaged with the contingent future for the sake of a significant end. Croesus' appearance before the Oracle – as the subject of strategy – is crucial to the process of divination and is what makes the question he poses a full-fledged *strategic* question.

This is not to say that it is always clear *who* the subject of strategy is in each case, nor is any stand being taken at this point about the nature of this subject. Indeed, in organizational strategy theory we find various conceptions of the organizational subject of strategy. Yet, there is no theory of organizational strategy without an underlying notion of the organizational subject or subjects of strategy. Knights and Morgan (1991), for example, offer a theory of strategy wherein the organizational subjects of strategy are taken to be the “managers

and employees [as] subjects who secure their sense of purpose and reality by formulating, evaluating and conducting strategy.” Knights and Morgan (1991), base their theory of organizational strategy on a micro theory of organization as socially constructed. In contrast, orthodox strategic planning theory is based upon a macro theory of organization wherein the organization as a whole is taken to be the subject of strategy.

These notions of the organizational subject of strategy are pre-theoretically assumed in each strategy theory and are thus not put at stake or problematized within the ambit of each theory. Firstly, this occurs through the use of disciplinary signifiers such as *business* strategy and *corporate* strategy which categorially presume different organizational subjects of strategy. Secondly, as we saw in Section 2.2.1 above, in taking strategy to be an accidental behavioural property of the organizational subject, the nature of that subject may be pre-theoretically assumed and thus bracketed off from problematization.

If strategy means the engagement with the contingent future, then the phenomenon of strategy entails a subject that is involved in such an engagement; and, if strategy involves that which is significant then it also requires a subject for whom matters can have significance. The basic idea of strategy comes into being as a phenomenon only once a subject of strategy is added to it. Thus, we may define the phenomenon of organizational strategy as *the organizational engagement with the contingent future for the sake of the significant*. The term *organizational* here indicates a subject of strategy in deliberately broad terms so as to be applicable to different conceptions of organizations. Thus, the sub-ject is understood, at this introductory point, in a general and preliminary way as the organizational being that necessarily underlies organizational strategy; that is, as the “*subiectum*” that “lies beneath as an ontological basis” (Backman, 2005) of organizational strategy, and nothing more. The notion of the organizational subject of strategy is considered

in Chapter 7 where it is described more comprehensively in ontological terms as organizational strategic being.

The relation between strategy and organization involves an ontological sense of necessity in that the organizational subject is necessary for strategy to come into being as the phenomenon of organizational strategy. However, this sense of necessity is not brought into the foreground in theories of organizational strategy. More often, the organizational subject of strategy remains among the background assumptions of strategy theories which focus on explaining the strategic behaviour of that presumed subject which, because it is approached as an accidental property, is taken to be distinct and empirically separable from that subject. However, the nature of the engagement with the contingent future depends very much on the nature of the subjects of strategy as the *beings* that are *being strategic*. For example, in ancient times, war was understood to be conducted by the *strategos* as the individual subject of military strategy, or between different peoples or races as the collective subjects of military strategy. It was Montecuccoli and Lipsius who first argued that war should be understood as conducted between states rather than peoples. This marks a shift in military strategy in virtue of the shift in the conception of the proper *subject* of military strategy from generals to peoples to states. Such important considerations do not arise within the ambit of a rigorous strategy theory since each theory fixes pre-theoretically upon a notion of the subject of strategy which is held stable throughout the ensuing process of theorization. As Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel (1998) say:

Who is the strategist? How do we read the "organization's mind"? In Table 12-1, we listed the candidates for the job of strategist—each school has its own. At one extreme, it is the him or her of the design and entrepreneurial schools; at the other extreme, the them of the learning, political, and cultural schools. Or perhaps the strategist is the it of the environmental, planning, positioning, and cognitive schools—the world out there, procedure, analysis, or the biological brain.

In the light of the necessity of the subject of strategy, organizational strategy theory should attend more explicitly to the nature of that subject and not only to its accidental strategic behaviour.

Nevertheless, this sense of necessity in the relation between strategy and organizational being only runs in one direction; that is, while organization is necessary to the coming into being of strategy as the phenomenon of organizational strategy, it still does not mean that strategy is an inherent, *ontological* characteristic of organizational being.

2.2.3. The ontological basis of strategy in the temporality of organizational being

Although the study of time and temporality has recently become a more established theme of research in organization studies, time and temporality are rarely⁷ brought into the foreground in the field of strategy theory (Kornberger, 2016). For Kornberger, it is ironic that strategy, for “all its future orientation, time has been of little concern to strategy theorists.”

According to Orlikowski and Yates (2002), the study of time has “recently emerged as a focus of attention in organizational studies”. In this area of research, time is understood either as an objective phenomenon “existing independently of human action” (characterised as clock time), or as a subjective phenomenon (characterised as event time) that is “socially constructed through human action”, or as the mutual structuring of objective and subjective time in practices (Orlikowski and Yates, 2002). In such treatments of time (Orlikowski and Yates, 2002; Sonnentag, 2012), the notions *time* and *temporality* are not distinguished conceptually. Rather, the term temporality is used as the adjectival form of the term time. For Orlikowski and Yates, for example, the phrase “temporal structures” is a more elegant way of

⁷ See, for example Kunisch, Bartunek, Mueller and Huy (2017) and Myllykoski and Rantakari (2016).

referring to *time-based* structures that people in organizations “enact recurrently in their everyday practices”.

In other research in this area the notion of temporality is distinguished from the notion of time. For Kunisch, Bartunek, Mueller, and Huy (2017), for example, temporality is distinguished from both clock time and event time in that temporality involves the interplay between past, present and future in “temporal contexts”. In the literature on the process perspective on organization, temporality is a notion of central importance and is clearly distinguished from time. From this perspective, organizing and organizations are encountered as thoroughly temporal phenomena in an ontological sense (Weick, 1979, 1995; Nayak and Chia, 2011; Hernes, 2014). The process of organizing is temporal in its being stretched out over time and therefore entails the simultaneous interplay of the temporal dimensions of past, present and future. In this sense, organization (as a verb) is understood as involving the past, present and future in virtue of being a kind of being that is always stretched out over the dimensions of temporality. The notions of temporality in prominent process ontologies of organization are treated in more detail in Chapter 5.

From a process perspective, there are grounds for questioning the elision of the possibility of an ontological connection between strategy and organization. Understanding organizational strategy at its most fundamental, *as the organizational engagement with the contingent future*, suggests that the phenomenon of organizational strategy springs from the temporality of organization and is therefore not a merely accidental property after all. Thus, there is more to organizational strategy than strategic behaviour and content. Understanding organization more generally as temporal, and therefore as incorporating an orientation towards the future, points decisively to the ontological significance of strategy. If strategy is rooted in and *inherent* to organization as a temporal phenomenon, then the *ontological* thinking of the

relation between strategy and organization arises as interesting and worthy of exploration.

2.2.4. The question of this study

What does it mean for organizations to *be* strategic? This *vorfrage* of the relation between organizations and strategy is equally basic in strategy theory and in the practice of strategy, and is another point of confluence between these otherwise separated fields of academic and everyday endeavour. The other point of confluence between strategy theory and practice is that both fields of endeavour may be taken as referencing a shared minimal understanding of organizational strategy as *the organizational engagement with the contingent future for the sake of the significant*. In understanding how these points of confluence are addressed and elaborated in theory and in practice we hope to disclose the hidden features of the rigour-relevance gap in strategy theory.

We found in Section 2.2.1 that the relation between strategy and organization is universally presumed in theory to be an accidental relation. Hence, what it means for organizations to be strategic devolves into the scientific study of observable strategic behaviours and other accidental properties of organizations. By this pre-theoretical assumption, the possibility that strategy is *ontologically inherent* to organizations is elided.

This elision is problematized in three ways. Firstly, we find that in practice, strategy is understood as normatively and existentially necessary and “natural” (Knights and Morgan, 1991) for contemporary organizations rather than being merely accidental. At the very least, this everyday attitude and the empirical ubiquity of organizational strategy are suggestive of a deeper connection between strategy and organizations. Secondly, we find in the relation between strategy and organizations a more conceptual sense of the necessity of the organizational subject of strategy; this is an ontological sense of necessity since the phenomenon of organizational strategy cannot come into being without an

organizational subject of strategy (no matter how this subject is construed). Thirdly, a more compelling positive indication of an ontological relation between strategy and organization is obtained when we take the temporality of organization seriously. In Section 2.2.3, we found that organizational strategy – the organizational engagement with the contingent future for the sake of the significant - is grounded in the temporality of organization. In other words, what it means for temporal organizations to *be* strategic must also be approached ontologically.

The aims of this study are to address the rigour-relevance gap in organizational strategy theory and to bolster the critical capacity of this field by giving a speculative ontological account of organizational strategy which thematises the everyday practical attitude towards and understanding of this phenomenon. Such an account begins by bringing the inherent projectedness and futural orientation of organizational being (as a verb/noun) into the foreground as the ontological basis of all ensuing strategic behaviour in and of organizations.

To prioritise the organizational engagement with the future in this way raises the question of the nature of this distinctive kind of strategic being. Thus, the emphasis is shifted from the theorization of organizations *being strategic* to the study of organizations as inherently *strategic beings*. These are the two senses of what it means for organizations to *be* strategic: the former sense has to do with the human actions and organizational texts and artefacts that are made the objects of rigorous strategy theories; the latter sense is ontological and has to do with the *organizational* subject of strategy that is always already there before anything in the former sense can occur.

In asserting the priority of the ontological sense, a further stand is taken in this study that the proper *subiectum* of organizational strategy is organizational being *as a totality*. There is much strategizing that happens *inside* organizations, however, all these interrelated behaviours, tools and texts are,

for the most part, *for the sake of* some organization as the *subiectum* of organizational strategy. Amazon and Jeff Bezos are distinguishable subjects of strategy: they are each involved in an engagement with the contingent future in their own rights. Prior to *being strategic* there is an organizational *strategic being* that is disposed to being engaged with the future in its own right. Just as there can be no strategy without a subject, so there is no pristine moment of organizational strategy before an organizational subject of strategy. Hence, the focal question of this study: *what is the nature of organizational strategic being as an ontological unity?*

This question is not answered by a description of what happens inside organizations. Organizations are indeed complex assemblages of people and their interactions, of equipment, of texts, and meanings. However, if organizations are understood exclusively in terms of their parts, the sense of the organization as the proper *subiectum* of organizational strategy is lost. An overemphasis on what is happening inside organizations leads to a reductive dissipation of the *subiectum* under which these happenings occur as they do, and organizational being as the locus of its strategy is theoretically covered over.

In everyday terms, when people inside organizations undertake strategic work they do so, foremost and for the most part, *for the sake of* the organization and not foremost for their own sakes. The equipment inside organizations *belongs* to the organization, and the texts and meanings we find inside organizations only make sense in those organizational contexts. In posing the question of organizational strategic being as a totality, a stand is taken here that organizational strategy is ontologically rooted in and inherent to organizational being. That is, organizational strategic being is always prior to and therefore conditions all ensuing strategic behaviour. The emphasis is thus on describing the ontological features of organizational strategic being that are always already the case before human strategists can even begin to strategize on its

behalf. No *organizational* strategy can come into being without referencing an *organizational* subject of strategy. Thus, to make sense of the minutiae of organizational strategy we need to attend to the nature of organizational strategic being in whose name and for whose sake organizational strategy is typically undertaken in practice.

2.3. A hermeneutic phenomenological approach to the question of organizational strategic being

The main task towards the aims of this study is to interpret and describe the nature of organizational strategic being as an ontological unity. This task is approached from the hermeneutic phenomenological perspective that is associated with Heidegger's early philosophical project. Such a perspective is germane to the task at hand given Heidegger's emphasis on the critique of deep presumptions which underlie metaphysics and the sciences, on thematically disclosing the ontological underpinnings of the everyday, on possibility over actuality, on the full-fledged temporality of being, and on the primacy of the futurity of human existence. A hermeneutic phenomenological approach strikes at the heart of the disjunction between the scientific and everyday attitudes, both of which are critiqued from a philosophical standpoint. Such an approach avails a way to thematise the everyday understanding of organizational strategic being and to return these findings to the science of strategy theory as a new basis for theoretical rigour that does not begin by cutting itself off from everyday relevance and significance. In taking temporality seriously, this approach also allows us to see that a retrospective epistemology of accidental organizational behaviour is out of kilter with organizational strategy as a *futural* phenomenon that is *ontologically* rooted.

Broadly speaking, ontology is the branch of philosophy for the study of being and Heidegger's early project is avowedly ontological from the outset.

However, his project is ontological in the highest degree in that it enquires into the meaning of “*Being* as such” (Heidegger, 2000/IM). Ontology at this most basic level involves a questioning of and about the *being* of beings, “the being of all beings”, “what it means for anything to be” at all (Davis, 2010). Although this questioning has its precedent as the “first philosophy” of the ancient Greek philosophers, Heidegger has good reason to distinguish it from the traditional metaphysical questioning of the nature of “beings as such” (2000/IM):

... for the “question of Being” in the sense of the metaphysical question about beings as such precisely does not ask thematically about Being. Being remains forgotten.

Heidegger does not hark back to the ancient questioning of being in order to salvage it and to merely pick up where Plato and Aristotle left off, so to speak. Rather, in harking back to the “soil” in which ontological questioning has its provenance, Heidegger seeks a “*destrucktion*”, a dismantling or “deconstruction”, of traditional metaphysics by thinking the ontological difference between beings and the *being* (often capitalised *Being*) of beings.

This difference becomes apparent in the realization that the “the being of beings is itself not a being”, it is not even a “highest being or entity” which, though it ‘reigns’ over other entities, still remains an entity itself (Davis, 2010).

The being of beings is also not disclosed by aggregating the beings that exist to a universal, catch-all category such as Aristotle’s “substance” as “the enduring substratum (*hypokeimonenon*)” which “remains constantly present” in all existing beings. Thus, Heidegger distances his project from both the theological and metaphysical approaches to the question of the being of beings.

The emphasis of Heidegger’s questioning of being is not on the nature of this or that kind of being as would be the case with a “regional ontology” which pursues the nature of a category or distinctive kind of being. Rather, Heidegger’s project is motivated by a more fundamental questioning of the “unity of Being” (1962/BT) which perplexed the ancient philosophers but which has been forgotten in modernity. Heidegger sets out in search of a “non-

categorial” ontology (Stapleton, 2010). The ontological in this broadest of senses is distinguished from, but is a “precondition for, the “regional ontologies” that underlie all the sciences” (Richardson, 2012). These distinctions make it clear that Heidegger aims at what is most fundamental and thus at what is presupposed in all the regional ontologies that undergird the sciences of this or that class of beings, and what is ultimately also presupposed and definitive of practical human being as well.

In the question which we are to work out, what is asked about is Being – that which determines entities as entities, that on the basis of which entities are already understood, how ever we may discuss them in detail. (1962/BT)

The study of organizational being that is undertaken here is a regional ontology in that it brings a distinctive kind of being into the foreground, rather than seeking the meaning of being in general. It is thus an ‘application’ of Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenological approach as a schema for addressing the question of organizational strategic being in ontological terms. Heidegger does not abjure such regional ontologies, provided they take their proper beginning from the disclosure of human existence as the clearing in which all other beings come into being as phenomena in the first place (Sheehan, 2016). As Inwood (1999) says:

Ontology is the ‘study of beings as such’, but it can be a ‘regional’ ontology, concerned with the being or nature of e.g. numbers, space, or a work of literature. In contrast to such ontological inquiry, the inquiry and findings of unphilosophical mathematicians, geometers or philologists are [ontical], concerned with beings, not with their being.

The meaning of organizational strategic being can be addressed thematically by such a regional ontology.

Heidegger acknowledges his indebtedness to Husserl’s “phenomenology of the acts of consciousness” (Figal, 2010). Husserlian phenomenology, broadly speaking:

shares the conviction that the critical stance proper to philosophy requires a move away from a straightforward metaphysical or empirical investigation of objects to an investigation of the very framework of meaning and intelligibility that makes any such straightforward investigation possible in the first place. (Zahavi, 2013)

Heidegger accepts Husserl's phenomenological insight that human being "is the one point of reference in terms of which everything else is understood as something that is" (Figal, 2010). Existing things show up to humans as phenomena, in their "very appearing" rather than as "something that appears" independently of its appearing to us. According to Inwood (1999): "For Husserl 'phenomenology' was the study of what appears to us, to our consciousness." Husserl's phenomenology thus involves a bracketing off of the external world and a reduction to the ontologically foundational ego, its thoughts and intentionality and how these are related; not in reductive psychological terms but rather as a transcendental ego.

However, Heidegger also distinguishes his project and approach from that of his former teacher. Heidegger critiques Husserl's phenomenology as a categorial ontology which falls into the same misrepresentation of reality as Descartes' ontology. This critique of phenomenology "aims to see phenomenological experience not as a scientific method, but as a fundamental possibility of human life" (Figal, 2010). According to Sheehan (2016), whereas Husserl effects a phenomenological reduction to "the transcendental life of consciousness ... in which objects are constituted", Heidegger's phenomenological reduction involves coming "back from the apprehension of a thing" to "the way it is disclosed", "the way it happens to be meaningful in the present circumstances". For Heidegger, the meaning of a phenomenon occurs:

within meaning-giving worlds where we relate to things not merely as objects in the spatio-temporal universe, independent of us, but rather in terms of their meaningful presence to us as engaged with them, bodily, personally, and socially. (Sheehan, 2016)

Thus, the meaning of a phenomenon is not immediately given in consciousness, but “is what must be discovered, must be drawn out from concealment” (Figal, 2010) through interpretation. According to Dahlstrom (2013), Heidegger “transforms Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology of consciousness into a hermeneutic phenomenology of facticity.” Facticity signifies what is always already the case for the phenomenon in question, the *a priori* features of that phenomenon. According to Inwood (1999), phenomenology does not consider “particular entities” in an empirical sense, rather, it considers the “features of the being of entities, features that usually show themselves inconspicuously or 'unthematically', but [which] can be got to show themselves thematically.” Phenomena are often experienced in a rather vague everyday manner, however, a thematic consideration is a more serious endeavour to uncover the meaning of a phenomenon. As Zahavi (2013) says of phenomenology broadly speaking:

Rather than engaging in first-order claims about the nature of things (which it leaves to various scientific disciplines), phenomenology concerns itself with the preconditions for any such empirical inquiries.

In this study, it is the phenomenon of organizational strategic being that is claimed to be hidden from view especially in the scientific field of strategy theory. Yet, this phenomenon comes to the fore through an *ontological* questioning.

In his dictionary, Inwood (1999) says: “Heidegger uses *Hermeneutik* to mean 'interpretation'”. Interpretation is the uncovering of the *meaning* of something. Traditionally, hermeneutics is a method for interpreting religious texts and involves detailed exegesis to find the meaning of a text as a whole. Heidegger, however, “introduces a new conceptualization of the hermeneutic circle” which “describes a ‘circular’ relation between understanding (*Verstehen*) and interpretation (*Auslegen*)” (Rasmussen, 2016). Thus, Rasmussen (2016) says that Heidegger effects an ontological turn in hermeneutics as he undertakes a

project to interpret the meaning of human being as the horizon for all interpretation. The task of that project being to disclose the factual characteristics of human being which are always already the case with and for such a being (which Heidegger names *Dasein*) and which are thus prior to all its other characteristics and properties. Heidegger points out that interpretation always involves a “fore-having” (Inwood, 1999) of what is sought that first marks the hermeneutic situation around which interpretation spirals as it goes from presuppositions to tentative ideas to explicit descriptions of meaning and, if needs be, back again to a new understanding of the initial presuppositions. According to Rasmussen (2016), this “dialogic interaction between response and question” is an important feature of contemporary hermeneutics.

In this interpretative study of organizational strategic being, something of this phenomenon is prefigured in the very question that is posed of it. Through a lengthy process of questioning we arrived at organizational strategic being as the “hermeneutic object” (Rasmussen, 2016) that is to be interpreted phenomenologically.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is the name Heidegger gives to the approach which he takes to the project of finding the meaning of being in general which is disclosed in human being. Towards this end, Heidegger pursues an analytic of *Dasein*. In one sense, the analytic of *Dasein* is also a regional ontology. However, this sense only holds if *Dasein* is taken as just another kind of entity among other kinds of entities. For Heidegger, *Dasein* has an entirely different character from other entities and thus has a special significance in the broader project to uncover the meaning of being in general. Hermeneutic phenomenology is best thought of as a philosophical approach to ontology. However, it should not be thought of as a scientific method which precedes and remains unaffected by its application to ontological questions. Indeed, Heidegger understands hermeneutic phenomenology in more dynamic terms

as a discursive process of “aheadness and return”. Davis (2010) describes the approach:

Heidegger might have characterized his pathway of thinking in terms of a deepening spiral rather than a linear progression, a spiral that always circles around the central question of being and its proper relation with human being.

In this study, the phenomenon of interest is *organizational strategic being* that is to be thematically uncovered and described as a totality in terms of its distinctive ontological features. In other words, a hermeneutic phenomenology of organizational strategic being is undertaken in this study. What we are seeking is what is always already the case with organizations *as* strategic beings which is prior to and thus conditions the ensuing strategic behaviour and properties of such a being. This is a regional ontology in that we are interested in *organizational* being rather than being in general.

This section carries a general description of the hermeneutic phenomenological approach to the focal question of this study. In Part II we treat the more specific aspects of Heidegger’s early project that are drawn upon in the descriptive interpretation of organizational strategic being. In Chapter 6 we attend to Heidegger’s notion of futurity in the context of the analytic of Dasein. In Chapter 7 we attend to the description of Dasein as being-in-the-world which is used as an ontological analogue for thinking organizational being-in-the-world. And, in Chapter 8 we consider the ontological structure of primordial Dasein, as a way to approach organizational strategic being as an ontological unity.

2.4. The significance of this study

This study makes positive contributions in and across three academic areas: organizational strategy theory, organizational ontology, and the philosophy of the organization sciences. It is an interstitial study in the sense that it is located

in the nascent field of the philosophy of the organization sciences and traverses the disciplinary boundary between the fields of strategy theory and organizational ontology. Therefore, this study does not join in the pursuit of existing and well-developed topics of academic interest *within* these separate fields. Rather, through a critique of strategy theory and organizational ontology from a philosophical standpoint, this study contributes by initiating a new topic that lies across these separate fields.

This new bridging topic involves an *ontological* interpretation of the relation between organization and strategy against the prevailing presumptions in strategy theory and organizational ontology that this relation is accidental and may be safely severed. An ontological interpretation of the phenomenon of organizational strategy is significant as a new development because it thematises the everyday understanding of organizational strategy in a way that promises to revitalise strategy theory in terms of its practical relevance.

Contributions to the field of organizational strategy theory

The main contribution to the field of strategy theory is a new hermeneutic phenomenological perspective on organizational strategy and on the problem of the rigour-relevance gap in that field which avails a specific proposal for ameliorating this problem. The aim of this study is not to develop a theory of organizational strategy, nor is it to denounce the field of strategy theory.

A contribution is made by raising and diagnosing the persistent rigour-relevance gap in strategy theory which is a major topic of concern in organization and management studies (Daft and Lewin, 2008; Gulati, 2007; Heracleous, 2011; Kieser and Leiner, 2009; Kieser, Nicolai and Seidl, 2015; Rajagopalan, 2020). Although the rigour-relevance gap is understood to also run through strategy theory, it has rarely been treated explicitly in that field (with exceptions such as: Shrivastava, 1987; and, Barnett, 2016). Whereas, the extant “programmatic” (Kieser *et al*, 2015) literature on the gap emphasises

methodological ways of addressing the general problem, this study includes a diagnosis of the peculiarity of the gap in strategy theory in terms of the pre-theoretical assumptions that underlie the field which, it is argued, form the basis of theoretical rigour in that field even before methodological matters come into play. This diagnosis leads to a positive proposal for ameliorating the gap in strategy theory by describing a new, ontological basis for theoretical rigour that is more consonant with the everyday understanding of organizational strategy. This proposal has significant consequences in that it operates upon the pre-theoretical underpinnings of the field and involves a radical shift from the current aetiological basis of theoretical rigour to one that is dispositional instead.

This study is responsive to the growing sense among critical theorists in organization studies that organizational strategy needs to be revitalised by approaching it from new philosophical perspectives (Carter and Whittle, 2018). Although Carter and Whittle do not identify Heidegger in their list of recommended heterodox philosophers, Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology is well-known for the critical capacities that it avails. A methodological contribution to the hermeneutic phenomenological strand of interpretative approaches (Hatch and Yanow, 2003) is significant because it avails a critical approach that promises to get as close as possible to the crux of the field of organizational strategy theory. Yet, despite some research in this vein (Chia and Holt, 2006; Heil, 2008; Bakken, Holt and Zundel, 2012), hermeneutic phenomenology remains a rare and peripheral approach in strategy theory which has not coalesced as a basis for a distinctive theoretical perspective on the phenomenon of organizational strategy. The thoroughgoing hermeneutic phenomenology that is undertaken in this study bolsters the capacity for the critique of organizational strategy theory and strategy in practice.

Moreover, a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective is eminently suited as a point of departure for new theories of organizational strategy that take the temporality of organizational phenomena seriously. Thus, this study is responsive to Kornberger's (2016) call to take time and temporality more seriously in strategy theory. Such a dearth of attention in strategy theory is surprising given the amount of research in process organization studies (PROS) where time and temporality feature prominently. For some reason, the Whiteheadian-inspired process ontologies of organizing are not directly amenable to the theorization of organizational strategy. Since the questions of time and temporality are central in Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology, this study shows how an alternative ontico-ontological approach is productive of new thinking that has a direct bearing on the rigorous theorization of organizational strategy.

This study makes three conceptual contributions to the field of organizational strategy theory. Firstly, it offers a conceptual history (Koselleck, 2002) of strategy which provides a wider purview of this historical phenomenon than is the case with extant nominal historiographies of strategy. Secondly, from this conceptual history, essential elements of the meaning of strategy are derived and synthesized into a minimal, basic idea of strategy. This idea of strategy, although it is not exhaustive, is significant because it marks a point of confluence in the meaning of strategy which underlies both theory and practice. It is also significant in that it provides an answer, albeit a banal one, to the question of the meaning of strategy as a construct - a question that remains open in the pluralistic field of strategy theory. Thirdly, a new taxonomy of contemporary strategy theories is offered. As a social scientific field, strategy theory includes a bewildering diversity of rigorous theories which makes it hard to obtain a field-wide view. However, as a scientific field that must answer the demand of rigour, it lends itself to taxonomic categorisation. The taxonomy that is offered here exposes the ways in which

the field is shaped by specific pre-theoretical assumptions which are definitive of what rigour currently entails.

Theoretical rigour is not a cut-and-dried matter in any of the social sciences and this study approaches it in strategy theory as something that can be revised but *not as something that can be relinquished*. In critically questioning these pre-theoretical assumptions, we obtain a vital foothold for revising the prevailing aetiological basis of rigour in the field of strategy theory.

Contributions to the field of organizational ontology

This study contributes an ontology of organizational being as an inherently strategic kind of being. Although all theories of organizational strategy presume a theory of organization, organizational strategy does not feature in ontological descriptions of organization. That is, organizational strategy is not accorded ontological status in these extant descriptions. Moreover, there are no extant organizational ontologies from a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective. This is significant because such a perspective crosses the divide between the epistemological and the ontological.

Organizational being is construed in this study as an ontological whole. Behling (1978) refers to this as the “macro” aspect of organizations, and as the “total organization”. This holist standpoint runs against the grain of extant process ontologies of organization which tend to emphasise the micro-phenomena of organizing. The eschewal of static structures and “entitative” conceptions of organizations makes sense from a strong process perspective since if organization is processual then it is exhaustively reducible to the micro-phenomena of organizing. Thus, in strong process views of organization (as a verb), *the organization* (as a noun) is epiphenomenal. The problem, however, is that the prominent process ontologies of organization (considered in more detail in Chapter 5) involve a temporal ordering that gives priority to the past and the continuous-present over the future. Thus, organizational

strategy – the organizational engagement with the contingent future - is also construed as a derivative phenomenon. The question here is not about whether ‘the future’ exists or not; the same deflationary question can just as well be posed of ‘the past’ and even of ‘the present’. Nor is it a question of the future perfect images that people make and share about the future - what Kornberger (2016) calls a “present future, a here-and-now imagined future”. Rather, the question is about the priority which is given to the ontological characteristic of the *future-ness* of organizational being in its crucial and ongoing organizational engagement with the contingent future. In the extant process ontologies, it is the future-ness of organizing which, although it is ontologically entailed in the temporality of organizing, is taken to be derivative among the dimensions of temporality. To emphasise the futural character of organization by according priority to its future-ness involves a fundamentally different temporal ordering that is constitutive of organization.

This study also contributes a mode of critique which can apprehend organizational being and concrete organizations in an age of the “growing corporatization of our world” (Pettit, 2015). Thus, it is responsive to the challenge which Pettit (2015) highlights:

One of the most important challenges for political theory is to identify the extent to which corporations should be facilitated and restricted in law. ... we need to develop a view about the nature and potential of corporations and indeed of corporate bodies in general.

This study responds to Pettit’s call for holding organizations (which he calls corporations and corporate bodies) responsible, not only for what they have done or are doing in the present, but also for their orientations towards the future. The critique of organization and organizations depends on the proper ontological descriptions of the “nature and potential” of these powerful and pervasive beings.

Contributions to a nascent philosophy of organization theory

This study takes a philosophical vantage point in order to approach strategy theory critically. This ‘external’ vantage point is important for the critique of the pre-theoretical assumptions which underlie these fields. Since these assumptions are deeply implicit and taken-for-granted they are rarely addressed in reflexive critiques *within* each scientific field where meta-theoretical treatments tend to emphasise the epistemological and methodological problems that arise in the field. As Tsoukas and Knudsen (2003) say of the early meta-theoretical research (such as Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Astley and Van de Ven, 1983; and Pfeffer, 1982) in Organization Studies which:

... aimed at providing a map of the main theories of the field, teasing out their epistemological assumptions, rather than philosophically, historically, and sociologically scrutinizing key categories implicated in organizational research.

Tsoukas and Knudsen (2003) call for a broadening of the scope of “meta-theoretical reflection” *in* Organization Theory beyond taxonomic surveys of the field. However, this call, which is made *within* the ambit of the applied social science of Organization Theory, remains firmly ensconced in the important epistemological matters that are relevant for and in this field. Thus, the critique of the science itself, its demarcations from and articulations with other fields, and the deeper ontological questions that bear upon the pre-theoretical assumptions that underlie the field are given short-shrift in such ‘internal-to-a-science’ meta-theoretical reflection. Since this study brings these very matters into the foreground from an ‘external’ point of view it belongs more properly in the ambit of a nascent philosophy of the organizational sciences wherein it makes *extra-scientific* contributions that nevertheless have scientific implications.

However, the philosophy of organization is not a recognised field in the broad discipline of organization studies. Whereas one finds demarcated and well-

developed fields such as the philosophies of science, of economics, of physics, of sociology and so on, this is not the case in organization studies. This is not to deny that philosophical treatments of organizational phenomena have indeed been undertaken in organization studies. Turner (2006) points out that “the philosophy of science, the philosophy of social science, and organizational studies have a long and complex history of interaction.” Behling (1978) treats problems in organization studies from the perspective of what he calls “the philosophy of science of organizations”. Hassard and Pym (1990) published a volume of essays under the title of “The Theory and Philosophy of Organizations” where ‘the theory of organizations’ refers to the field of Organization Theory and is vaguely distinguished from “the philosophy of organizations”.

This study contributes to expanding the academic space for the *philosophy of organizational theory*. Such a philosophical, extra-scientific vantage point is crucial if we are to address the nature of organizational strategic being.

Chapter 3

The theoretical elision of the question of organizational strategic being

The level which a science has reached is determined by how far it is capable of a crisis in its basic concepts. In such immanent crises the very relationship between positively investigative inquiry and those things themselves that are under interrogation comes to a point where it begins to totter. Among the various disciplines everywhere today there are freshly awakened tendencies to put research on new foundations.

Heidegger, 1962/BT

In this chapter, we attend more closely to how the phenomenon of organizational strategy is treated *theoretically*. This is necessary to further diagnose what it is about rigorous organizational strategy theory as a social scientific field that renders it irrelevant to organizational strategy in practice. To do this, we need a field-wide view of the various kinds of theoretical answers given to the basic question of what it means for organizations to be strategic. Thus, we do not attend here to specific theories, rather, we attend to the field and the contours of the field. How is the relation between organization and strategy operationalised in the field of strategy theory under the demand of scientific rigour? What is the current *pre-theoretical* basis of rigour in this field? It is this extant basis that is to be laid out and critiqued in this chapter, ahead of offering an alternative basis in Chapter 9.

In this chapter, extant taxonomies of organizational strategy theory are considered, and a more comprehensive taxonomy is offered using the basic idea of strategy as a point of departure. This discloses the basis of theoretical rigour in the field which is then considered critically. In Section 3.1, the

theoretical assumption that strategy is accidental to organization is explored further. In Section 3.2, extant taxonomies of organizational strategy theories are considered, with an emphasis on those offered by Ansoff and Mintzberg. In Section 3.3, a new taxonomy is proposed which classifies extant strategy theories in terms of the different ways in which the organizational engagement with the future is pre-theoretically construed. The implications of theoretical rigor are critically considered in Section 3.4.

3.1. The theorization of strategy as accidental to organization and organizing

The assumption that strategy is accidental to organizations is identified in Chapter 2 as a pre-theoretical assumption that underlies the field of organizational strategy theory. This assertion is justified and explored in more detail in this section.

In strategy theory, the question of what it means for organizations to be strategic is addressed on the basis of observable organizational behaviour and other organizational properties. Strategy theorists operationalise organizational strategy in different ways: as individual and intersubjective human behaviour inside organizations, as ‘macro’ organizational behaviour, as management activities, as managerial cognition, as organizational resources, as texts, as discourses, as routines, as rituals, and so on. As Nag, Hambrick and Chen (2007) say in their survey of definitions of strategic management:

The definitions range widely. Some refer to general managers (Fredrickson, 1990; Jemison, 1981; Schendel and Cool, 1988), while others do not. Some indicate the overall organization or firm as the relevant unit of analysis (e.g., Learned *et al.*, 1965), while others do not. Some refer to the importance of organizational performance or success (Bowman *et al.*, 2002; Rumelt *et al.*, 1994; Schendel and Hofer, 1979), some to external environments (e.g., Bracker, 1980; Jemison, 1981), some to internal resources (e.g.,

Bracker, 1980; Jemison, 1981), some to strategy implementation (Van Cauwenbergh and Cool, 1982), and some refer to none of these (e.g., Smircich and Stubbart, 1985).

The epistemological emphasis in strategy theory is fitting for a scientific field wherein the phenomenon of organizational strategy must be brought into objective focus for it to be rigorously theorized. Thus, theories of strategy are based upon distinctive organizational behaviours and other properties which are taken to hold what it means for organizations to be strategic. For theorists of orthodox strategic planning, for example, being strategic is indicated by and in distinctive kinds of *content* such as formal strategic plans, articulated visions, mission statements, budgets, and the like; and conversely, the absence of such strategic content indicates that an organization is *not* being strategic. For theorists in the process school, organizational strategy is indicated in and by specific kinds of *processes*, such as formal planning, which are taken as more basic than the content which arises from such processes; thus, the absence of these processes indicates that an organization is not being strategic. For other theorists, in the strategy-as-practice fold for example, organizational being strategic is indicated in and by the *praxis* of strategy practitioners who undertake specific kinds of activities such as workshops, meetings, presentations which are taken to be even more basic than strategy content and strategy processes; and, the absence of such activities indicates the absence of organizational strategizing.

For Ansoff (1987), the field of strategy theory seeks to explain the “strategic behaviour of purposive organizations” which he disaggregates into three dimensions: strategic problems; strategic processes, and scientific rationalities (that is, the “scientific optic” or theoretical perspective that is taken by the theorist). Each of these dimensions is then further disaggregated into categories of behaviour. Figure 1 below shows that for Ansoff organizational strategy is taken to be a thoroughly behavioural phenomenon and is thus accidental to organizational being.

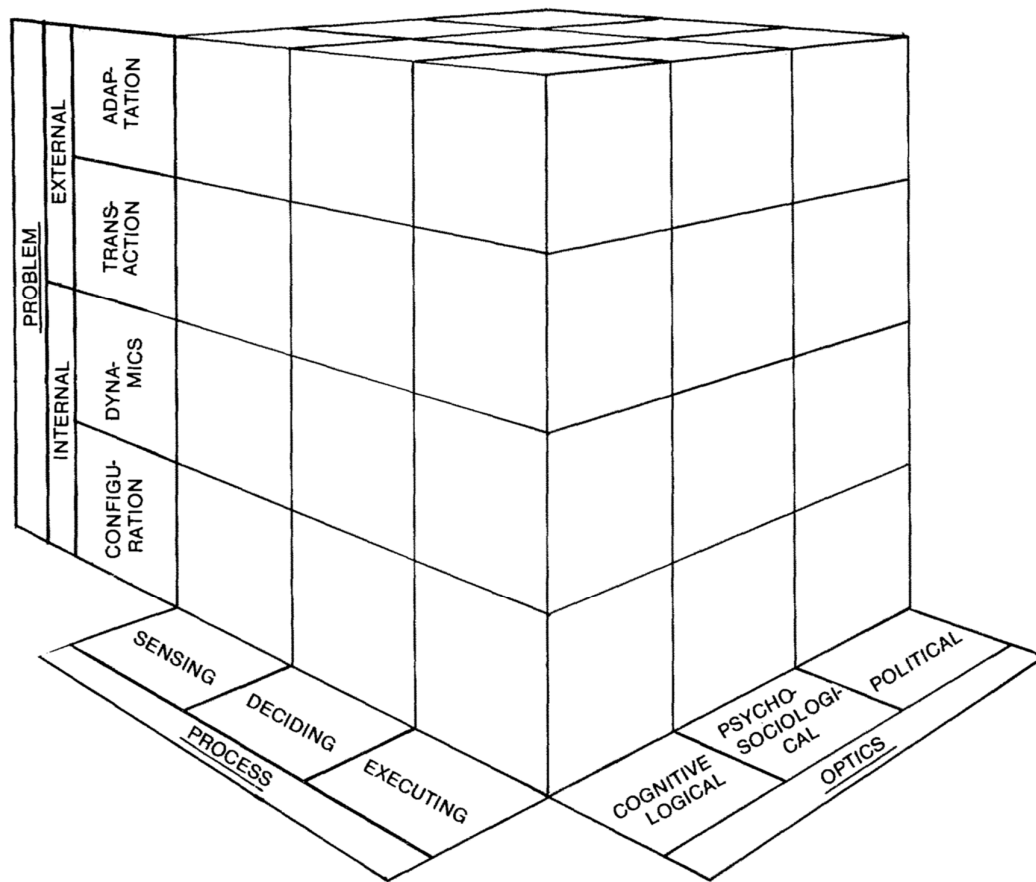


Figure 1: Ansoff's dimensions of organizational strategic behaviour (Ansoff, 1987)

Schendel and Hofer (1979), who are credited with naming the academic field of strategic management, define organizational strategy as the “*means* an organization uses to achieve its objectives”. Thus, whereas objectives are inherent to organizations in this view, strategy is construed as an *instrument* of organizations in the pursuit of their objectives. In other words, organizations all have objectives which may or may not then be pursued by the specialised means of strategy. Thus, in this conception, strategy is an accidental *instrumentum* that some organizations bring to bear in the pursuit of organizational objectives.

The accidental nature of strategy is a somewhat more explicit assumption for theorists that adopt the contingency perspective on strategy. As Ginsberg and Venkatraman (1985) say:

... though strategy is conceptualized as a pattern of responses to the three major types of contingencies [organizational conditions, environmental conditions, and organizational performance], the choice of strategy itself serves as an important contingency for many administrative decisions such as organization structure, management systems, and choice of key management personnel.

Here, as discussed in Chapter 2, the term contingency means something like ‘it depends’ rather than referring to in-principle future contingency. That is, what an organization’s strategy should be *depends upon* variable characteristics which all organizations have *as* organizations. Strategy *follows* from these primary organizational characteristics as a *choice*. In this conception, strategy is understood as a behavioural response to the conditions in which an organization must operate. Thus, strategy is taken to be important yet accidental to organizations rather than necessary to what it means to be an organization.

For Snow and Hambrick (1980), the organization/environment relation is posited as a necessary characteristic of all organizations whereas strategy is understood as an accidental “mechanism” for guiding this relation:

In order to survive and prosper, every organization must develop and maintain an acceptable alignment with its environment. Increasingly, organization and management theorists are viewing strategy as the mechanism that guides environmental alignment and provides integration for internal operations.

The assumption that strategy is merely an accidental property of organizations is also evident in Knight’s and Morgan’s (1991) critique of orthodox strategic planning:

According to the orthodoxy propounded in business schools and embraced by consultants, stock market analysts, financial institutions and the media, every organization must have a strategy, because otherwise it is without direction in an increasingly turbulent economic, and politically charged, environment.

Knight and Morgan worry about the “tendency in business schools and amongst practitioners to treat the discourse of corporate strategy as a ‘natural’

rather than problematic feature of organization life” (1991); a feature which is problematic as a “discursive” “mechanism of power”. This is why Knights and Morgan raise the critical questions they do: they regard strategy as an accidental “means” to which “there are alternatives” (1991), rather than as “an already existing norm”; and, certainly not as *ontologically inherent* to organizations and organizational life. Thus, they ask:

How is it, for example, that banks have moved from a traditional view of management and markets towards a strategic approach to their future? How is it that corporate strategy is now seen as relevant to the health service and other public services?

Whether organizational strategy is taken to pertain to organizations as irreducible wholes or is taken to be reducible to what happens and appears inside organizations, it is still universally theorized on the basis of behaviour and other properties which are understood to be *accidental* in nature. Irrespective of whether strategy is operationalised as distinctive kinds of content, or processes, or activities, these behaviours and traits are all taken in theory to be accidental properties of organizations. It is implicitly taken in strategy theory that some organizations are strategic and some are not depending on whether they display the relevant behaviours and properties which indicate *whether* and how they are *being strategic*.

From an Aristotelian perspective, accidental properties have a secondary mode of being that is only actualised in another primary substance to which it is not necessary. For example, the redness of an apple is not an ontologically *necessary* feature of the being of an apple. Apples are still apples whether that happen to be red or not-red. Similarly, the assumption that strategy is an accidental property means that it is not an ontological characteristic of organizational being. Casting the phenomenon of organizational strategy in this way constitutes a pre-theoretical, ontological assumption “which concern[s] the very essence of the phenomena under investigation” (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). However, this assumption is deeply implicit in strategy

theory and is the result of an overriding epistemological emphasis on the overt behaviour and other observable properties of organizational strategy.

This assumption is also implicit, albeit in a negative sense, in extant organizational ontologies which do not treat strategy at all as ontologically inherent to what organization or organizing mean. Extant ontologies of organization do not grant ontological significance to strategy and so elide strategy as ontologically implicated in the very being of organizations. By this blanket assumption, the phenomenon of organizational strategy is universally understood in strategy theory and Organization Theory as distinct from organizational being. Thus, no rigorous strategy theory posits an *ontological* relation between strategy and organization. Indeed, to explore such a relation would shift the very question of organizational strategy into the field of organizational ontology. The implication of this assumption for the field of strategy theory is that it elides the very possibility of strategy as *ontologically* significant in the being of organisations, a possibility which we explored positively in Chapter 2 and which we find in Chapter 4 is admitted in the everyday understanding of organisational strategy.

3.2. Extant taxonomies of organizational strategy

If the basic idea of strategy seems unproblematic and even banal, attaching the term ‘organizational’ to it gives us a conjunction which is approached in a rich variety of ways and is fraught with dissensus. The diversity of contemporary perspectives, theories, and frameworks of organizational strategy is the result of the different ways in which organizations are construed *compounded* by the different ways in which strategy is construed.

Organization strategy theory comprises various largely independent theoretical perspectives. As Hambrick (2004) says with some consternation:

Alas, strategy content and process researchers operate in very different spheres, as do economics-based and behaviorally-based researchers, as do those who subscribe to assumptions of strategic rationality and those who favor assumptions of bounded rationality, as do those who study corporate-level strategy and those who study business-level strategy. I could go on and on. In my 25 years in the field I observed a distinct trend toward separateness; beyond that, dogmatism.

One way to obtain a field-wide view of such a pluralistic field is to describe it taxonomically. Indeed, it is the very separateness of the extant perspectives in strategy theory that lends itself to taxonomic analysis. Taxonomy is a common and well-worn meta-theoretical technique in the social sciences, however, it seems to have fallen out of favour in organization studies (Delbridge and Fiss, 2013). For Tsoukas and Knudsen (2003), “meta-theoretical reflection in Organization Theory” needs to move on from the earlier “concern with creating typologies”. However, for Delbridge and Fiss (2013), taxonomy remains a useful conceptual tool. In any case, rigorous strategy theories lend themselves to taxonomic classification in terms of the different ways in which organizational strategic behaviour is operationalised.

A taxonomy is the result of the application of a conceptual schema upon a set of diverse elements which are classified into the *taxa* or categories of the schema. Such “classification permits parsimony without simplicity [and] the ability to recognize fundamental structure and relationship” without denying the “the underlying richness and diversity that exist within the type” (Rich, 1992). Taxonomies operate upon a set of things, to which a specific logic of categorization is applied. The categories of a taxonomy also allow for a second-order, conceptual exploration of the “deep structure” (Burrell and Morgan, 1979) of the extant assumptions that underpin a theoretical field. A cogent taxonomy provides a parsimonious yet comprehensive view of a theoretical field. Ideally, taxonomies seek to be schematically exhaustive with mutually exclusive categories so that all the elements of a set may be placed in

one and only one of the categories of the taxonomy. For these reasons, taxonomies make more sense for categorising rigorous theories rather than as a way to arrange messy practices.

A seminal early example of a taxonomy of the field of Organization Theory is that offered by Burrell and Morgan (1979) “which analyses social theory (and hence the possibilities in organization theory and research) in terms of four broad world views, characterised as functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist and radical structuralist” (Tsoukas and Knudsen, 2003). This taxonomy applies a categorial schema of the four competing social theory “paradigms” which underlie extant theories of organization. Such a classification abstracts from the diversity of the large set of extant theories upon which it operates.

The multitudinous diversity of organizational strategy theory has also been approached using taxonomic classification. However, most of these classify a subset of the field such as the taxonomies that are offered of business strategy (Galbraith and Schendel, 1983; Chrisman, Hofer and Boulton, 1988). A prominent taxonomy of business strategy theories is that which distinguishes between the resource-based view (Mahoney and Pandian, 1992) and the positioning school (Porter, 1980) which has only two categories and thus gives us a taxonomic dichotomy. Focusing on a different subset of strategy theory, Ginsberg and Venkatraman (1985) apply a two-level classification approach to contingency theories of strategy which first demarcates contingency theories from non-contingency theories of organizational strategy, and then applies a further level of classification using dimensions that are relevant to contingency theories. These sub-taxonomies of strategy theory are not relevant to the questions and aims of this study which are about organizational strategy in general.

Of the taxonomies at the more general level of strategy theory, most have tended to be empirical rather than theoretical. Rich (1992) distinguishes between “empirical taxonomies” which are developed *a posteriori* on the basis of knowledge of the phenomenal domain of the science, and “theoretical taxonomies” which classify phenomena on the basis of *a priori* concepts or heuristics. The well-known content-process-practice categorization, for example, is both empirical and theoretical in that it classifies extant theories of strategy on the basis of the types of phenomena that are investigated, and it is general in that it operates at the level of the whole field rather than upon a subset of it. However, the content-process-practice categorization is more of an intuitive, heuristic device than a cogent taxonomy since there are no extant theories, strictly speaking, which fit entirely into any one of these categories. Even theories of strategy from the strategy-as-practice perspective draw on notions of strategy as a *process* and often include studies of strategy *content*. Therefore, the content-process-practice typology is not particularly useful in the context of this study.

Classificatory studies of the theoretical contours of the field of strategy theory have also been undertaken using bibliometric methods to analyse the shifting “intellectual structure” of the field over time (Ramos-Rodriguez and Ruiz-Navarro, 2004; Nerur, Rasheed and Natarajan, 2008). These studies, which are based on publication and citation data have been useful for identifying the leading scholars, the degrees of conceptual proximity between scholars, and the major perspectives within the broader field. However, such author-centric categorizations rarely illuminate the underlying, pre-theoretical assumptions that are implicated across the field.

Of particular interest here are taxonomies of the general field of organizational strategy theory. The seminal examples of such taxonomies, which receive more detailed attention below, are those offered by Ansoff (1987) and Mintzberg (1973).

Mintzberg's taxonomy of the modes of organizational strategy

Mintzberg's (1973) taxonomy identifies three ideal-typical modes of organizational "strategy-making" which classify the strategy *theories* that are found in the "literature of management and public administration". These are the *entrepreneurial*, *adaptive*, and *planning* modes of organizational strategy-making. The modality of strategy confirms for Mintzberg (1973) that the dominant planning mode of strategy "is not a panacea for the problems of strategy-making". That is, there are other identifiable modes of organizational strategy in the literature which may make more sense than planning given an organization's characteristics.

The *entrepreneurial* mode resonates with the ideas of the economist Joseph Schumpeter about economic change and those of business management thinker Peter Drucker. For Mintzberg (1973):

In the entrepreneurial mode, strategy-making is dominated by the active search for new opportunities.

The orientation of the entrepreneurial organization is "active rather than passive" in pursuit of especially opportunities for growth; the emphasis of the organization is on strong and centralised leadership, and it is "characterized by dramatic leaps forward in the face of uncertainty".

The *adaptive* mode of organization has resonances in the work of Braybrooke and Lindblom (1963) on organizational decisionmaking as "disjointed incrementalism", and that of Cyert and March (1963) on organizational behaviour. In this mode, organizational strategy proceeds from an acceptance of a "powerful status quo and a lack of clear objectives" in the face of a "complex environment" that is uncertain and beyond organizational control. Strategic decisions tend to be "remedial" in nature and proceed "in small steps", with the emphasis on reactively solving present problems which are well understood rather than on pursuing new opportunities for future growth.

The *planning* mode of strategy-making, which Mintzberg associates with the work of Ackoff, emphasises “anticipatory decision-making” and is assertive in the pursuit of desired “future states” which must be brought about by organizational strategic action. “Formal planning demands rationality” in the formulation of highly integrated, “comprehensive plans” for the organization as a whole. This mode is underpinned by the “belief that formal analysis can provide an understanding of the environment sufficient to influence it.”

For Mintzberg (1973), strategy is conceptualised as a pattern in a set of organizational decisions; more specifically, strategy is constituted in the linking together of an organization’s “important decisions”. Thus, Mintzberg holds constant across all three modes the aspect of the basic idea of strategy that has to do with significance, and derives his modes of strategy-making by varying the other aspect of the basic idea of strategy: that of the engagement with the contingent future. Thus, we find that the planning mode involves a primarily assertive, cognitive engagement under lower contingency, the entrepreneurial mode involves an assertive, creative engagement with risk, whereas the adaptive mode involves a modest wait-and-see kind of engagement under high contingency.

For Mintzberg the contingency of the future can never be eradicated and he therefore advises managers “to remain partially in the adaptive mode at all times”. Thus, while Mintzberg’s taxonomy is a cogent classification of strategy theories, it is only of heuristic value when talking about strategy in practice.

Ansoff’s models of organizational strategic behaviour

Whereas Mintzberg’s taxonomy is applicable both to theory and to a lesser extent to practice, Ansoff’s (1987) taxonomy is explicitly aimed at classifying the *theoretical models* of “strategic behaviour”. For Ansoff, these models are different “scientific paradigms” aimed at explaining the same problem:

Some of us call it the problem of policy formation, others of strategy formulation. It concerns the logic which guides the process by which an organization adapts to its external environment.

This taxonomy is applicable to organizations in general, however, it is a partial taxonomy of strategy theory in that it focuses on “strategy formulation” and leaves out strategy execution. For Ansoff, strategy formulation is the prior logic which guides ensuing organizational adaptive behaviour. Ansoff’s taxonomy comprises four models: the *organic*, *reactive*, *ad hoc*, and *systematic* models of organizational strategy formulation.

In the *organic* model, an organization’s “strategic behaviour is unmanaged, organic, and serendipitous ... determined by socio-political forces” (Ansoff, 1987). It is based on the “political-social” view of organizations as sites of bargaining and power struggles between groups with the implication that “there is no agreement upon common goals for the organization”. Examples of organic organizations include pluralistic “government bureaucracies” and “universities”.

In the *reactive* model, which Ansoff associates with the works of “March and Simon (1958), Thomson (1967), Cyert and March (1963)”, strategic behaviour is construed “as reactive, inertial and incremental adaptation to dysfunctions in organizational performance”. Ansoff’s reactive model is akin to Mintzberg’s adaptive mode. This model is based on the “social-anthropological” view with strategic behaviour being the “result of interaction between the organizational *survival drive* and *organizational inertia*” under conditions of slow and incremental environmental change and low competitive intensity.

The third model, the *ad hoc management* model, is associated with “Mintzberg (1980)”, “Quinn (1978), and “Chandler (1962)”. In contrast to the organic and reactive models: “A managed firm is now seen not as a reactive adapter, but as a deliberate shaper of its own development.” (Ansoff, 1987). This model emphasises the role of managers whose decisions are consistent, not because

they reference the same organizational plan, but because they all draw on the same “strategic history” of the organization. This model is based on the psycho-sociological view of organizational behaviour where managers tend to stick to “incremental changes, consistent with historical behaviour of the firm”.

The fourth model is the *systematic management* model which is associated with Ansoff (1965) himself, and wherein organizations are depicted as “guided by a comprehensive and explicit strategy which is systematically planned and co-operatively executed”.

The model is of a strongly and comprehensively managed firm which tries to anticipate rather than react to future threats and opportunities from the environment.

This model which Ansoff says “is based on logical reasoning” is akin to Mintzberg’s “planning mode”.

3.3. A new taxonomy of organizational strategy theory

Why offer a new taxonomy of the field of organizational strategy theory? In the context of this study we need to critically investigate and describe the current basis of theoretical rigour in the field beyond the fact that rigorous theories appear in academic journals. This task is not tractable if it is approached at the level of individual strategy theories since there are so many of them. A field-wide taxonomy avails a comprehensive and more tractable approach to disclosing the bases of rigour at the level of the theoretical perspectives that make up the field.

Moreover, although they are useful for giving a general overview of the field and as comparative points of departure for a new taxonomy, the taxonomies offered by Ansoff and Mintzberg will not suffice for the purposes of this study. Firstly, as they stand, both taxonomies offer partial views of the field. Both are decades old and need to be updated to include not only new perspectives but also to take into account the shifts in the perspectives that are included.

Moreover, Ansoff's taxonomy is partial in that it emphasises strategy formulation but leaves out the crucial facet of strategy execution. Secondly, and most importantly, both taxonomies do not explicitly disclose the bases of theoretical rigour in the field since they do not proceed from a critical analysis of the *pre-theoretical, field-wide* assumptions that are at sway.

The new taxonomy offered below transgresses Rich's (1992) types in that it classifies extant strategy theories on the basis of the ways in which the phenomenon of organizational strategy is conceptualised; it is thus both empirical and theoretical. The taxonomy offered in this section is an "*a priori*" (Rich, 1992), propaedeutic idealization (Lopreato and Alston, 1970) of extant strategy theory and is not aimed at producing any theoretical outcomes. Understanding organizational strategy as the organizational engagement with the contingent future, provides the conceptual platform for a new taxonomy of strategy theory.

Proceeding from the basic idea of strategy, the categorisation of extant theoretical perspectives is undertaken by asking: *What are the distinctive ways in which organizations are taken in theory to be engaged with the future?* We have already established that strategy is universally understood in theory as an accidental organizational behaviour. The further aim here is to identify and describe the various theoretical *modes* of the organizational engagement with the future. These modes cleave the set of strategy theories into distinguishable mono-modal perspectives which are, by and large, hermetically sealed off from each other. These mono-modal perspectives involve peculiar pre-theoretical assumptions which are not problematized within that perspective. Such assumptions have the force of commitments which are rarely, if ever, questioned or put at stake in the normal pursuit of rigorous theories *within each perspective*. These commitments include ontological assumptions, and epistemological and methodological prescripts which are "taken for granted"

(Burrell and Morgan, 1979) as conceptual points of departure by the theorists working in a particular perspective.

Extant theory is rigorous in that each of these ideal-typical modes is pursued in a focused way which gives primacy to that mode of organizational engagement, and which effectively excludes the other modes from *theoretical* consideration. This mono-modality is the basis of rigour in the field of strategy theory. A theory is not deemed to be rigorous if it is equivocal about the very phenomenon it seeks to explain. Thus, each mode of strategy theory effects an epistemological demarcation of the phenomenal domain of organizational strategy such that each mode involves the rigorous theorization of a different subset of observable organizational behaviour and other accidental properties. Each mode involves a specific pre-theoretical assumption about the primary behavioural basis of the organizational strategic engagement, which filters and constitutes the phenomena to be rigorously theorised in that mode. Thus, the modal basis of theoretical rigour is already pre-theoretically in place before methodology comes into play in the process of theorization.

Taken together as a taxonomy, the descriptions of these modes in terms of their pre-theoretical assumptions discloses the current bases of rigour in the field of organizational strategy theory. This updated taxonomic schema is depicted in Figure 2 below. Thus, four modes of organizational strategy theory are identified and described: strategy-as-knowing; strategy-as-adapting; strategy-as-doing, and strategy-as-making.

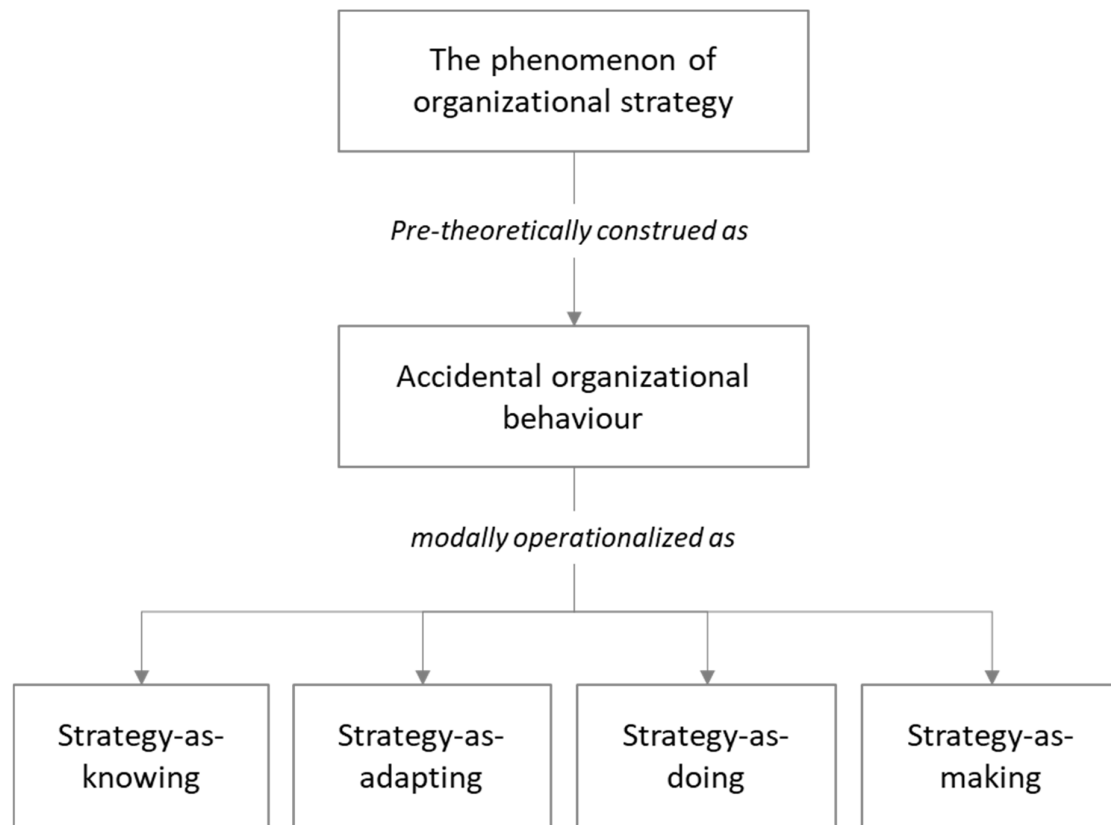


Figure 2: A new taxonomic schema for the classification of rigorous theories of organizational strategy

The four modes of strategy theory are summarized in Table 1 below and described in more detail in the ensuing sections.

Strategy-as-knowing The organizational engagement with the future is worked out and effected on the basis of organizational knowing and knowledge of future environmental change. <i>Mantra:</i> “The organizational future is controllable to the extent that it is knowable.” <i>Assumptions:</i> The environment is the exogenous source of change. The future environment is sufficiently knowable as a basis for foresight and formal planning ahead. <i>Theories:</i> Orthodox strategic planning; strategic knowledge management; <i>La Prospective</i> and Futures Studies.	Strategy-as-adapting The organizational engagement with the future is worked out and effected on the basis of adapting to given environmental change. <i>Mantra:</i> “The future is unknowable – the organization must adapt to the environmental change.” <i>Assumptions:</i> The environment is the exogenous source of change. The future environment is unknowable and thus beyond organizational prognosis and control. <i>Theories:</i> Resource-based theories; Mintzberg’s theory of adaptive strategy; Theories that emphasise strategic fit.
Strategy-as-making The organizational engagement with the future is worked out and effected through creative organizational action. <i>Mantra:</i> “The organizational future is what we make of it. We can imagine a future and make it come about.” <i>Assumptions:</i> The organization and the environment are approached assertively as amenable to creation, design and construction. <i>Theories:</i> Strategic innovation; open strategy; design theories of strategy.	Strategy-as-doing The organizational engagement with the future is effected through subjective praxis and institutionalised practices. <i>Mantra:</i> “The organizational future depends upon what was done in the past, so we must attend to what is being done and how we do it.” <i>Assumptions:</i> The organization is approached as a derivative result of what actors in organizations have done and continue to do. <i>Theories:</i> Strategy-as-practice (SAP).

Table 1: A taxonomy of organizational strategy theory categorised by ideal-typical modes of the organizational engagement with the future.

3.3.1. Organizational strategy-as-knowing

The knowing mode of the organizational engagement with the contingent future has been and still is the predominant theoretical perspective in the field of organizational strategy theory (Calori, 1998). It incorporates the largest number of theories which go by such names as orthodox strategic planning, prescriptive models of strategy, and rational planning. This mode is assertive and posits knowledge of the contingent future as the basis of strategy. The knowing mode of organizational strategy corresponds to Ansoff's systematic management model, and Mintzberg's planning mode.

It is in the dominant orthodoxy in strategy theory that the *rational* prospectivity of strategy is most explicitly espoused⁸. Calori (1998) identifies the three “prescriptive schools” and “orthodox models of strategic management”, which he subjects to an “epistemological critique”. He does so by questioning these “rational models of strategy formation on their own ‘terrain’: reasoning”. A strong epistemological commitment to prospective organizational knowing and the prognostic organizational knowledge availed thereby is definitive of these models and especially of the strategic planning model.

Prognostic organizational knowledge⁹ refers here to organizational knowledge garnered by “rational prognosis” (Koselleck 2002, 2004): predictions, projections and descriptions as specified claims about what is yet to come. Such claims are made in reference to, for example, future organizational actions, means, states, events, trends, and outcomes. Formal strategic planning typically involves detailed situation analyses and forecasts of the organizational environment, which are translated into even more detailed

⁸ Parts of this section appeared previously in Naidoo (2018).

⁹ Strictly speaking, the term ‘prognostic knowledge’ contains a redundancy since *prognostic* already means knowledge of what is yet to come. But it is a useful redundancy in the context of this inquiry.

forecasts in the form of plans and budgets for achieving some desired future state. Formal strategic plans are detailed specifications of the organizational future constructed primarily out of myriad prognostic claims.

Prospective organizational knowing and the prognostic organizational knowledge availed thereby are of central importance in the orthodox theory of strategic planning. It is rational, deliberate, and assertively proactive in relation to the future (Mintzberg, 1973). The underlying assumption of orthodox strategic planning theory is that the organizational engagement with the future is effected and sustained – and ultimately circumscribed – by the extent to which the contingent future is amenable to prospective organizational knowing and prognostic knowledge. Here, strategic reasoning about the future is exhausted in the possibility for prospective knowing and knowledge.

However, from an Aristotelian perspective (in *On Interpretation IX*), knowledge of future events and states of affairs, unlike the knowledge of past and present things, is understood as contingent in principle and is thus epistemologically problematic. This is the Aristotelian epistemological *fundamentum divisionis*, or epistemological fold, according to which knowledge of future contingents is of a fundamentally different kind due to the failure of the strong principle of bivalence. According to Boethius (Audi, 2009):

Aristotle's view can be formulated as follows: the principle of bivalence is universally valid, but propositions about future contingents, unlike those about past and present things, do not obey the stronger principle according to which each proposition is either determinately true or determinately false. A proposition is indeterminately true as long as the conditions that make it true are not yet fixed.

The Aristotelian conception of future contingency (Williams, 2008) supports a more attenuated epistemological principle to that which has to do with what we know of past and present things. The notion of the Aristotelian epistemological fold conveys the principle that no matter what position one

might hold about knowledge of what is and what has been, such a position must necessarily be weakened about knowledge of what is yet to come. The objectivity of “substance” as “present reality” conditions one side of this fold, and in-principle future contingency conditions the other side. On the one side is Aristotle’s assertive claim that we can know “Reality” in what is present before us, whereas the other, less famous, side is a more attenuated claim about whether and what we may know of future events. The polemic on future contingency and especially on the bivalence principle is a current topic in studies of Aristotle (Sorabji, 1980) but falls outside the scope of this study. The point here is that scientific, epistemic approaches to knowing do not lie on the same side of Aristotle’s epistemological fold as the kind of knowing and knowledge that is assumed in strategy-as-knowing.

The Aristotelian epistemological fold	
<i>Knowledge of present and past things</i> • Epistemic certainty • Substance • Experience • Predictable • Degrees of probability • Scientific knowing	<i>Knowledge of future contingents</i> • In-principle contingency • Event • Expectation • Non-predictable • Degrees of plausibility • Strategic knowing

Table 2: The Aristotelian epistemological fold.

In Table 2, scientific knowing is counterposed to strategic knowing on either side of the Aristotelian epistemological fold. Thus, in the Aristotelian conception, while strategic knowing involves knowing and knowledge, this should not be taken in the same sense in which science is epistemic. Strategic

knowing is a coping with the in-principle contingency of the future which cannot be bracketed off. Thus, organizational knowledge claims of what ‘the future’ will be like, typically the products of strenuous strategizing, are understood as conjectural and tenuous to begin with. And to the extent that such claims are made and taken seriously as the basis for future action, may turn out in unforeseen ways. The people who strategize *know* that they *cannot* know *ex ante* how their strategies will turn out. Since the future cannot be ignored in strategizing, even tenuous forms of knowledge of what is yet to come are taken as rationally better than ‘flying blind’ or gambling on the basis of pure chance. Organizational strategy-as-knowing is not a seeking to overcome in-principle future contingency, it is a means of coping with it as an ineradicable condition of organization.

Although strategic planning remains the mainstream mode of strategy, it has been roundly critiqued since the 1960s (Lindblom 1959; March and Olsen 1976; Mintzberg 1976; Knights and Morgan 1991; Weick 1995) with the result that numerous alternative organizational perspectives and theories have been offered. Scenario-planning (Van der Heijden, 1996), foresight (Tsoukas and Shepherd, 2004) and effectuation (Sarasvathy, 2001) are contemporary examples of such alternatives. These may be read as critical reactions, primarily to the strong claim to prognostic organizational knowledge that underlies orthodox strategic planning theories.

This brings to light a substantive yet implicit problematic that is shaping the development of contemporary strategy theory: in the retreat from prognostic knowledge, how might prospective knowing be sustained as the basis for strategy? The study of these retreats from prognostic organizational knowledge and the shifts in how strategic prospectivity has been re-conceptualized requires more detailed study than is practicable here. The point to hold on to is that strategy theory is caught on the horns of a dilemma in the age of higher-order contingency: it must gradually give up on prognosis without

relinquishing the possibility of other modes of prospective organizational knowing. This dilemma is due to the commitment to organizational knowing as the sole basis for effecting the organizational engagement with the future.

Paradoxically, strategy, including formal strategic planning, is becoming more pervasive in practice, and strategy theory is a burgeoning field of research (Laamanen, 2017). Strategy is not only becoming more widespread among organizations of every kind, it is also becoming more widespread within organizations (Schreyögg (1994). In an age in which prospective knowing and prognostic knowledge are increasingly questioned, and in which ‘one can discern a “retreat from rationality”’ (Reed, 1991) in organization theory, it is surprising that strategic planning is becoming ever more pervasive. Perhaps it is precisely because prospective knowing is becoming more problematic that strategy is not only burgeoning but also becoming more pluralistic as an ameliorating response. Nevertheless, although they are problematic and even diminishing possibilities, we must accept that organizational knowing – both prospective and retrospective – is a feature of organizational strategy. Koselleck (2002) is mindful of the unavoidability of knowing in effecting and sustaining this engagement:

In order to even act, one must take into account and plan for the empirical inexperience of the future. Whether it makes sense or not, one must foresee the future.

For Koselleck, this leads to a questioning of foresight and “prognostic rationality”: “What do humans foresee, what can they foresee? The coming reality, or only possibilities?”

In any case, the problems remain for theories of strategy in the knowing mode. If the veracity of theories of organizational strategy-as-knowing resides wholly in the possibilities of prospective knowing, are such theories at stake in an age of higher-order contingency? If not by prospective knowing and prognostic knowledge, how else is the organizational engagement with the contingent future theorised?

3.3.2. Organizational strategy-as-adapting

In the adapting mode of strategy theory, the process of organizational adaptation is taken to be the basis for the organizational engagement with the future. Central to this mode is the idea that organizations must adapt to changing environmental circumstances if they are to survive and thrive. Whereas the knowing mode depends upon predictions of relevant environmental conditions before they occur, the adapting modality operates on *post-dictions* of what has already occurred in the environment. This is the contrast between striving to know the future versus knowing the present circumstances that already prevail. Thus, whereas the knowing mode is prospective, the adapting mode is reactive.

The strategy-as-adapting mode corresponds with Mintzberg's adaptive mode and Ansoff's reactive and ad hoc management models of strategy. The strategy-as-adapting mode is recognized in the literature as a distinctive theoretical perspective of organizational strategy. Included in this category are contemporary theories of strategy that espouse organizational resilience, improvisation, and agility. In these theories we see the emphasis on the organizational responses to change rather than the anticipation of change.

The process of organizational adaptation is not based on knowing what the future holds. Rather, it is a less assertive mode of orientation towards the future on an understanding of the ineradicable contingency of the future which is beyond the control and fore-knowledge of the organization. Strategy-as-adapting involves organizational flexibility and responsiveness to a changing, unpredictable environment. Hence, there is an emphasis in such theories on the organizational capacity for change, its agility, and its internal repertoire which are resources of particular significance in theories of strategy in the adapting mode.

Theories in the strategy-as-adapting mode reference evolutionary theory in identifying the environment as the source of contingent change and in placing the environment beyond the control of the organization. The notion of organizational adaptation, as it is used in theories of strategy-as-adapting, harks to the formal concept of adaptation in biological evolutionary theory, but should also be distinguished from it. In the biological theory, the individual organism does not adapt; rather, it is populations of organisms which become adapted (Mayr, 2002). The generalized notion of evolutionary adaptation is a population concept, it is about species – as populations of organisms - becoming adapted to their environments over generations through the evolutionary process of blind variation and natural selection (Campbell, 1987; Mayr, 2002). Whereas strategy-as-adapting is about the adaptation of the individual organization, evolutionary adaptation has little to say about how individual organisms change over time in the course of their lives. Moreover, the idea that an individual organism is able to *guide* or *choose* an adaptation is entirely foreign and inadmissible in generalised Darwinian evolutionary theory (Mayr, 2002; Campbell, 1987). Thus, whereas theories of strategy-as-adapting are premised on the very possibility that individual organizations can adapt to environmental change, such a possibility is definitively excluded in generalized Darwinian evolutionary theory.

Hannan and Freeman (1989) offer a seminal theory of organization that is based on the generalized Darwinian model of evolutionary change. Hannan and Freeman (1989) do not provide a theory of strategy at all. In fact, the evolutionary theory of organizations is, strictly speaking, counterposed to the very idea of strategy. As Burgelman (1991) points out, Hannan's and Freeman's theory is associated more with "environmental determinism" than with "strategic choice". Burgelman (1991) offers an intraorganizational ecological theory of "strategy making" which "examines how internal selection may be combined with external selection to explain organizational

change and survival.” In doing so, Burgelman (1991) marshals the cultural evolutionary framework of variation-selection-retention to understand how both strategy content and process “take shape over time”. Although he sees the source of variation as the individual strategists, both selection and retention are “organizational-level” processes. This leads him to take “strategic initiatives rather than individuals [as] the unit of analysis”.

The adapting of individual organizations as a strategic mode – a mode of the organizational engagement with the contingent future - must therefore be understood, not as a populational process nor as a process which is subject to *natural* selection, but as an organizational process of change in response to changing conditions which impinge on the survival and growth of that particular organization. However, adapting as an organizational mode, does inherit a crucial aspect of the generalized Darwinian notion of adaptation in that it is understood as a process that is *blind to the future* in the sense that the organizational process of adapting is always *ex post facto* in response to exogenously given change.

3.3.3. Organizational strategy-as-doing

The doing mode of strategy theory, which emphasizes the activities of strategizing, is of more recent provenance than the knowing and adapting modes. This mode is not included in Mintzberg’s and Ansoff’s taxonomies of strategy theory as a separate category. However, in the case of Mintzberg’s (1973) taxonomy, which classifies modes of *strategy-making*, the doing of strategy is implied in all three modes that he identifies. Theories of strategy in the doing mode focus on the practices and activities that strategy practitioners *do* in the process of strategizing.

The most prominent stream of strategy theory in the doing mode is that of the strategy-as-practice (SAP or s-as-p) research programme. According to Jarzabkowski, Balogun and Seidl (2007) “strategizing comprises those actions,

interactions and negotiations of multiple actors and the situated practices they draw upon in accomplishing that activity.” Whittington (2003) poses six questions of “the work of strategizing” paraphrased as: (1) where and how is it done?; (2) who does it?; (3) what are the skills for doing it and how are these acquired?; (4) what are the common tools and techniques for doing it?; (5) how is it organized?; (6) how do its products come to be shared. These questions are aimed at working out “the internal life of process” and the emphasis is on people as skilful and purposive. Vaara and Whittington (2012) point out that “SAP research partly draws on the process approach to strategy-making (Bower, 1982; Burgelman, 1983; Mintzberg & Waters, 1985).”

Research in strategy-as-practice is centered on the praxis-practitioners-practices framework (Whittington, 2007; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). According to Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009):

The s-as-p field has defined its broad research parameters as studying: practitioners (those people who do the work of strategy); practices (the social, symbolic and material tools through which strategy work is done); and praxis (the flow of activity in which strategy is accomplished) (Jarzabkowski 2005; Jarzabkowski et al. 2007; Johnson et al. 2007; Whittington 2006a).

Jarzabkowski and Spee (2009) consider “the doing of strategy as the practice that constitutes strategy process”. They define strategy “as a situated, socially accomplished activity”, and strategizing as “those actions, interactions and negotiations of multiple actors and the situated practices that they draw upon in accomplishing that activity’ (Jarzabkowski *et al*, 2007).”

In contrast to the knowing and adapting modes, the strategy-as-doing mode provides a thoroughly intra-organizational view of strategizing. This emphasis on the micro-phenomena follows from a reducibility thesis, that organizational phenomena are fully reducible to the actions of human practitioners. The upshot of this reducibility thesis is that ‘the organization’ is regarded as

epiphenomenal. That is, ‘the organization’ is derived in its entirety from the substrate of human praxis informed by institutionalised practices.

Although the praxis-practitioners-practices framework is dominant in strategy as practice judging by the weight of research work undertaken, it has been criticized as overly restrictive. For Carter *et al* (2008), “strategizing as a verb would surely encompass other, more ‘grey’ ... areas that remain unexplored in current approaches and which frame the labour of strategizing.” Similarly, Rasche and Chia (2009) argue that “empirical contributions to the strategy-as-practice agenda are often based on what people say they do or have done (Mantere 2005; Paroutis and Pettigrew 2007) rather than on a direct observation of oftentimes unconscious physical tendencies and styles of engagement.” In dealing with the problem of “micro-isolationism” that besets some strategy as practice research, Vaara and Whittington (2012) argue that:

while SAP research has been very successful in enriching our knowledge of the ways in which strategizing takes place; it has not yet fully realized the potential that lies in the practice perspective, especially its recognition of how activities are embedded in broader societal or macro-institutional contexts.

Although the epistemological emphasis in strategy as practice research is still on the micro-phenomena of strategy-making, it has come to be accepted that strategy praxis, practitioners, and their practices are institutionally embedded. For Vaara and Whittington (2012) the distinctive contribution of strategy as practice is due to a “focus on the ways in which actors are enabled by organizational and wider social practices in their decisions and actions”.

3.3.4. Organizational strategy-as-making

The making mode is the most recent of the modes of organizational strategy theory and is still in the early stages of becoming a theoretical perspective. In contrast to the doing mode, which focuses on strategy as human praxis, the making modality involves an emphasis on *creation* as a means of influencing

the organizational environment. This assertive orientation towards the environment is in contrast to the more reserved orientation that underlies the adapting mode. Both the knowing and adapting modes involve an acceptance of environmental conditions as given and beyond the control of the organization, whereas in the making mode the environment is approached as amenable to the creative influence of the organization. For Montuori and Donnelly (2013):

Creativity has traditionally been defined as the ability to respond adaptively to the needs for new approaches and new products, or as the ability to bring something new and valuable into existence purposefully.

Although Ansoff's taxonomy does not include a strategy-as-making category, we find in his models of the strategic behaviour of the "managed firm" (that is, the ad hoc and systematic management models) that the firm is seen as "a deliberate shaper of its own development" and this is suggestive of the endogeneity of the strategy-as-making mode. Mintzberg's (1973) entrepreneurial mode of strategy-making, "where a powerful leader takes bold, risky decisions towards his vision of the organization's future", also points to the making mode of organizational strategy. Considered in terms of the various schools of organizational strategy, the making mode includes what Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel (1998) refer to as the "design school" and the "entrepreneurial school". Both of these schools involve an active and creative orientation towards bringing about a representation or vision of the organizational future in a way that is less beholden to the environment in which the organization operates.

The making mode of strategy theory includes notions of organizational strategy which emphasise "disruptive innovation" (Christensen, McDonald, Altman and Palmer, 2018), "foresight by design" (Liedtka and Kaplan, 2019), "design-led strategy" (Knight, Daymond and Paroutis, 2020), and creativity (Montuori and Donnelly, 2013). In these works, organizational strategy is

operationalised in a wide variety of ways: as a process, as practices and tools (Comi and Whyte, 2017; Liedtka and Kaplan, 2019; Knight, Daymond and Paroutis, 2020), as knowledge (Knight, Daymond and Paroutis, 2020), as structure (Knight, Daymond and Paroutis, 2020), as visual artefacts (Comi and Whyte, 2017). Comi and Whyte even offer “*future making* as an alternative perspective on how practitioners orient themselves towards the future (different from current perspectives such as foreseeing, future perfect thinking and wayfinding).”

In the strategy-as-making mode *the future is to be made rather than received as given*. Unlike the knowing and adapting modes, wherein the source of change is environmental and thus exogenous to the organization, the making mode has an endogenous locus of creative change. Strategy-as-making is posited as well-suited to “postnormal times” (Montuori and Donnelly, 2013) which are characterised by “complexity, contradictions and chaos” and require creativity, innovation and imagination.

3.4. Theoretical rigour and its implications

Rigour is generally regarded as a definitive quality of scientific theories. For Kieser (2002), and Kieser and Leiner (2009), hypotheses and statements are scientific because they have been subjected to the “criterion true/false” before being declared a “coded truth” in the self-referential context of a science. The ascription of being scientific also relies on the “proxy criterion [of] reputation” which scientists earn by publishing their work in scientific journals and which they bestow upon each other through citation. For Nicolai and Seidl (2010), who approach the rigor-relevance gap from the perspective of Luhmann’s systems theory, the difference between scientific communication and other types of communication resides in the “self-referential *modus operandi* of science” which primarily involves “striving for rigour”.

Another way to think about what rigour entails is to consider how rigorous theories bring an object phenomenon into view. Both Mintzberg's and Ansoff's taxonomies seek to provide broad, field-wide views, and in doing so, they confirm that the phenomenon of organizational strategy is universally approached in strategy theory as an *accidental* organizational property. That is, strategy theories generally provide scientific explanations of what it means for organizations to be strategic in *terms* of organizational behaviour and other accidental properties. This field-wide assumption underlies and binds theories of organizational strategy together as a scientific field, and is decisive for what rigour *currently* entails in this field.

The elision of the question of organizational strategic being

The most important implication of this assumption, in the context of this study, is that the possibility of an *ontological* relation between strategy and organization is *pre-theoretically bracketed off and elided*. Under the current basis of rigour in strategy theory it is not possible to pose the question of organizational strategic being that is posed in this study. What is sought in strategy theory is the behavioural *how* of *being strategic* and not the questioning of organizational strategy as ontologically inherent to organizations as *strategic beings*.

The assumption that strategy is accidental is implicated in the rigour-relevance gap in strategy theory in that it is incongruent with the everyday emphasis on strategy as *normatively and existentially necessary* for organizations. That is, whereas the possibility of an ontological relation between strategy and organization is *excluded* in strategy theory, this possibility (as we will find in Chapter 4) is indeed *admitted* in practice even though it is not thematised as such.

The rigorous dissection of organizational strategy

Although the field of strategy theory proceeds from a commitment to the accidental nature of strategy, it is a famously pluralistic field wherein theories are based on different conceptualisations of what *being strategic* involves for organizations. In accordance with these conceptualisations, different *kinds* of organizational behaviour and behavioural orientations are taken to constitute the primary empirical basis of theorization in each theoretical mode. In Sections 3.2 and 3.3, we saw how extant theories may be categorised in terms of these modal conceptualisations and the kind of organizational behaviour that is privileged in each case. Each of these is a mode of theorization which is taken by its adherents to be determinative of the organizational engagement with the contingent future. Rigorous theories in each mode show their ‘flags’ in this regard and may thus be described as being of the form: *strategy-as-X*, where X is one of the modes of strategic behaviour which is taken as the phenomenal basis of explanation. In the new taxonomy offered above in Section 3.3, we identified four independent, ideal-typical modes which are prevalent in strategy theory as the mono-modal bases of organizational strategy: strategy-as-knowing, strategy-as-adapting, strategy-as-doing, and strategy-as-making. It is contended here that rigorous theories may be categorised into one or the other of these mutually exclusive *taxa*.

Thus, in the pluralistic field of strategy theory, scientific *rigour* must also be understood in modal terms since each mode involves a different framing of the phenomenon to be explained. These modes constitute different bases of rigour in the field before any theorization even begins. What are the implications of this taxonomic analysis of the modal bases of rigour in the field of organizational strategy theory?

Organizational strategy theory is a modally pluralistic field in pursuit of the same phenomenon: the organizational engagement with the contingent future

for the sake of the significant. Rigorous theories are grounded in the pre-theoretical assumptions of a particular mode of explanation which relegates other modes. In this way, the phenomenon of organizational strategy is dissected into fundamentally different behavioural perspectives. In the “scientific attitude”, to straddle these modes is anathema since to do so is to muddy the epistemological waters and to sacrifice scientific rigour in the process. For example, to theorise in the strategy-as-knowing mode involves a specific pre-theoretical commitment to organizational knowing as the primary basis of what being strategic means for and in organizations; this commitment restricts the kinds of organizational behaviour and other properties, such as managerial cognition, strategy texts and planning processes in this case, which are brought into view. A rigorous strategy theory cannot be equivocal about this commitment since it will then be operating with different conceptualisations of the very phenomenon that stands in need of explanation. The upshot of this is that rigorous theories in each mode can only give a one-sided view of organizational strategic behaviour. As Ansoff (1987) acknowledges: a rigorous theory “provides only a partial explanation of its chosen reality”.

The hope that such theories will collectively give the full story of the phenomenon of organizational strategy - at the level of the field as a whole - is dashed on the rocks of the very demand of rigor which renders any modal synthesis anathema to rigor. In this way the demand of rigor theoretically covers over both the rich complexity and the unity of the phenomenon of organizational strategy. The demand of theoretical rigour means that the complex phenomenon of organizational strategy is disaggregated into separate behavioural domains on the basis of different objectifications. Each rigorous theory must provide an explanation within a mono-mode of strategic behaviour - to mix or synthesize these modes is to sacrifice scientific rigour. As Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel (1998) say:

Like butchers (and here we include ourselves), they [theorists] chop up reality for their convenience ...

Yet, even strategy theorists acknowledge that these dissected modes of strategic behaviour are readily synthesized in practice. That is, in practice, organizational strategy tends to be multi-modal in contrast to the strict modality of rigorous strategy theories. Here again we see that it is the current modal basis of rigour in strategy theory that is implicated in the rigour-relevance gap.

The hindsightness of rigorous strategy theory in pursuit of a futural phenomenon

The organizational behaviour and properties which are brought into focus in each mode of strategy theory are generally studied after they have occurred. Thus, strategy, a fundamentally futural phenomenon, is only ever approached theoretically *in hindsight*. Counterposed to this epistemological hindsightness, is the fundamentally projected orientation of organizational strategy in practice. Here again we see how it is the rigorous focus on organizational strategy as an accidental behaviour that leads to an incongruence between the temporal orientations of strategy theory and strategy in practice that only widens the rigour-relevance gap. As Shrivastava (1987) says:

Unless research programs accurately portray actual organizational features and assumptions, their results are unlikely to be understood or used by practitioners (Davis, 1971; Pondy and Boje, 1976; Shrivastava and Mitroff, 1984).

As will be explored in more detail in Chapter 4 below, organizational strategy in practice involves a full-fledged temporality which exceeds what can be apprehended in terms of past organizational behaviour.

Chapter 4

The practical admission of organizational strategic being as an ontological unity

We must rather choose such a way of access and such a kind of interpretation that this entity can show itself in itself. And this means that it is to be shown as it is *proximally and for the most part* – in its average everydayness. In this everydayness there are certain structures which we shall exhibit – not just any accidental structures, but essential ones ...

Heidegger, 1962/BT

In Chapter 3 we found that the phenomenon of organizational strategy is approached in the field of organizational strategy theory on the basis of one or other of the four ideal-typical modes of the organizational engagement with the contingent future. Each of these modes entails an independent behavioural basis - a pre-theoretical point of departure - for the rigorous theorization of organizational strategy. These modes are decisive in the context of this study in that they are identified as the modal bases of theoretical rigour in the pluralistic field of strategy theory. Whereas discussions on theoretical rigour in organization studies emphasise the *general* social scientific criteria for theoretical rigour such as coherence and conceptual consistency, the *modal criteria of rigour* that are specific to the field of strategy theory have not been attended to.

We also found that this modal arrangement of rigorous strategy theories is underpinned by the implicit field-wide assumption that strategy is an accidental property of and in organizations. In this way, the possibility of a deeper ontological relation between strategy and organization is pre-theoretically elided in strategy theory and is put out of bounds for rigorous

theorization. In other words, the very *possibility* that strategy may be ontologically inherent to organizations is inconceivable within the current basis of theoretical rigour in the field of organizational strategy theory.

In Chapter 2, the universal assumption that strategy is merely accidental to organizational being was called into question: in Section 2.2.3, it was shown that the necessity of the organizational *subiectum* of strategy has ontological implications for the relation between strategy and organization. And in Section 2.2.4, it was shown that strategy – as the engagement with the contingent future - is ontologically inherent to organizational being construed as a temporal kind of being. These ontological arguments provide the conceptual grounds for questioning the assumptions that undergird strategy theory and this allows us to pose the speculative question of the nature of organizational strategic being as an ontological unity.

In this chapter, we turn to the everydayness of organizational strategy to consider what it means in practice for organizations to *be* strategic. For Heidegger (1962/BT), “average everydayness” pertains to the way something is construed “proximally and for the most part”. The average everyday meanings of organizational strategy in practice are contrasted with the theoretical understanding of organizational strategy that underpins scientific rigour in the field of strategy theory. In Section 4.1, an ontological connection between organization and strategy is discernible in the *existential* sense of necessity which attaches to the everyday understanding of strategy. In Section 4.2, two conceptual frameworks of organizational strategy - the dynamic capabilities framework, and the scenario-based strategy framework - are analysed. Since these frameworks have been taken up in practice, they are congruent with and thus indicative of the everyday understanding of organizational strategy. This puts us in a position in Section 4.3 to strengthen the conceptual critique of strategy theory from the perspective of practice and to explain the rigour-relevance gap in strategy theory.

4.1. The existential relevance of strategy in an age of higher-order contingency

The rigor-relevance gap between the theory and practice of organizational strategy involves an incongruence which has gone unnoticed. In theory, strategy is universally and pre-theoretically assumed to be *accidental* to organizational being. In contrast, the empirical ubiquity of strategy among contemporary organizations suggests that strategy is deemed in practice to be *necessary* to organizations in some way.

How do we explain the everyday ubiquity of overt strategy among organizations? And if strategy has become normatively necessary to organizations in these ways, why would they not take up rigorous theories of strategy?

An institutionalist response to these questions can only provide a partial answer to the first question, and provides no answer at all to the second question. To say that strategy has become ubiquitous by a process of institutionalisation is to explain *how* it has become ubiquitous, not *why* it has become ubiquitous. Something more is at sway in “the age of strategy” (Carter, 2013) that underlies the normative institutionalisation of strategy.

According to Knights and Morgan (1991), strategy is understood in contemporary practice as more than just a ‘good idea’ for organizations:

What is not questioned within the discourse is the relevance and necessity of perceiving strategy as the most appropriate means of resolving problems.

Although Knights and Morgan are problematising the unquestioned sense of the necessity of strategy among practitioners, this shows up a fundamental incongruence between the theoretical and practical understandings of the relation between strategy and organization. In practice, strategy is widely understood as “natural” (Knights & Morgan, 1991) and is thus imbued with a

sense of necessity as a condition for organizations not only to thrive but also to survive. In practice, strategy is taken for the most part to be crucial and of existence-relevance to organizations.

The unquestioned need for and existential relevance of strategy indicates that it is understood in everyday terms as necessary for organizations rather than as merely accidental. However, in its everydayness, the relation between organization and strategy is not treated “thematically”. Indeed, saying that strategy is necessary for the continued existence of an organization also translates into a normative injunction, albeit one which carries a greater sense of urgency. Thus, the incongruence between the theoretical and everyday understandings of strategy (as accidental and as normatively necessary respectively) does not by itself constitute an *ontological incongruence* between them. Although this is a decisive practical admission of the *possibility* of an ontological relation between strategy and organization, it does not give sufficient grounds to assume such a relation on the basis of what we can discern of everyday organizational strategy.

In the ontological sense, to *be* strategic is to be *inherently* strategic rather than merely accidentally so. This approach does not emphasise what organizational *being strategic* means, rather, it emphasises *organizational being as an inherently strategic kind of being* to begin with. Thus, the emphasis is shifted in this study from the theoretical preoccupation with explaining the organizational *how* of *being strategic* to an ontological questioning of organizations as inherently *strategic beings*. This marks a shift in approach to the question of what it means for organizations to *be* strategic. The shift here is from the behavioural and thus accidental, to the ontological and thus essential sense.

4.2. The conceptual disclosure of organizational strategic being in practically prevalent frameworks of organizational strategy

Whereas rigorous theories of strategy are rarely taken up in practice, this is not the case for conceptual frameworks, models and tools of strategy, such as SWOT analysis, the BCG Matrix, The Five Forces Model, and many more which are indeed used in practice. This shows that rigorous strategy theories are not deemed to be practically irrelevant because of their conceptuality.

Of particular relevance in this study are the more comprehensive conceptual frameworks of organizational strategy which have been adopted in practice. Prominent examples to be considered in this section are the scenario-based strategy framework, and the dynamic capabilities framework, both of which are not regarded as *rigorous* theories of organizational strategy. That these frameworks have been adopted in practice, and even widely so in the case of the scenario-based strategy framework, points to a congruence with everyday understandings of organizational strategy.

Why would the non-rigorous dynamic capabilities framework be taken up in practice, whereas the rigorous strategy-as-practice (SAP) praxis-practitioners-practices (PPP) theoretical framework, for example, is ignored by practitioners? A primary difference between rigorous theories and these non-rigorous frameworks is that the former are mono-modal whereas the latter are multi-modal. That is, both the scenario-based and dynamic capabilities frameworks approach organizational strategy by synthesizing multiple behavioural modes of strategy, and in so doing, the claim to scientific rigor is sacrificed and these frameworks are thus not included in the panoply of rigorous scientific theories of organizational strategy. On the other hand, rigorous mono-modal theories that espouse the knowing mode of strategy, for example, typically do so to the exclusion or relegation of other mono-modes of strategy such as the adapting, making, and doing modes. As we found in

Chapter 3, the rigor of theories of organizational strategy resides in their mono-modality. Thus, theoretical rigour is not only nor primarily the *end* result of the process of methodologically sound theorization. Rather, theoretical rigour resides first and foremost in the *pre-theoretical* demarcations and commitments which underpin the ensuing process of theorization. Theorists first select, or perhaps simply accept, a specific modal perspective of organizational strategy within which they then begin to theorize. Each modal perspective is not itself open to theoretical problematization within that perspective since to question the pre-theoretical assumptions of a modal perspective is to pose a critical or meta-theoretical question which puts rigorous theorization, as it is currently conceived, into abeyance.

Of particular importance is the further contrast that the multi-modal frameworks of strategy incorporate nascent notions of organizational strategic being. Whereas many theorists of organizational strategy regard the reification of organizational being as a cardinal sin, organizational insiders commonly refer to organizations as if they are agents in their own right. In theory, the reification of organization is eschewed, yet, in practice the organization is encountered unproblematically as a strategic being in its own right. Both of these conceptions are useful in revealing aspects of organizational strategic being although both are problematic descriptions: the one reduces organization to an epiphenomenon of a flattened ontology of human intersubjectivity; the other uncritically reifies organization in granting it a centred personhood that is taken as given.

4.2.1. The dynamic capabilities framework

The dynamic capabilities approach was motivated by the lack of extant strategy theories of business organizations that explained “how and why firms build competitive advantage in regimes of rapid change” (Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997). Initially, the dynamic capabilities framework was not offered as a

framework for organizational strategy in general, but was aimed at complex business organizations that face the “strategic problem” of “[d]eciding, under significant uncertainty about future states of the world, which long-term paths to commit to and when to change paths”. However, it has more recently also been identified as a promising framework for public sector organizations (Pablo, Reay, Dewald and Casebeer, 2007). Thus, we approach the dynamic capabilities framework here as one which is applicable to organizations in general.

This framework, in its emphasis on competences, falls into the resource-based view of organizations which is counterposed to the positioning school of business strategy (Porter, 1980). According to Teece *et al* (1997):

We refer to this as the 'dynamic capabilities' approach in order to stress exploiting existing internal and external firm-specific competences to address changing environments. Elements of the approach can be found in Schumpeter (1942), Penrose (1959), Nelson and Winter (1982), Prahalad and Hamel (1990), Teece (1976, 1986a, 1986b, 1988) and in Hayes, Wheelwright, and Clark (1988).

Although understood by its proponents as a framework for organizational strategy, it does not have its provenance wholly in the field of strategy theory. Moreover, the theoretical status of this framework has been a contentious issue in the field of strategy theory. According to Winter (2003): “Many strategy scholars are sceptical about the value of the concept of ‘dynamic capabilities’.” Guidici and Reinmoeller (2012) point out that the academic debate about the theoretical value of the dynamic capabilities framework continues with critics calling for it to be “abandoned due to its weak theoretical foundations and inconsistencies” whereas its proponents call for “further development” and point to “its growing relevance”.

On the other hand, for Teece (2007) there is little doubt that dynamic capabilities have been “relevant to achieving competitive advantage” and that “their importance is now amplified”. According to Pablo *et al* (2007), the

dynamic capabilities framework is relevant to and has also been adopted in strategy practice in the public sector. For Teece (2007), the endeavour to find the foundations of organizational capabilities is not approached, foremost, as an exercise in rigorous theorization.

A framework, like a model, abstracts from reality. It endeavors to identify classes of relevant variables and their interrelationships. A framework is less rigorous than a model as it is sometimes agnostic about the particular form of the theoretical relationships that may exist.

Thus, the primary motivation is programmatic with situational relevance favoured over rigorous scientific generalization. Teece (2007) explicitly aims to “explain the sources of competitive advantage over time” and to “provide guidance to managers”.

The ongoing debate about dynamic capabilities centres on the question of scientific rigour *versus* practical relevance. The dynamic capabilities approach is an example of a conceptual framework of organizational strategy that is *not* deemed to be a rigorous scientific theory by both its detractors and its proponents (despite the many academic articles about it), but which has indeed been taken up as relevant to organizational strategy in practice. Why is this the case? What can we learn about rigour and relevance in strategy theory from this exemplar which is practically relevant *and* lies at the contentious edge of rigour?

The dynamic capabilities framework has been critiqued from an academic perspective for its “conceptual inconsistencies and contradictions” (e.g. Barreto, 2010), for the lack of clarity about its underlying assumptions, for the “reification” (that is, the taken-for-grantedness) of the construct of dynamic capabilities, for its lack of “coherence”, and for being a passing “fad” (Guidici and Reinmoeller, 2012). On the other hand, it has been defended as a “promising” and practically “relevant” development on the way to “a general theory of strategic management” (Teece, 2007). The question of its rigour has

been approached in terms of generic requirements of rigour in the social sciences, however, it has not been approached in terms of the peculiar *modal* bases of theoretical rigour which are at sway in the field of organizational strategy theory. Such an approach provides another explanation for the discomfort that strategy theorists have about the rigour of the dynamic capabilities construct and framework. Although this diagnosis is cause for scepticism about whether dynamic capabilities can become rigorous in the *current* framing of rigour in the field of strategy theory, this approach also allows us to reverse the critique by showing how the very lack of mono-modal rigour is what contributes to the relevance of dynamic capabilities to strategy in practice.

A fundamental reason that the dynamic capabilities framework is not deemed to be rigorous is that it transgresses the current modal bases of rigour in strategy theory which are identified in Chapter 3. From the start of its conceptual development, the transgressiveness of this framework has been evident in the way in which it integrates otherwise disparate streams of extant research. This is reflected in Teece's description of his project which is aimed at:

... integrating the "strategy and innovation literature [to] provide an umbrella framework that highlights the most critical capabilities management needs to sustain the evolutionary and entrepreneurial fitness of the business enterprise. (Teece, 2007)

Whereas rigorous theories of organizational strategy are mono-modal, the dynamic capabilities framework is a multi-modal synthesis of especially the strategy-as-adapting and the strategy-as-making modes. As Teece (2007) says: "Enterprises with strong dynamic capabilities are intensely entrepreneurial. They adapt to business ecosystems, but also shape them...". Furthermore, Teece says:

Dynamic capabilities assist in achieving evolutionary fitness, in part by helping to shape the environment. The element of dynamic capabilities that involves shaping (and not just adapting to) the environment is entrepreneurial in nature.

The contention then is that it is the transgressive synthesis of the adapting and making modes of explanation which falls foul of the demand of mono-modal rigour in the field of strategy theory. As rigour is currently conceived, to mix independent modes of theorization in this way is to sacrifice scientific rigour since to do so is to introduce equivocal notions of the basis on which organizations engage with the contingent future. In the strategy-as-adapting mode, to allow that the individual organization or entrepreneur can “shape the environment” is to transgress a core conceptual commitment of adaptationist thinking: that the environment is beyond the control of the individual organization. And, in the strategy-as-making mode, to bring in adaptation and evolutionary fitness is to introduce a tension which restricts the creative possibilities of the organization. Thus, the synthesis of adapting and making that we find at the core of the dynamic capabilities framework renders it non-rigorous from the start.

Yet, it is this multi-modal synthesis which also accounts for the *practical relevance* of the dynamic capabilities framework. There can be no doubt that organizations that operate in rapidly changing environments face the ongoing tension between adapting and making, between the given features of the environment and those that are more or less amenable to creativity, and thus find the dynamic capabilities construct and framework practically relevant. Whereas the demand of rigour in strategy theory is answered by mono-modal conceptual models, the indication here is that practical relevance calls for multi-modal conceptual frameworks. Here we see how the underlying mono-modal criterion of rigour in strategy theory effectively excludes the possibility of practical relevance which apparently calls for multi-modal understandings of the complex and practically challenging phenomenon of organizational strategy.

4.2.2. The scenario-based strategy framework

According to Cairns and Wright (2011), the scenario-based approach to planning was first developed by Herman Kahn at the Rand Corporation in the 1950s in the aftermath of WWII. Contemporary scenario-based thinking comprises three distinguishable approaches: probabilistic scenario planning, futures-based scenario planning, and the “intuitive logics” scenario-based approach to organizational strategy (Bishop, Hines and Collins, 2007). Of the three streams, it is the intuitive logics approach that provides a general framework specifically for undertaking organizational strategy and is thus the focus of this section.

The intuitive logics approach to “organizational scenario-based strategic thinking” was founded in corporate practice at the Shell corporation in the 1960s (Bradfield, Wright, Burt, Cairns and Van der Heijden, 2005) and has been developed further into its contemporary form by other contributors. This approach is the most prevalent of the three scenario approaches in the practice of organizational strategy (Cairns and Wright, 2011). According to Millett (2003), the intuitive logics approach to and “definition of scenarios and their methods remained the gold standard of corporate scenario generation” since its inception. According to Bishop *et al* (2007):

As consultants and organizations have come to recognize the value of scenarios, they have also latched onto one scenario technique – a very good one in fact – as the default for all their scenario work. That technique is the Royal Dutch Shell/Global Business Network (GBN) matrix approach, created by Pierre Wack in the 1970s.

Van Der Heijden, Bradfield, Burt, Cairns and Wright (2002), claim that this framework “has proven to be effective in organizations of all sizes, types and locations, facing different opportunities and threats, both apparent and unnoticed.” According to Chermak (2005), the use of scenarios “has exploded” and the “practice of scenario planning” is established and “continuing to

develop rapidly”. For Derbyshire (2017): “Scenario planning is a tool for considering the future that is widely used by business and government”. Thus, apart from having been adopted widely in practice, it is also a conceptual framework which is applicable to organizations in general (Cairns and Wright, 2011).

According to Cairns and Wright (2011):

... the application of ‘intuitive logics’ (Jungermann & Thuring, 1987) is focussed on the development of multiple scenarios that explore the ‘limits of possibility’ for the future, rather than on the development of singular, ‘normative’ scenarios of some ideal future to be aspired to.

Wack (1985a) distinguishes “scenario analysis” from orthodox formal strategic planning which is based upon probabilistic “forecasts” of features of the organizational environment:

Few companies today would say they are happy with the way they plan for an increasingly fluid and turbulent business environment. Traditional planning was based on forecasts, which worked reasonably well in the relatively stable 1950s and 1960s. Since the early 1970s, however, forecasting errors have become more frequent and occasionally of dramatic and unprecedented magnitude.

Orthodox organizational strategy in the knowing mode seeks the singular, rationally ‘best’ strategy on the basis of prospective knowing and attenuated prognostic knowledge. In orthodox strategy, the single-shot scenario is the strategic future-perfect image of the future that emerges at the pinnacle of the organizational processes of prospective knowing. In contrast, scenario-based thinking seeks the set of plausible scenarios, none of which are individually taken to constitute a predictive claim, but which taken together, demarcate the organizational *region of strategic possibility*. The claim that scenario-based thinking makes about what is yet to come is that the organizational strategy will play out somewhere *between* the scenarios, not *as* any of them taken severally.

The scenario-based framework for organizational strategy, although it is relevant to organizations in general, has *not* attained the status of a rigorous theory in the field of organizational strategy. Chermak (2005) identifies the problem “that there has been inadequate research and theory development to support the fast growing practice of scenario planning” which he sets out to address through a “theory building research method”. However, theoretical rigour has remained elusive (Cairns and Wright, 2011; Derbyshire, 2017; Spaniol and Rowland, 2018). Here we pose the same questions that we posed of the dynamic capabilities framework: Why is it that the scenario-based framework remains non-rigorous four decades after its inception and despite efforts towards making it rigorous? What can we learn about rigour and relevance in strategy theory from this prominent exemplar which is practically relevant *and* which still remains at the outer edge of theoretical rigour?

Among the extant reasons offered for this are that the emphasis has been on a wide range of practical applications rather than on more focused theoretical research, that the framework lacks solid theoretical foundations, and that it has not coalesced into a mature set of methods but has instead continued to proliferate in terms of the range of techniques that fall under the rubric of scenario planning (Derbyshire, 2017). These explanations all operate at the general level of what theoretical rigour entails in the applied social sciences. However, the question of the persistent non-rigorousness of the scenario-based framework has not been considered in terms of the *pre-theoretical*, mono-modal bases of rigour that underpin what rigour entails in the field of strategy theory.

Bishop *et al* (2007) point out that scenario planning is a “comprehensive activity”. For Cairns and Wright (2011), scenario thinking is integrative of “art- and science-based” approaches. Scenario-based strategy is also a synthesis of the understandings of strategy as process and as content. As Bradfield *et al* (2005) say:

... scenarios as a process tool in an ambiguous world. But they are also a content tool, a way of gaining a new perspective on the world.

This synthesis is transgressive of long-held disciplinary demarcations in strategy theory between theoretical construals of the phenomenon of organizational strategy as either content or process or practice. More importantly, as we found in Section 4.2.1 for the dynamic capabilities framework, the scenario-based framework is also a conceptual synthesis of the theoretical modes of organizational strategy which we identified in Chapter 3. However, whereas the dynamic capabilities framework explicitly combines the making and adapting modes, the scenario-based strategy framework incorporates all four modes. As Van Der Heijden *et al* (2002) say:

Scenarios offer a powerful and unique method of harnessing organizational insights, enabling organizations to adapt to change, by exploiting adaptive organizational learning, including perception, thinking and action.

Van Der Heijden *et al* (2002) describe this synthesis in other words as involving the “capability of organizations to perceive what is going on in their business environments, to think through what this means for them, and then to act upon this new knowledge.” These synoptic descriptions of the scenario-based strategy framework show that it is a multi-modal synthesis of the knowing, adapting, doing and making modes of organizational strategy.

The scenario-based framework for organizational strategy is not rigorous, nor can it become rigorous under the *current* regime of rigour, because it transgresses the bounds of mono-modal explanation in the field of strategy theory. In the comprehensive and integrative scenario-based framework, the modes of the organizational engagement with the contingent future are synthesised which in strategy theory are kept asunder ostensibly for the sake of rigour. Here we see again the indication that it is the very multi-modality of scenario-based strategy that underwrites its practical relevance and that also

explains that and why it *cannot* be rigorous if rigour *entails* giving a mono-modal behavioural explanation of organizational strategy.

4.3. A critique of rigorous strategy theory from the perspective of everyday practice

What does the demonstrated relevance of multi-modal frameworks of organizational strategy tell us about the everyday understanding of organizational strategy?

The mono-modality of rigorous theory in the multi-modality of the everyday

It is no accident that the very same indication is found in the analysis of the dynamic capabilities framework and the scenario-based strategy framework. It is plausible to say from this analysis that the multi-modality of a framework of organizational strategy is positively correlated with its degree of practical relevance. In the field of strategy theory, the rigor-relevance gap is due to the current mono-modal criterion of rigour which militates against multi-modal understandings of the phenomenon of organizational strategy – and yet, it is this very multi-modality that renders conceptual frameworks relevant to organizational strategy in practice.

The major incongruence between strategy theory and strategy in practice which explains the rigor-relevance gap in strategy theory is that between the mono-modal behavioural criterion of theoretical rigor in this field which is in stark contrast to the multi-modality of everyday organizational engagements with the contingent future. The mono-modality of rigorous theories means that they each address one and only one modal aspect of organizational strategy and ignore the other modes. On the other hand, everyday organizational strategy involves the interplay of these modes which may change in emphasis depending on the concrete circumstances involved and the distinctive

orientation of each organization in its engagement with the future. When conditions are more stable, it makes sense that organizations will tend to emphasise the knowing mode to make sense of legible environmental trends, however, in doing so they do not eschew the other modes. Why would they if the stakes are high and uncertainty cannot be eradicated? In fast changing conditions characterised by higher-order contingency, organizations tend to emphasise the adapting mode, but again, they do not thereby eschew the knowing, making and doing modes. Whereas extant rigorous theories of organizational strategy eschew the ‘miscegenation’ of the modes of organizational strategy in order to provide modally ‘pure’ scientific models and explanations, contemporary organizations favour multi-modal conceptual frameworks in order to cope strategically. As Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel (1998) say:

Every strategy process has to combine various aspects of the different schools. Can anyone possibly imagine strategy making in any serious organization without mental and social aspects, without the demands of the environment, the energy of leadership, and the forces of organization, without tradeoffs between the incremental and the revolutionary? And can any strategy process be realistically pursued as purely deliberate or purely emergent? To deny learning is as silly as to deny control.

The need for multi-modal range and options is especially relevant under conditions of higher-order contingency which are practically challenging for contemporary organizations of every kind. This is why multi-modal, synthetic frameworks such as scenario-based planning and the dynamic capabilities framework find increasing acceptance in practice: they help organizations to draw on multiple modes of strategic engagement and to synthesize them in ways that help to address the challenges of increasing uncertainty and change. Mintzberg *et al* (1998) emphatically set out the theoretical challenge that must be faced in the field of strategy theory:

But, more importantly, we have to get beyond the narrowness of each school: we need to know how this beast called strategy formation, which combines all of these schools

and more, really lives its life. We need to ask better questions and generate fewer hypotheses—to allow ourselves to be pulled by the concerns out there rather than being pushed by the concepts in here. And we need to be more comprehensive—to concern ourselves with process and content, statics and dynamics, constraint and inspiration, the cognitive and the collective, the planned and the learned, the economic and the political. In other words, in addition to probing its parts, we must give more attention to the whole beast of strategy formation. We shall never find it, never really see it all. But we can certainly see it better.

The organizational self as the proper *subiectum* of everyday organizational strategy

Rigorous strategy theories are reductive in that the phenomenon of organizational strategy is always reduced to the study of a singular ideal-typical mode of accidental organizational behaviour. This is why the field of strategy theory is so amenable to taxonomic analysis. A major implication of focusing on a specific mode of organizational strategic behaviour is that it then becomes theoretically admissible to ignore *the being* that is behaving in that way, especially since such behaviour is taken to be accidental to that being. In this way, the ontological question of the nature of the behaving organization is bracketed off from theoretical consideration in rigorous strategy theory. In contrast, both the dynamic capabilities and the scenario-based strategy frameworks have *the firm*, *the enterprise*, and more generally, *the organization* as the locus of organizational strategy. This reveals another important conceptual difference between rigorous theory and the practically relevant frameworks we have been considering.

Dynamic capabilities are understood as characteristics of organizations which are irreducible to the characteristics of their human constituents. As Teece *et al* (1997) say: “the firm in our conceptualization is much more than the sum of its parts – or a team tied together by contracts.” The three primary capabilities which Teece (2007) identifies – sensing (and shaping) opportunities and

threats, seizing opportunities, and managing threats and reconfiguration – all operate at the organizational level and thus involve, in this case, “the firm” as the proper *subiectum* of strategy in the dynamic capabilities framework. Teece (2007) and Teece *et al* (1997) speak of “the firm” and “the enterprise” as a kind of being that is bounded and which disposes of capacities and meta-competences, as is evidenced in the following quotations:

The capacity an enterprise has to create, adjust, hone, and, if necessary, replace business models is foundational to dynamic capabilities.

Dynamic capability is a meta-competence that transcends operational competence. It enables firms not just to invent but also to innovate profitably (Teece, 1986; 2006).

Although the organizational entity is given primacy as the proper subject of organizational strategy, Teece (2007) does not ignore the role of managers and the “micro-foundations of dynamic capabilities – the distinct skills, processes, procedures, organizational structures, decision rules, and disciplines – which undergird enterprise-level” capacities.

In the intuitive logics scenario-based strategy framework we find that more explicit attention is paid to the question of the nature of the organization as the locus of strategy. According to Phadnis, Caplice, Singh and Sheffi (2014):

Scenario planning takes an open systems perspective on organizational strategy (Van der Heijden *et al*, 2002) treating organizations as interdependent on the environment. An organization's environment is the set of “variables not subject to complete control by the organization and hence not contained within [its] closed system of logic” (Thompson, 1967).

Van der Heijden *et al* (2002), in a chapter titled “How organizations think about the future”, posits organizational identity as the “intermediating mechanism” between the “external events observed by the organization, and the same organization’s actions”. This “filtering mechanism”, referred to as the “for us/not for us filter is related to how members of the organization see their joint identity.” The personification of the organization here bears a

striking resemblance to the personification that we also find in the descriptions of the dynamic capabilities framework, and more importantly to the ways in which practitioners personify the organization in strategic discourse.

These descriptions of organizational identity vacillate between conferring a unified actor-hood to “the organization” as something which thinks, observes and acts, and the disaggregation of organizational identity to the views of the members of the organization which are somehow collectivised into a “joint identity”. This conceptual balancing act between the organization as the unified subject of strategy, and individual strategists as the enactors of strategy is a feature of scenario-based organizational strategy. This is further illustrated by Van Der Heijden *et al* (2002) when they say:

Our research has consistently showed that the issue of whether a change in strategy leads the organization into unknown territory is a subjective judgement, made by the people who share in the strategic conversation. ... The key is to maintain consistency between the change option and the identity. ... The principle involved is redefining the aspirations of the organization at a higher, superordinate level, which can act as an umbrella under which both the new and the old can be consistently connected.

Here it is quite clear that “the organization” is construed as the proper *subiectum* of organizational strategy, as the “superordinate” “umbrella” under which organizational strategy is undertaken and changed by “the people who share in the strategic conversation”. Thus, organizational strategic change is understood to begin and end with *the organization* but is also understood to involve subjective judgement. In this way two ontological perspectives of organizational strategy are held open at the same time – something which confounds the extant taxonomies of organization theory (Burrell and Morgan, 1979) and is deemed to be a sin against the canon of theoretical rigour in strategy theory.

In the later development of the scenario-based strategy framework, we find an even greater emphasis on the organization as the proper subject of

organizational strategy. For Bradfield *et al* (2005), inspired by Emery and Trist (1965), “scenarios become meaningful only in the context of an understanding of the *organizational self*”. Since scenario planning crucially involves looking outward into the organizational environment, it requires a notion of the organization as a whole which is the locus of that particular organizational environment. In this case, Bradfield *et al* (2005) conceptualise the organizational self as the locus of the process of scenario-planning which the managers undertake: “thoughtful managers have powerful insights, albeit often intuitive, into the characteristics of the organizational self against which the scenarios can be made meaningful.”

The conceptual centrality of the organizational self in the scenario-based strategy framework points decisively the more general question of the nature of organizational strategic being. In the absence of the organizational self as the subject of strategy, as the *alter* of its own environment, no meaning can be generated through scenario-based planning no matter how many workshops are held with the managers. When strategy practitioners gather to consider organizational scenarios they do not begin with a clean slate as if *the organization* does not exist; indeed, the understanding of the organizational self as distinct from the selfhood of the practitioners is a crucial precursor to any practice of organizational strategy. We see this in Bradfield *et al*’s (2005) conceptualization of organizational being as a “living system” that has the “basic characteristic” of the “urge to survive and grow”. According to De Geus (1997), companies and other organizations are “living” beings that have an “essential character”, “identity” and “personality” which are irreducible to the characteristics of its individual human members. However, as is the case for Van der Heijden, this does not lead De Geus to deny or ignore the role of the managers and other human members of the organization. Rather, he proposes to hold both of these views of organization open at the same time while always

understanding that it is *the organization* that is the proper *subiectum* of organizational strategy.

In this vein, Ogilvy (2005) proposes a “new kind of science” which incorporates the tension between the deterministic necessity of scientific law and the freedom of desire in the narrative form, as a story of the conflict between “what *must* be” and “also what we *want*” (italics in the original). For Ogilvy (2005) this culminates in an “emergent subject, whether an individual, or a community”:

The only way to make sense of this struggle is to see it as the struggle of an individual or collective subject who *cares about what happens* against an indifferent realm of law that doesn't. (Italics in the original)

The synthesis of the ideal-typical modalities of organizational strategy in scenario-based thinking requires a notion of the organizational self as a *projected strategic being* to hold them together. The organic ontology permeates scenario-based strategy and this makes it clear that the intuitive logics framework is not a reductionist, mono-modal framework. A major aim of scenario-based strategy is to bring the futural organization and *its* distinctive schema of significance into view so that managers can understand and act upon *organizational* possibility. This points us directly to Heidegger's thinking of the futurity of being.

The hindsightedness of theory and the projected aheadness of practice

A third incongruity is discernable in the comparisons between rigorous strategy theory and the prominent frameworks of strategy. This incongruity lies in the difference between the temporal orientations of strategy theory and everyday strategy practice.

The basic idea of strategy throws into sharp relief the challenge of coming up with rigorous theories of organizational strategy which may also resonate with strategy practice. Understanding strategy as the organizational engagement

with the contingent future, and thus as a temporal phenomenon, means that after-the-fact access to the everyday moments of strategy provides only derivative representations of those dynamic moments which are not only de-contextualized but are also de-temporalized in the theoretical gaze. As a scientific field, organizational strategy theory proceeds epistemologically. It aims to theorise the phenomenon of organizational strategy on the basis of some or other objectification thereof. Yet, in objectifying the observed practice of strategy something crucial is lost.

Focusing theoretically on the actions and activities of strategy practitioners, on what they have already done, provides a *retrospective* view of strategy practice. This view runs in the opposite temporal direction to the definitively *prospective* practice of strategy which the practitioners are involved in as they seek to work out the organizational engagement with the contingent future. This is why avowedly retrospective theoretical methodologies, which operate on what has already occurred, are temporally out of kilter with the phenomenon of strategy. And since strategy theorists have no other access to organizational behaviour except in retrospect, their theories are always belated, doomed to follow the *minutiae* of strategic behaviour without being able to bring the fundamental organizational orientation towards the future back in.

In contrast to the hindsight of rigorous strategy theories, we find that the dynamic capabilities framework emphasises the futural orientation of organizations. As Teece *et al* (1997) say:

Deciding, under significant uncertainty about future states of the world, which long-term paths to commit to and when to change paths is the central strategic problem confronting the firm.

Moreover, Teece (2007) also describes the managerial orientation towards the future:

Because of uncertainty, entrepreneurs/managers must make informed conjectures about the path ahead. These conjectures become working hypotheses that can be updated as

evidence emerges. Once a new evolutionary path becomes apparent, quick action is needed. (Teece, 2007)

In the scenario-based strategy framework we find the same emphasis on the future and a scepticism towards the past as indicative of what is yet to come. Thus, Wack (1985a) says:

My thesis-on which agreement may be less general-is this: the way to solve this problem is not to look for better forecasts by perfecting techniques or hiring more or better forecasters. Too many forces work against the possibility of getting the right forecast. The future is no longer stable; it has become a moving target. No single "right" projection can be deduced from past behavior.

And, Duncan and Wack (1994) describe how managers are temporally aligned with the future orientation of the organization:

A more specific answer to the question, "Why scenarios?" is that they encourage the managers of a business to explicitly examine the strategies and options they choose for the success of the business unit under a spectrum of different conditions. Managers then have the opportunity to test drive their business plan through the landscape of several scenarios. The decision making process begins when the strategic plan and its implementation program are modified to take into account what was learned by testing it in possible future conditions. (Duncan and Wack, 1994)

Thus, whereas rigorous strategy theories always operate upon the phenomenon of organizational strategy in hindsight, both the dynamic capabilities and the scenario-based strategy frameworks are more congruent with the futural orientation, the projected aheadness, of everyday organizational strategy.

The practical admission of the question of organizational strategic being as an ontological unity

The critique of the modal incongruence and the temporal incongruence between strategy theory and strategy practice uncovers the reasons for the rigor-relevance gap and helps us to understand why it is so persistent. These differences are not trivial. They are fundamental differences which, when understood, point to ways in which the gap may be ameliorated.

It is apparent that both the dynamic capabilities and the scenario-based strategy frameworks cannot do without explicit notions of the organization as the proper subject of strategy. The increased attention to the characteristics of the organizational self makes sense in these frameworks given that they involve syntheses of multiple modes of the organizational strategic engagement; as more behavioural modes are brought into the synthesis, so the gaze is led to the nature of *the being* that disposes of such a range of behaviours. This feature of both frameworks is indicative of the everyday understanding of the organization as a the proper *subiectum* of organizational strategy. Thus, both frameworks admit the question of organizations as strategic beings in their own rights, and the scenario-based strategy framework goes further in positively pointing to the question of organizational strategic being as an ontological unity.

What I have come to call living companies have a personality that allows them to evolve harmoniously. They know who they are, understand how they fit into the world, value new ideas and new people, and husband their money in a way that allows them to govern their future. Those personality traits manifest themselves in behaviors designed to renew the company over many generations. Throughout, living companies produce goods and services to earn their keep in the same way that most of us have jobs in order to live our lives. (De Geus, 1997)

Chapter 5

Towards a hermeneutic phenomenology of organizational strategic being

The question of the relation between organization and strategy comes to the fore most clearly as an *ontological* question when organization is understood as a temporal phenomenon that always involves an orientation towards the future. The assertion of the temporality of organization, or organizing, is a definitive ontological point of departure of process perspectives of organization. It therefore makes sense to pay closer attention to process thinking in organization studies, and to the specific conceptual frameworks of organization-as-process since these contain explicit treatments of organizational temporality which include views on the relation between organization and the temporal dimension of the future.

In this chapter, we critically consider the treatments of the organizational engagement with the future in two prominent process perspectives and propose hermeneutic phenomenology as a more fitting philosophical perspective for understanding this crucial engagement. An overview of the process perspective in organization studies is given in Section 5.1. In Section 5.2, the Whiteheadian-inspired process ontology of organization is considered; and the Weickian sensemaking framework and the related notion of future-perfect thinking are considered in Section 5.3. Heidegger's early hermeneutic phenomenology is proposed in Section 5.4 as an ontological perspective that avails an alternative framing of organizational temporality such that primacy is accorded to the futural orientation of organizational being.

5.1. Process thinking in organization studies

Process thinking in western philosophy may be traced to the pre-Socratics and especially to Heraclitus of Ephesus who is regarded as an ancient progenitor of a thoroughgoing commitment to a processual ontology (Rescher, 1996; Chia, 1999; Bakken and Hernes, 2006). According to Rescher (1996):

Process metaphysics as a general line of approach holds that physical existence is at bottom processual; that processes rather than things best represent the phenomena that we encounter in the natural world about us.

Heraclitus's process metaphysics is counterposed to Parmenides universal substance metaphysics. Process views of reality troubled the thinking of both Plato and Aristotle, who nevertheless went in search of more timeless truths which Plato located in the realm of ideal forms, and which Aristotle located in the realm of substances. According to Rescher, early modern process philosophy is associated with Leibniz and Hegel; and both Darwin and Marx, who was inspired by Hegel's dialectic, are famously processual thinkers. In Rescher's historiography, process thinking in the 20th century is exemplified in philosophical pragmatism in the works of Peirce, James, and Dewey who were all convinced of the veracity of evolutionary thinking as a way to an alternative process philosophy. According to Rescher (1996):

For William James, time and the processes that unfold under its aegis are the central issues of metaphysical concern.

Alongside the development of philosophical pragmatism, it was Bergson (1859-1941) and Whitehead (1861-1947) who developed separate, comprehensive philosophical systems on the basis of a firm commitment to a process view of the world which they contrasted with the dominant substantialist view. In the light of the long history of process philosophical thought and its impressive list of proponents, it does not seem right to say that process thinking has been a minor movement. Yet, considered in historical

context, process thinking has indeed been on the periphery from where it bore a critical relation to dominant thinking. Process philosophical thinking has been a thorn in the side which has troubled substantialist views of the world since Heraclitus, although it has not displaced these substantialist views which remain dominant especially in the sciences.

In organization theory, the appearance of processual perspectives is a relatively recent occurrence that coincides with what may be called a contemporary turn to process thinking in the physical and social sciences and in the humanities, albeit as streams of research which are still somewhat peripheral to more dominant “substantialist” perspectives in those disciplines. According to Bakken and Hernes (2006): “Weick (1979) is an early contributor towards the theorizing of process in organization studies” and marks the beginning of “strong” process thinking (Rescher, 1996) aimed specifically at improving our understanding of organizational phenomena. In addition to Weick’s seminal sensemaking theory of organizing, a Whiteheadian-inspired process ontology of organization has also developed into a large and vibrant body of research which comes under the aegis of process organization studies (PROS).

These prominent processual perspectives of organization are both located more specifically in the field of organization theory and give rise to explicit conceptualisations which are considered below in more detail. The first is the ontology of organization which is inspired primarily, though not exclusively, by Whitehead’s process philosophy and Mead’s framing of temporality (Chia, 1999; Nayak and Chia, 2011; Hernes, 2014; Bakken and Hernes, 2006). The second is Weick’s sensemaking perspective which is inspired to a large extent by James’s social psychology and Schutz’s sociological phenomenology (Weick, 1979, 1995; Bakken and Hernes, 2006; Helin, Hernes, Hjorth and Holt, 2014). These frameworks are processual in the strong sense since they both involve an ontological commitment to a view of the world as universally processual. In strong process perspectives, everything that exists is taken to be

processual at bottom and may thus be reduced to process without remainder. Moreover, in the social sciences, they posit the reducibility of social entities “where entities, as far as they are seen to exist, are products of processes rather than existing prior to them” (Bakken and Hernes, 2006). Strong process perspectives eschew the weaker, “entitative” (Chia, 1999) view of process which is based on “the *a priori* assumption of the world as consisting of entities, whose interactions constitute processes” and which nevertheless remain “intact throughout their participation in the process” (Bakken and Hernes, 2006).

In process thinking generally, time and temporality are of central significance. As Rescher (1996) says:

The passing of time represents the perishability of the world, what Whitehead called the passage of nature. The perishability of the world is what creates its multiple possibilities of creating new forms. Bergson, Heidegger, Whitehead, and Mead all engage intensely with time ...

This is no different in the processual models and theories of organizational phenomena. In Chia’s (1999) early synopsis of the process view of organization, temporality is interwoven into all of the axioms he posits of the then nascent subfield of process organization studies (PROS). Nayak and Chia (2011), who draw on Whitehead, James, and Bergson in their conceptual synopsis of process philosophy in organization studies, say that “from a philosophical outlook, primacy is accorded to becoming over being, difference over self-identity, and time and temporality over simple location.” For Helin,*et al* (2014), who take a broader view of process organization studies and draw on a wider range of process thinkers, temporality is explicitly identified as one of the aspects of thinking about organization in processual terms.

Of particular relevance in this study is that the Weickian and Whiteheadian-inspired onto-epistemological frameworks, wherein temporality is of central importance, must account for organizational phenomena as involving the

temporal dimension of the future in an *ontologically inherent* way¹⁰. Thus, both include framings of organizational temporality and both conceptualise the organizational relation with the future in ontological terms.

5.2. Organizational temporality in the Whiteheadian-inspired process ontology

According to Helin *et al* (2014), early research in the process organization studies (PROS) fold draws largely from a small set of process philosophers and especially from the Whiteheadian process philosophy.

Process philosophy was originally a moniker for a small collection of philosophers including Alfred North Whitehead, Henri Bergson, and William James, and then extending back to Heraclitus.

According to Rescher (1996): “Whitehead has been the dominant figure in recent process philosophy.” Whitehead built his process philosophy from the ground up, so to speak, under the influence of Leibniz and Bergson. However, process organization studies has become a more diverse sub-field of organization studies wherein researchers draw on a wider range of conceptual resources availed in process philosophy and the processual approaches developed in the social sciences. Thus, although Whitehead’s process philosophy is still the most prominent touchstone, PROS does incorporate various other process philosophical perspectives. The specific ontological framework discussed here is derived from the work of process organization theorists who are committed to Whitehead’s process philosophy and to Mead’s framing of temporality.

¹⁰ This is not the case with extant process theories of strategy such as those offered, for example, by Burgelman, Pettigrew and Mintzberg. As we saw in Chapter 3, extant theories of strategy generally approach strategy as accidental to organizations rather than as ontologically inherent to them. Thus, for the purposes pursued in this chapter, we set aside further consideration of process theories of strategy.

Drawing primarily on Whitehead's process philosophy, Chia (1999) "pits a *metaphysics of change*, in which primacy is accorded to movement, change and transformation, against the still-dominant Parmenidean *metaphysics of substance* which elevates stability, permanence, and order." This is a shift from an "ontology of *being* which privileges outcomes and end-states" to an "ontology of *becoming* in which movement, process and emergence are emphasized". For Chia (1999), who rejects "epistemological realism in favour of constructivism/social constructionism", organization "is an essentially human accomplishment involving the deliberate 'slowing down' and fixing of reality." Here we find that organization and change are "intrinsically opposing tendencies" reminiscent of a dialectical process between the fixity of organization and the fluidity of change. However, in this view, organization is epiphenomenal since it is an emergent outcome, a temporary stabilisation, of the more basic underlying process of "inherent becoming and perishing".

Chia (1999) identifies "three enduring axioms" of the "process-metaphysical approach": a process epistemology, the logic of otherness; and a principle of immanence. Although a concern with temporality runs through all three axioms, it is in the axiom of immanence that we find an explicit framing thereof:

According to this principle of *immanence*, the past is immanent in the present and this fact implies that each outcome, each situation or state, always necessarily incorporates and absorbs the events of its past.

In this "constitution of the present by the past", "the present is not merely the linear successor of the past but a novel outcome of it".

But what of the future? In Chia's framing of temporality, "potentialities for the future" are both created and constrained in the present which carries the "weight" of the past. Each Whiteheadian actual occasion is "necessarily grounded in its past, but always projected towards a not-yet-knowable future."

The present is “loaded with possibilities” depending on the meanings that are made of the past in the present. Chia (1999) quotes Whitehead as follows:

The future is there in the present, as a general fact belonging to the nature of things. It is also there with such general determinations as it lies in the nature of the particular present to impose on the particular future which must succeed it. All this belongs to the essence of the present, and constitutes the future, as thus determined, an object for prehension in the subjective immediacy of the present. (Whitehead, 1948, p. 226, emphasis added)

In Whitehead’s philosophical system, the world is made up entirely of processual “actual occasions” rather than Aristotelian substances. Actual occasions are the basic “building blocks of reality” (Rescher, 1996) which are analogous to human experience and dispose of human capacities such as emotion, consciousness, and purpose, albeit in a lower grade form called “prehension”. As such, actual occasions “prehend” what goes on in their environments and are “living units of elemental experience.” Actual occasions are construed as thoroughly temporal in nature such that every actual occasion *necessarily* involves a past, present and future. In this framing of temporality, the past is understood as objective in the present, the present is understood as subjective, and the future is understood as objective in the present. Thus, temporality is framed as stretched out vertically in the present rather than in horizontal terms. That is, the temporality of actual occasions is not understood, in the first instance, as stretched out horizontally across the temporal dimensions of the past, the present and the future. Rather, both the past and future of each actual occasion are *objectively present* in every actual occasion. Chia (1999) quotes Whitehead in this regard:

The future belongs to the essence of present fact, and has no actuality other than the actuality of present fact. But its particular relationship to present fact is already realised in the nature of present fact. (Whitehead, 1948)

In the process of becoming, in the “passage” of actual occasions, the future of an actual occasion is always already fully immanent in its present actuality

which is fully inherited from the past. Thus, Whitehead's process philosophy emphasises the *actuality* of the present which "implicates" (Nayak and Chia, 2011) the past, over future *possibility* which is taken to be a derivative dimension of the process of becoming. The present actuality is an emergent product of the past and all future possibilities are objectively contained in, derived from, and ultimately circumscribed in the present actuality.

Chia translates the temporality of Whitehead's actual occasions to describe organizational phenomena:

Each organizational effect, such as is illustrated by these examples, bears the inevitable impress of preceding organizational assemblages of material and social elements, from which the present configuration has evolved, which, thereby both limits and enables the possibilities for future potential configurations to emerge. (Chia, 1999)

Thus, the evolutionary past and the future possibilities of an "organizational effect", which is Chia's conceptual analogue for Whitehead's actual occasion, are *immanent* in the present. Here we see again in the Whiteheadian-inspired framing of organizational temporality that future *possibility* is derived from within a *present actuality* which is the evolutionary, emergent result of the past.

Nayak and Chia (2011) also "outline the key principles and axioms of process philosophy" which they offer as underpinnings of a process perspective of organizational phenomena. Drawing on Whitehead, Bergson, and James, they explicate "three key features of a process philosophical orientation": an ontology of becoming, internal difference over identity, and, thinking in time. For Nayak and Chia, an ontology of becoming involves understanding that "[e]ntities such as individuals and organizations are theoretical reifications". That is, change is "not a mechanism that works on existing orders and things", rather, "reality *is* change". The axiom of internal difference, which references Heraclitus's assertion of internal difference against the dominant idea of the non-contradiction of identity, states that "[w]hat a thing is, as an individual

entity, then, is the result of [internal] difference and tension”. In Whiteheadian terms, actual occasions involve inner tensions which are constitutive for them. The immanent temporality of occasions is such an internal tension in the way that past, present and future are related. In the description of the axiom of “thinking in time” we find a clear statement of the temporality of processual becoming that Nayak and Chia (2011) associate with both Bergson and Whitehead.

... for process thinkers, the past and present interact. What we experience as pure presence is ‘the invisible progress of the past gnawing into the future’ (Bergson, 1911, p. 194, emphasis in the original). Hence, to think in time is to take the problem of the existence of the past in the present seriously; the past is immanent in the present. The past is not the present that once was, but is inextricably implicated in the present; ... So, far from being a mere dimension of time, the past is the synthesis of all time of which the present and the future are only dimensions.

To think genuinely processually is to explain how process leads to end-states, how becoming constitutes being, how difference leads to identity and how the past is implicated in the present.

Here we see again the derivative status of the future dimension in the Whiteheadian framing of temporality which is carried over into a process ontology of organization. The temporal framework here is one in which change is always underway but always runs from the causal immanent past to a derivative immanent future. As Helin *et al* (2014) say: “there is no continuity of future without continuity of past, nor is there change of future without a change of past”. Thus, in the Whiteheadian-inspired framing of organizational temporality, whereas the future dimension is taken to be ontologically inherent to all actual occasions, future possibility is entirely derivative from and dependent upon a present actuality which is the evolutionary result of a weighty past. Weber (2016) describes this framing of temporality as the “growing block theory of time” wherein the past and present have both ontological and epistemological priority over the future.

Drawing on Bergson and Mead, Schultz and Hernes (2013) also offer a description of the framing of temporality that underlies the prevailing process ontology of organization. For Schultz and Hernes, organizational temporality is described on the basis of:

a temporal perspective that views actors as operating in an ongoing present (Bergson 2007, Mead 1932), which means that the organization's future is continually enacted from past experience using materials available in the present (Mead 1932).

And they go on to say that:

Such a view directs focus toward the demands posed by the flow of time and the challenge of constructing the future from past experience.

For Hernes (2014), this framing of temporality follows from taking an “endogenous view” of the “becoming of the present-past-future relationship”. In signifying temporality as the *present-past-future* relationship, Hernes indicates the derivative status of the future relation which is understood as dependent upon the “materials of the present” and “the aspects of the past” that are brought forward and translated “into prospects for the future”. Hernes (2014) follows Mead in framing temporality as vertically stretched out in the “specious present” which contains “elements of the past and the future”.

For Mead, the present is the “locus of reality” (Flaherty and Fine, 2001); the present is not *determined* by the past, rather, the present *emerges* from the past by a process of *evolutionary* becoming. The crucial difference is that temporal emergence allows for unpredictable change and novelty whereas temporal determinism does not. Mead and other pragmatist philosophers were deeply committed to generalised Darwinian evolutionary thinking which emphasises the emergence of variation as a core principle of unpredictable change and novelty. However, the thing about variation in the Darwinian model is that it is ‘*blind*’ to the future (Mayr, 2002; Campbell, 1987). That is, the variations which account for change and novelty do not come about as a result of any view of the enhanced fitness that such variations might bestow in the future.

Moreover, for Hernes (2014) and Schultz and Hernes (2013), the emergent present supervenes upon the past in the sense that no change can occur in the present without some change of the past.

For Mead (in Hernes 2014), the extent to which we can think ‘the world to come’ differently from “the world that is” depends upon the extent to which we can rewrite “the world that has been” differently under the present circumstances. We proceed in “what is” from “has been” to “to come”. It is only by retrospectivity that we can be prospective – we reconstruct the present and future by reworking the past. Thus, the meanings of the past are interpretatively malleable and future prospects depend upon the extent of this malleability of past meanings under the circumstances in the emerging present. Thus, for Hernes, primacy is accorded to the present tethered to a more or less malleable but inescapable field of meanings of the past – and the relation to the future is derivative among the relations of organizational temporality.

On this view, ‘the future’ is never epistemologically available to our efforts in the present except as anticipations and in our imaginations. The only knowing that is available is what we know of the past, including what we know of the emerging present *as it comes to pass*. Thus, the temporal relations are ordered in the present from past to future as a *one-way road*. That is, the future emerges from the present, however, the future does not in any way exert an influence upon the present.

From the Whiteheadian-inspired PROS perspective, organizations and strategies are useful conceptual stabilisations of ongoing change, however, they are processual results, and are thus epiphenomenal. In this view, organization (as a verb) and organizational strategy must be explained in terms of a more basic substratum of micro-processual phenomena. Thus, the tendency is towards the investigation of micro-phenomena such as actual occasions and events and away from the entitative macro-phenomena such as

organizations, individuals and strategies that are taken to be exhaustively constituted by micro-processual phenomena.

In the light of the prevalent framing of temporality in the Whiteheadian-inspired process ontology of organization, it is no surprise that this perspective has not given rise to corresponding process theories of organization strategy. Indeed, in the PROS fold organization is understood as epiphenomenal and organizational strategy is thus understood as doubly epiphenomenal. Since epiphenomena cannot be a basis for rigorous theorization nor for thinking in ontological terms, the Whiteheadian PROS ontology is not a fitting philosophical perspective for a study of organizational strategy in ontological terms.

5.3. Organizational temporality in Weick's notions of sensemaking and future-perfect thinking

According to Bakken and Hernes (2006): "The thrust of Weick's empirical work lies in his seeing actions as central in the study of person-to-person interaction." Sensemaking is a conceptual framework for understanding organizing on the basis of the "fine grain" of "acting" (Weick, 1979). For Weick (1995):

To talk about sensemaking is to talk about reality as an ongoing accomplishment that takes form when people make retrospective sense of the situations in which they find themselves and their creations.

In this onto-epistemology of organizing, "organizational realities" are taken to have a "subjective origin" and may thus be reductively operationalised as the human behaviour that occurs in such contexts. Moreover, in the sensemaking framework, *acting* precedes *experience* and is thus the basic source of organizational meaning-making. As Weick (1979) puts it: "There is no such thing as *experience* until [someone] does something." In this view, the

experience of organizational structures, which is typically thought to precede and constrain human behaviour, may be reduced to acting. Even the organizational environment is understood in sensemaking as “put there by the organization” and may thus be understood in terms of its “subjective origins” in acting and as meanings that are enacted in the process of organizing.

If environments are enacted then there is no such thing as a representation that is true or false, there simply are versions that are more or less reasonable. (Weick, 1979)

Weick’s eschewal of the primacy of organizational knowledge as prior to acting, and his critique of the claim to prospective knowledge in orthodox strategic planning underpins the fundamental *retrospectivity* of organisational sensemaking theory.

For Weick (1979) “managers often know much less about their environments and organizations than they think”. Weick’s (1995) pejorative view of strategic planning, as based on “magical probes into the future”, expresses the suspicion that prospective knowing is deeply problematic as the epistemological basis for organizational strategy.

The dominance of retrospect in sensemaking is a major reason why students of sensemaking find forecasting, contingency planning, strategic planning, and other magical probes into the future wasteful and misleading if they are decoupled from reflective action and history. (Weick 1995)

For Weick, actors involved in organizing can only look back on past action to make meanings in the present of what has transpired, since “the future is actually indeterminate, unpredictable”. Thus, although Weick does not attend to the other theoretical modes of strategy, he critiques and rejects the strategy-as-knowing mode of strategy as untenable on epistemological grounds. This critique of deliberate, foresightful strategic planning is shared with Mintzberg, whose “definition of strategy as observed patterns in past decisional behaviour (that is, realised strategy = consistent behaviour) represents a sophisticated treatment of retrospect” (Weick, 1995).

Although Weick accepts the Bergsonian notion of the “pure duration” of experience in ontological terms, retrospective sensemaking is an “attentional” epistemology wherein “it is only possible to direct attention to what exists, that is, what has already passed”. In this, Weick follows Mead and Schutz in their strong philosophical commitment to a retrospective epistemology (Gioia, Corley and Fabri, 2002). As Weick (1995) says:

The idea of retrospective sensemaking derives from Schutz’s (1967) analysis of “meaningful lived experience”. The key word in that phrase, lived, is stated in the past tense to capture the reality that people can know what they are doing only after they have done it.

For Schutz (1970), “action” refers to a specific category of “subjectively meaningful experiences” or *conduct*; action is that kind of conduct “which is devised in advance, that is, which is based upon a preconceived project”. Conduct belongs to the class of “empirical behaviour” but “does not imply any reference to intent”, whereas *action* is intentional in that “it transforms the mere forethought into an aim and the project into a purpose”. Schutz distinguishes further between overt and covert actions, such that *overt actions* (which he calls “working”) are actions “in the outer world”, whereas covert actions involve the inner process of thinking.

For Schutz, overt action is the “most important” kind of conduct “for the constitution of the reality of the world of daily life”. Through overt action:

The wide-awake self integrates in its working and by its working its present, past, and future into a specific dimension of time; it realizes itself as a totality in its working acts; it communicates with others through working acts; it organizes the different spatial perspectives of the world of daily life through working acts.

Acting, in this Schutzian sense, involves full-fledged temporality, however, different kinds of overt acting involve different temporal frames of attention. Overt action which springs from “*in-order-to motives*” refer to the actor’s future “in the ongoing process of action”; whereas overt action which springs

from “*because motives*” refer to the actor’s past and is available to her in retrospection. The crucial distinction between these kinds of overt action is that ongoing action motivated by in-order-to-motives is “an essentially subjective category”, whereas action already performed and motivated by *because motives* is an *objective* category. This distinction is crucial from an epistemological point of view since it is overt action motivated by *because motives* that is:

Accessible to the observer who has to reconstruct from the accomplished act, namely from the state of affairs brought about in the outer world by the actor’s action, the attitude of the actor to his action. Only insofar as the actor turns to his past and, thus, becomes an observer of his acts, can he succeed in grasping the genuine *because motives* of his own acts. (Schutz, 1970)

However, even for Weick and Schutz, the subjective orientation towards the future cannot be ignored. Thus, the “concept of future perfect thinking” is posited by Weick (1995) as the means by which:

... sensemaking can be extended beyond the present. As a result present decisions can be made meaningful in a larger context than they usually are and more of the past and future can be brought to bear to inform them.

According to Gioia *et al* (2002), future perfect thinking occurs when “people envision a desired or expected future event and then act as if that event had already transpired, thus enabling a “retrospective” interpretation of the imagined event”. Thus, an aspect of the future orientation of sensemakers is also handled in sensemaking in what Schutz (1970) refers to as “thinking in the future perfect tense” and as “anticipated hindsight”. For Weick (1995), this means that “expectations are real” and can also be acted out, experienced and made sense of *in retrospect*, especially when such expectations are disconfirmed after acting.

Schutz (1970) acknowledges that future-perfect thinking, “depends on our knowledge at hand before the event, and therefore leaves open what will be

irrevocably fulfilled”. Thus, future contingency is not removed in future perfect thinking. Nevertheless, Schutz (1990) points out an important difference between past action and future-perfect thinking:

But there is a great difference between action actually performed and action only imagined as performed. The really accomplished act is irrevocable and the consequences must be borne whether it has been successful or not. Imagination is always revocable and can be revised again and again.

Schutz conceptually identifies those subjective actions that are available to a retrospective observer whether the observer is the actor herself or a theorist. It is this notion of *overt subjectively meaningful acts* that Weick takes as the phenomenal basis of sensemaking which he simply calls “acting” and which is objectively accessible only in retrospect whether as acts already performed or acts based on future perfect thinking.

In emphasising a vertical notion of temporality and the unavoidable retrospectivity of observation, the sensemaking framework conforms to the more secure side of the Aristotelian epistemological fold which we discussed in Section 3.3.1, and thus *avoids the in-principle contingency of futural ongoing action*. Following Schutz, this avoidance is not an *ontological* denial of the future-orientation of ongoing subjective action, rather, it is an *epistemological* reduction of human subjectivity to the security of what can be apprehended in retrospect. Thus, Weick (1995) points out that “the problem faced by the retrospective sensemaker is one of equivocality, not one of uncertainty”. In this sense, Weick’s sensemaker is a *partial* subject in virtue of its curtailed *temporality*, a subject whose ongoing active engagement with the future has been theoretically bracketed off for the sake of theorisation.

Crucially, retrospective sensemaking, in the emphasis on acting that has already occurred, collapses the distinction between *expectation* and *experience* in that expectation is construed as something which can be experienced in hindsight in the future perfect tense. Although we experience our covert

expectations as acts of thinking, expectations only become overt acts and can be made sense of when they are enacted. That is, images of the future, so long as they have not been enacted are covert and lie outside Schutz's epistemology. However, future-perfect thinking itself requires the "projection" (Schutz, 1970) of whole future states specified in their completion, which thus always involves a combination of prospectivity *and* retrospectivity. Although images of the future are available to retrospective sensemaking, they do not first come about purely on the basis of retrospect. Weick's subjugation of expectation to experience is problematic especially under conditions of higher-order contingency. Koselleck (2002), for example, identifies the growing "divergence between experience and expectation" due to increasing change and uncertainty. Such divergences are not apprehended in Weick's pared-down construal of expectation.

There is no doubt that organizational strategists are also Weickian sensemakers. However, strategists are also always more than sensemakers since they are, by definition, actively involved in the *ongoing* organizational engagement with the contingent future; the sensemaking theory does not include the ongoing active involvement of strategists in everyday organizational strategy. Strategic subjective action includes retrospective sensemaking and future perfect thinking, but cannot be reduced to these types of acting without sacrificing what is crucial to the very meaning of strategy. Although sensemaking is *ontologically* founded on a full-fledged notion of temporality, it takes its point of departure from an *epistemological* curtailment of the futural character of action. Thus, although the sensemaking framework is processual and involves a commitment to temporality, it is not a fitting processual framework for understanding organizational strategy, not even in subjective terms. As Inwood (1999) says:

The present of our awareness and action is never a durationless instant, but a stretch of time of indeterminate length. One cannot assign boundaries to the present, say

what someone is doing 'now', or decide what to do 'now', without taking account of the agent's future-oriented purpose.

The critique here of organizational sensemaking is not a dismissal of retrospectivity as definitive of the scientific temporal attitude. Rather, the argument is that the primacy of the epistemological reduction to retrospectivity that underlies sensemaking is just as untenable in an age of higher-order contingency as is the commitment to prospective knowing that we find in strategy theories in the knowing mode. Retrospective sensemaking and prospective organizational knowing, severally and jointly, are not sufficient for working out and sustaining the crucial organizational engagement with the future under the condition of higher-order contingency. Something more basic is implicated in the ubiquity and multi-modality of everyday organizational strategy.

5.4. Hermeneutic phenomenology as an alternative processual perspective on the temporality of organizational being

That organizational temporality involves a futural dimension is explicitly affirmed in the strong process perspectives we have considered. However, although the future dimension of temporality is taken to be *ontologically inherent* in these perspectives, it is nevertheless approached in deflationary and sceptical *epistemological* terms. In the Whiteheadian-inspired PROS perspective, the future dimension is taken to be derivative among the relations of organizational temporality, and organizational strategy is reduced to the status of an epiphenomenon that is only apprehended in retrospect. And in the sensemaking perspective, a decidedly retrospective theoretical gaze brackets off the ongoing future-orientation of strategists as the individual subjects of organizational strategy.

Yet, it is this very ambivalence which is suggestive of an opening for a more radical questioning of the temporal phenomenon of organizational strategy,

which we know to be a powerful, ubiquitous and definitive feature of our times. Interestingly, it is in the very expressions and treatments of the ambivalence towards strategy theory that we find references to Heidegger in both the PROS and Weickian academic discourses.

Weick (2003) and several PROS scholars (Chia and Holt, 2006; Chia and MacKay, 2007; Holt and Meuller, 2011; Bakken, Holt and Zundel, 2013) have written about organizational strategy and “living forward” (Weick, 2003) from what might be called a Heideggerian process view. At this intersection, which is occasioned by a process critique of strategy theory, we find process theorists turning to Heidegger’s philosophical thinking.

In Rescher’s (1996) influential synopsis, Heidegger and hermeneutic phenomenology do not feature in the historiography of process philosophy. However, in recent synopses of process organization studies more specifically, Heidegger is accorded a place, albeit a peripheral one. Helin *et al* (2014) claim Heidegger as a process thinker although he is not often included in the PROS discourse among the “small collection” of canonical process philosophers: “Whitehead, Bergson and James”. The demoted referencing of Heidegger’s thinking in PROS scholarship nevertheless suggests that he is at least identified as a philosopher that is attuned to thinking in processual terms. For Helin *et al* (2014), who take a wider view of process organization studies than the prevailing Whiteheadian-inspired view, the five aspects of thinking in processual terms are identified as “temporality, wholeness, openness, force, and potentiality”. These aspects are intertwined and are emphasised in different ways by different process thinkers. Heidegger figures in Helin *et al*’s (2014) discussion of the aspects of temporality, openness and potentiality, and they describe process philosophy in a way that resonates with the philosophical themes of Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology:

In many ways process philosophy is method – the nature of being is revealed in the disclosive forms of life by which beings are both given vent and fall away.

Heidegger's early philosophical project to describe the ontology of temporal being, involves a processual understanding of being (or better, *be-ing*, to accentuate the verb sense) from the start. Following "the Aristotelian presupposition that being is a process" (Schneider, 1928), Heidegger uses the word *being* as a "participle of a verb" and in the present-continuous tense to indicate the underwayness of *be-ing*. The conceptual common feature between sensemaking, the Whiteheadian process model, and hermeneutic phenomenology is the ontological commitment to the *temporality* of being, irrespective of how *being* is construed. Heidegger is a famous proponent of the temporality of being in the strong sense. Let us turn then to the ways in which the PROS theorists have referenced Heidegger.

The PROS referencing of Heidegger in the critique of strategy-as-practice

In their critical engagement with orthodox strategic planning and the strategy-as-practice perspective, Chia and Holt (2006) explore a "Heideggerian perspective" on organizational strategy as "practical coping". Chia and Holt assert the idea "that strategy may be *immanent* in everyday practical coping" which is indicative of a non-deliberate "dwelling mode"; a mode that is more basic than the "dominant building mode of strategizing that configures actors (whether individual or organizational) as distinct entities deliberately engaging in purposeful strategic activities". Thus, rather than approaching strategy as an accidental property of organizations (such as formal strategic plans and strategic goals), they propose approaching strategy as "*immanent* in every adaptive action"; as a non-deliberate "*modus operandi*" which occurs on an ongoing basis even in the absence of formal plans and explicit goals. In the orthodox building mode, strategy is understood as something to be deliberately constructed prior to acting, whereas in the dwelling mode, strategy is understood as inherent to acting. This marks a fundamental shift away from the "methodological individualism" which they associate with the strategy-as-

practice perspective, towards “a form of relationalism that acknowledges the latent primacy of relations and practices over the individual or organization”. Chia and Holt draw on Heidegger’s notion of *dwelling* to describe this more “primitive” and “mindless”, “relational state of absorbed involvement with [sic] the world”, which is a more basic phenomenal plane than that of the knowledge-infused praxis of the practitioner. For Heidegger, dwelling means “being-in” the world among entities which are encountered “and which belong to a world already discovered” (1962/BT). Human being involves dwelling among the things and others in the world in a way that precedes any subject-object dichotomy, or better, that precedes any subject-world dichotomy.

For Rescher (1996), a strong process view entails “an ontological reductionism that sees all physical things as reducible to physical processes.” This is contrasted with the weak view which is “a conceptual reductionism that sees the explanation of the idea of a “thing” as necessarily involving a recourse to processual ideas.” Analogously to the strong view, Chia and Holt (2006) argue for the dissolution of the centred subject of strategy-as-practice and her consciousness and intentionality too. What is left to the strategy-as-practice perspective after this reduction are just the “practical actions and relationships [which] precede individual identity and strategic intent” (Chia and Holt, 2006).

Here we see a departure from Heidegger’s treatment of the subject. Heidegger is famously critical of the notion of the *centred subject*, however, he does not seek the dissolution of the *subiectum* as such; rather, he interrogates and seeks to describe this *subiectum* ontologically so that it will not simply be taken as given. The problematic centred subject carries all kinds of epistemological burdens and is the product of unfounded ontological assumptions, whereas Heidegger’s *subiectum* minimally indicates the being beneath (*sub-*) which reality is thrown as it is (*-iectum*) (Backman, 2005). Indeed, Heidegger’s ontological description of human being, which he called *Dasein*, is understood

as a totality and not at all as reducible to some other phenomenal substratum. Thus, Heidegger critiques and displaces the centred subject, however, he does not dissolve it in the way that Chia and Holt (2006) call for.

Chia and Holt make a very specific selection from Heidegger's many concepts and descriptions. They draw only from the description of one of Dasein's ontological characteristics: that of "being-in", which Heidegger describes as dwelling in the everyday world in a pre-reflective way that remains unthematized. However, they do not follow Heidegger beyond his diagnosis of the everyday and into his conclusions. Who can blame them for this?

Nevertheless, if we take account of Heidegger's project further along, then we find that Chia and Holt arrive at conclusions that are incongruent with Heidegger's conclusions. Firstly, Heidegger offers a transcendental ontology of being rather than an immanentist ontology wherein the being of entities is dissolved into a more basic micro-processual substratum. Secondly, for Heidegger, human being-in-the-world involves a referential totality of significance, of myriad in-order-tos' and toward-whichs', that conditions the pre-reflective everyday attitude. Thus, although he construes everyday human being as pre-reflective, he does not construe it as *without* goals or intentions. Heidegger does not deny intentionality or consciousness, rather he seeks to describe what makes intentionality and consciousness possible in the first place. Thirdly, and more importantly in the context of this study, Heidegger holds fast to the description of Dasein's temporal existence as projected thrownness. That is, human being is thrown into a world that is not of its own making and in which it must cope. This thrownness is best described in first personal terms: as thrown I find myself already living a life that is projected in its orientation to the future and also returns in its orientation to the past. Thus, Heidegger seeks to thematise Dasein (the being of human beings) in a

hermeneutic phenomenological way that discloses the nature of this thoroughly temporal and *primarily futural being*.

In his early project, Heidegger discloses the ontological characteristics of Dasein which are *prior to* and are formally indicative of all Dasein's intentions and actions. Heidegger does not deny human consciousness, intentions and action. Rather, he seeks to get *beneath* these aspects of subjective life which are taken-for-granted in Husserl's phenomenology as the most basic ontological characteristics. Thus, Heidegger is sceptical of the notion of the conscious, intentional subject who stands over against the world, but he certainly does not *dissolve* the subject in overcoming this dichotomy in the notion of being-in-the-world. For Heidegger, Dasein is described essentially as a being for whom its own being is an issue for it; as a self that disposes of mineness (*Jemeinigkeit*). Dasein is not a primally *retrospective* being, nor is Dasein reducible to micro-phenomena. Rather, Dasein describes a projected temporal being that is an ontological totality.

Chia and MacKay (2007) offer a "revised understanding of strategy emergence" as a critical contribution to the "furtherance of [the] s-as-p perspective" of organizational strategy "towards some form of 'trans-individual' explanation that is not restricted to the mere 'activities' of strategy actors nor to the traditional emphasis on macro-structures and processes". Whereas the strategy-as-practice discourse refers "mainly to the purposeful activities of conscious agents", Chia and MacKay offer an alternative view of these as "trans-individual social practices". In this view "everyday strategy practices are discernable patterns of actions arising from habituated tendencies and internalized dispositions rather than deliberate, purposeful goal-setting initiatives". For them, such patterns are only discernable in retrospect.

Following Heidegger, Chia and MacKay question the Cartesian emphasis on "the essential purposefulness and intentionality of human action". However,

they depart from Heidegger in asserting that “ontological priority is accorded to an immanent logic of practice rather than to actors and agents”. This immanent logic “is the internalized practices or *schemata of action* (or what Bourdieu, 1990, calls *habitus*) that are the real ‘authors’ of everyday coping action”.

Consequently, it is the unconsciously acquired practice-complexes that generate the possibilities for strategy, not so much individual consciousness and intentionality. (Chia and MacKay, 2007)

Instead of a focus on the activities and talk of individual strategists, they propose that organizational strategy practice be operationalised in terms of “the organizational history and situation, cultural mediation, individual socialization, internalized habits, mannerisms, and tendencies” that shape strategic outcomes. That is, strategy emerges from these underlying processes and the ways in which they get grooved into ways of doing things and is thus understood as an emergent property of a trans-individual immanent logic of practice. In this way the individual strategist and her activities and utterances become secondary epiphenomena of the underlying logic of strategy practice.

Weick’s referencing of Heidegger on the conundrum of how to theorize living forward

Weick (2003) addresses the Kierkegaardian tension in life that “must be understood backwards” yet “must be lived forwards”; and he turns primarily to Heidegger’s philosophical thinking in order to do so. Interestingly, he traces the theory-practice “disjunction” to this very tension in a paper titled “Theory and Practice in the Real World” (Weick, 2003). Weick’s aim in this paper is to find a moment of congruence between theory and everyday practice as a way to address the disjunction.

To this end, Weick contrasts the hindsightedness of theorization with Heidegger’s description of “living forward as a condition of *thrownness*”.

“Thrownness is a mixture of unknowability, unpredictability, and enactment” (Weick, 2003) which is definitive of living forward in practice. When it comes to what theorists can know of practice in its thrownness, Weick is an epistemological sceptic. Even though he asserts, and indeed has demonstrated, that organizing can be explained and even understood in retrospect, this is not tenable for the study of the ongoing future-oriented acts of organizing. As Weick (2003) says:

Most of all, thrownness reminds analysts that practice is unfolding, fluid, ongoing, shifting, holistic, and dynamic, which means that static structural explanations such as those associated with institutional theories may widen the theory-practice gap rather than bridge it.

Thus, the worry is that “we are left with only sensemaking” as a means for theorizing human action, which, since it is a retrospective epistemology, cannot serve to apprehend the thrownness of practice.

However, Weick finds a moment of confluence when ongoing, thrown practice also involves retrospect. That is the moment when the ongoing, pre-reflective flow of practice is interrupted and the practitioners themselves have to stop and reflect on what has transpired. In these surprisingly frequent moments of what Heidegger calls breakdowns, practitioners become retrospective observers of their own past actions. Interruptions of practice bring the practical attitude into temporal alignment with the retrospective theoretical attitude.

In these moments of epistemological alignment, the theory-practice gap is narrowed since both theorists and practitioners experience them in hindsight. Weick is modest in avoiding the claim that the gap is *overcome* in the study of interruptions of practice. As Weick (2003) says:

During an interruption, forward living reaches less far ahead and backward explanation lags less far behind.

Weick describes this confluence of theory and practice further in terms of Heidegger’s notion of the ready-to-hand. In the ongoing flow of practice,

people act and experience in “the ready-to-hand mode of engagement” which according to Heidegger “is not grasped theoretically at all” (1962/BT). However, in moments of interruption this practical experience “changes into an *unready-to-hand* mode” when the practical gaze is turned backward and comes into alignment with the retrospective theoretical gaze.

Like the PROS scholars (Chia and Holt, 2006; Chia and MacKay, 2007), Weick also finds Heidegger’s description of pre-reflective, everyday being-in-the-world compelling as a way to address difficult theoretical problems. However, in similar fashion to the PROS scholars’, Weick draws selectively from Heidegger’s thought and engages with a few specific and preliminary notions rather than following Heidegger further along the analytic of Dasein that is undertaken in *Being and Time*. This selective referencing of Heidegger is not in itself a problem given Weick’s greater indebtedness to Schutz’s sociological phenomenology of subjective action, and by implication to Husserl’s phenomenology of subjective consciousness.

However, it should be noted here that Heidegger’s description of the everyday as a pre-reflective mode of engagement is directly counterposed to the primacy that Husserl accords to subjective intentional consciousness. Does Weick not undermine his own Schutzian philosophical underpinnings in admitting Heidegger’s notion of pre-reflective thrownness? The answer to this question lies in understanding that Weick’s primary concern as a theorist is *epistemological* rather than ontological. Weick (2003) draws on Heidegger’s ontological descriptions *for sake of* theorization. And in doing so he remains within the bounds of Schutz’s retrospective epistemology of human action which is defined in Husserlian terms as conscious and intentional action. Thus, Weick does not and cannot import Heidegger’s ontological notion of the ready-to-hand mode of everyday engagement into the sensemaking framework; indeed, this mode is taken by Weick to be beyond the epistemological reach of theorization. Rather, Weick finds the moment of inflection when this usual

ready-to-hand mode switches over into an “unready-to-hand” *reflective* mode which may then be characterised in Schutzian terms as action that is observable in retrospect.

The procedure that Weick uses here is a pared down version of the broader epistemological procedure that Schutz uses to carve out a phenomenal domain of subjectively meaningful action that can be approached scientifically. Schutz (1970) distinguishes between the unreflective and reflective modes of living, and proceeds to categorially zoom in on the reflective mode that gives rise to “phenomenal experience” which is only apprehended in retrospect. By drawing on Heidegger, Weick brings the interruptions of the unreflective practical mode into the domain of reflective “phenomenal experience” as a way to narrow the theory-practice gap.

Weick does not ‘cross the floor’ and go from Schutz and Husserl to Heidegger; instead, he combines Heidegger’s notions of thrownness and the ready-to-hand to find the *exception* to these ontological rules which can thus be brought into the Schutzian retrospective epistemology. Thus, Weick’s sensemaking epistemology is expanded by drawing on Heidegger but still remains intact and within the brackets of Schutz’s epistemology and Husserl’s ontology.

Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology as an alternative processual approach to the phenomenon of organizational strategy

Although both are strongly processual, the sensemaking framework and the Whiteheadian-inspired process ontology (henceforth called the PROS ontology) differ in fundamental respects. The sensemaking framework is theoretical, whereas the PROS ontology goes beneath the theoretical. The sensemaking framework incorporates a retrospective framing of temporality that brackets off futural “living forward” by an epistemological reduction; whereas in the PROS ontology a full-fledged temporality is posited which includes the future dimension but relegates it to derivative status. Sensemaking

theory proceeds from subjective consciousness, whereas in the PROS ontology the subject is dissolved into a “trans-individual” micro-processual substratum. The domain of immersed practice which the PROS perspective emphasises in ontological terms is the very domain which Weick excludes in epistemological terms. And, whereas sensemaking affirms the intentionality of action, the PROS ontology has no place for it. In the light of these basic differences it is interesting that both parties turn to Heidegger’s philosophical thought.

However, in drawing on Heidegger’s expansive philosophical thinking, it is also not surprising that they would do so in different ways. Apart from the basic differences between them, the breadth, depth, and turns of Heidegger’s works also ensures this. Weick’s take on Heidegger differs in important respects from that of Chia and Holt (2006), Chia and MacKay (2007) and Hernes (2014). Firstly, although Heidegger’s notion of thrownness is referenced by both parties, they interpret it differently. Hernes (2014) draws on Heidegger’s notion of thrownness, and goes on to describe the challenge facing organizational leaders on this basis as that of “articulating how the future makes sense in relation to the past”. According to Schultz and Hernes (2013):

Indeed, process theorists argue that we are our pasts (Hernes 2007, p. xv). “The past,” however, is open to interpretation, as it is conditioned by the situation from which it is viewed (Mead 1934; Weick 1993, p. 635). (Schultz and Hernes, 2013)

This interpretation of thrownness leaves out the crucial meaning of thrownness for Heidegger as also about being thrown *ahead* and as *projected* into the future. In the PROS framing of temporality, the futural dimension of thrownness is secondary, whereas for Heidegger it is primary. In contrast to Hernes’ interpretation, Weick (2003) interprets thrownness in way that is consonant with Heidegger’s thinking, however, this leads Weick to put thrownness beyond the ken of theorization. Secondly, whereas meaning does not feature in the referencing of Heidegger from the PROS perspective, it

remains central in Weick's thinking of the opposed directionality of theoretical and everyday temporalities. In this, Weick is more consonant with hermeneutic phenomenology in remaining in the register of meaning. However, following Schutz, Weick accords epistemological primacy to *acting* as the narrower basis of meaning, a process he calls retrospective sensemaking. This follows directly from the emphasis that we find in Husserl's phenomenology of intentional subjective consciousness, which Heidegger critiques and departs from decisively. Thirdly, whereas the PROS reading of Heidegger leads to the dissolution of the subject without remainder, Weick (2003) reads Heidegger in a way that retains the subject and which leads him to thematise this subject as two "modes of being", as *hindsighted sensemaker*, and as *thrown practitioner*. The sensemaking and PROS perspectives do not take organizational strategy seriously as a futural phenomenon. That alternative understandings of organizational strategy are worth pursuing is suggested in Kornberger's (2016) critique of strategy theory for not paying due attention to time and temporality. Kornberger (2016) provides a different take on the temporality of strategy from that taken in extant strategy theory. For Kornberger, "the future does not exist independently of the present" and he thus posits a vertical notion of temporality which, as we saw, also underpins Weick's sensemaking and the Whiteheadian PROS framework. However, Kornberger points out the paradox of imagining and speaking of the future which, although it does not exist as such, "holds power over us nonetheless" and he quotes Javier Marias to express this power:

perhaps the future has more influence and imposes more obligations on us than the past, the unknown more than the already known, the as-yet-untried more than the tried and rejected, the still-to-come more than what has already happened, the possible more than what has already been. (Marias, 2005)

Kornberger calls for a revision of the simplistic, "linear sequencing of past-present-future" which implicitly informs much of strategy theory. For Kornberger, "[s]trategy construction reverses the arrow of time" and the future

is “a present future, a here-and-now imagined future that causes people to act in one way or the other”. Although Kornberger’s description of imagined futures is consonant with Weick’s future perfect thinking, it differs from Weick in bringing in the possibility that imagined futures have causal efficacy over human acting in the present. To use Kornberger’s terms: this is the possibility of a temporal flow which runs ‘back’ from the present future to influence the present.

The perspective on the future that Marias asks about may thus be counterposed to the retrospective framings of temporality in the sensemaking and Whiteheadian process frameworks. In sensemaking theory, as in the PROS ontology, ‘the future’ cannot affect the past or the present in any way since the future emerges from the present actuality which is an emergent accretion of the past. This framing of temporality as *a one-way flow* is a central assumption of the generalized Darwinian theory of evolution that is among the philosophical antecedents of both sensemaking theory¹¹ and the PROS ontology¹². In evolutionary theory, evolutionary change occurs as an ongoing process of “blind-variation-and-selective-retention”, where the variations occur in a way that is *blind* to the future efficacy of those variations (Mayr, 2002).

Marias wonders about the force of the future *beyond* what we see and know of it in the present. That is, Marias is not asking only about the future perfect images that performatively inform and shape human behaviour in the present; he is asking more radically, about our basic orientation towards the ineradicably contingent future which impinges on the present in decisive ways. Marias is asking about the power of *possibility over actuality*.

¹¹ Weick (1979) is explicit about his commitment to generalised evolutionary thinking as a point of departure for his sensemaking research programme.

¹² James and Whitehead, but especially Mead, are well-known for their commitment to evolutionary thinking.

This questioning points to a decisive theme of Heidegger's philosophy: *the ontological priority of possibility over actuality*. There is an affinity among the philosophers that are drawn upon by process theorists of organization and Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology. Like Whitehead, Mead, Bergson and James, Heidegger is famously critical of traditional metaphysics and eschews the Aristotelian substantialist ontology. Thus, all of these philosophers proceed instead from an ontological commitment to the *temporality of being*. However, Heidegger goes further in his eschewal of the claim, which underlies traditional metaphysics and still lingers in Whitehead's and Mead's thinking, that the *present actuality* provides comprehensive access to 'Reality'.

Indeed, it is Heidegger who is credited with coming up with this radical reversal. For Heidegger, the full extent of human being resides neither exhaustively nor primarily in its *present actuality*. Rather, since it is a *futural* being to begin with, it is Dasein's ontological *possibility* that marks the full arc of Dasein's being, not its present actuality. Ontological possibility should not be understood as determinative of what could happen but rather as a most expansive *formal indication* that describes the outermost limits of what it means to *be* human being. To look at human being only in terms of its present actuality necessarily gives a partial representation of this futural and historical kind of being. In this way, the futurity of Dasein is ontologically prior to and formally indicative of its present actuality. Inwood's (1999) entry on *possibility* in his Heidegger Dictionary says that:

'Possibility' is the possibility open to [Dasein]: 'Dasein is not something present-at-hand which possesses its ability to be something as an extra; it is primarily being-possible. Dasein is always what it can be, and in the way in which it is its possibility' (BT, 143). Hence Heidegger alters the traditional, Aristotelian order of priority among the 'modalities': Higher than actuality stands possibility" (BT, 38).

Heidegger's thinking is drawn upon in the sensemaking and PROS discourses in ways that merely illustrate and support the prior philosophical commitments that already underpin these discourses. Yet, scholars in both discourses turn to Heidegger in moments of ambivalence and difficulty about the meaning of strategy and about life lived forward. This is suggestive that Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology, rather than being a merely rhetorically useful stock of isolable notions, presents a genuine alternative to the extant retrospective process perspectives of organization.

For Richardson (2012), Heidegger's interpretation of the underlying structure of Dasein may be understood as a "schema". Thus, the analytic of Dasein avails a schematic analogue for approaching the question of the futurity of organizational strategic being – the holistic *subiectum* of organizational strategy - as an ontological unity. As Heidegger says:

Every inquiry is a seeking. Every seeking gets guided beforehand by what is sought. Inquiry is a cognizant seeking for an entity both with regard to the fact that it is and with regard to its Being as it is. (1962/BT, p24)

Hermeneutic phenomenology avails an ontological approach to the temporality of organizations as *futural beings* that are inherently strategic in that they are always engaged with the contingent future for the sake of the significant.

Part II

The interpretative description of the futurity of organizational strategic being as the ontological basis of organizational strategy using Heidegger's analytic of *Dasein* as a schematic analogue

Looking back on Part I

In Part I of this thesis, comprising chapters 2 to 5, the conceptual ground was prepared for addressing the question of organizational strategic being as an ontological unity. Let us look back over the ground we have covered to get an overview of the argument thus far with the benefit of the notions and terms at our disposal.

In Chapter 2, we found that the *bare idea* of strategy – which is defined as *the engagement with the contingent future for the sake of the significant* – does not and cannot come into being as a phenomenon without a *subiectum* of strategy. Strategy *as such* is not something which can stand on its own as a phenomenon. A being which is being strategic is necessary for the coming into being (*Wesen*) of the basic *idea* of strategy as the *phenomenon* of organizational strategy. The *subiectum* of strategy does not refer to a centred Husserlian subject, rather, following Heidegger, it formally indicates the *being* beneath which strategy is thrown in its appearing in the world. In the theories and in the practice of organizational strategy, an organizational *subiectum* is always identifiable. Thus, organizational strategy is a phenomenon that is understood to be forged in the necessary relation between strategy and the *subiectum* of strategy. However, the nature of this relation is construed in fundamentally different ways in theory and in practice, and this is an underlying cause of the rigor-relevance gap in strategy theory. That the relation between strategy and

organization has ontological implications, becomes clearer when organizational being is understood in terms of its full-fledged temporality. If organizations are temporal beings that are stretched out across the temporal dimensions of past, present and future, then strategy, as the engagement with the future, springs from and is conditioned in organizational being. Thus, we saw how the question of *organizational strategic being* arises most clearly when organizational being is approached as a temporal kind of being that disposes of the engagement with the future as an ontologically inherent characteristic. Hence, the focal question of this study: *what is the nature of organizational strategic being as an ontological unity?*

In Chapter 3, we saw that in the field organizational strategy theory, strategy is rigorously approached as an *accidental* behavioural property of some organizations and not at all as *inherent* to organizational being. It is by this field-wide, pre-theoretical assumption that the phenomenon of organizational strategy is separated from organizational being and then analytically dissected into the various ideal-typical modes of organizational strategic behaviour that cleaves the field into different mono-modal perspectives. In strategy theories, the organizational *subiectum* of strategy is always identifiable but is ignored for the sake of rigorous theorization on the basis of one of the four modes of strategic behaviour. Thus, the possibility of a deeper connection between strategy and organizational being is elided and organizations are never approached theoretically as inherently *strategic beings* in an ontological sense. It is this current, mono-modal, behavioural basis of scientific rigor which explains the elision of the question of organizational strategic being. By critiquing the assumption that strategy is accidental to organizations, and by raising and addressing the question of organizational strategic being as an ontological unity, the hope is to show how the current basis of rigour in the field of organizational strategy theory may be revised.

In contrast to strategy theory, we saw in Chapter 4 that strategy is approached in *practice* as normatively necessary and of existential relevance to contemporary organizations. This is reflected in the ubiquity of organizational strategy in an age of higher-order contingency. Moreover, to the consternation of theorists, strategy practitioners unproblematically refer to and even reify the organization as a personalized subject in its own right. We see this too in corporate law. Strategy practitioners in organizations strategize explicitly, and for the most part, for the sake of ‘the organization’ as the proper *subiectum* of organizational strategy. Whether as individuals or as a group, human strategists in organizational settings do not firstly and mostly undertake organizational strategy for their own personal sakes. Indeed, in many cases, doing so would be punishable by law. Organizational strategy is the *organisational* engagement with the contingent future for the sake of what is significant to *that organization*. Therefore, organizational strategy is taken in this study to be irreducible to the behaviour of human strategists. That is, the proper *subiectum* of organization strategy is taken in this study to be *organizational being*, not human strategists. When organizational strategists strategize, they always presume the existence of an organizational being as the prior *subiectum* of strategy. This is borne out in the emphasis on organizational being as the locus of strategy which we found in the multi-modal frameworks of strategy which have been taken up in practice. Scenario-based strategy and the dynamic capabilities framework are leading examples of practically relevant frameworks which point decisively towards organizational being as the *subiectum* of strategy.

However, these practical understandings of organizational strategy are not underpinned by a *thematic* thinking of organizational strategic being. Thus, while the synthesis of the behavioural modes of strategy undoubtedly leads to greater practical relevance, it also sacrifices theoretical rigour in the process. That is, the rigour-relevance gap in strategy theory cannot be addressed merely

by a synthesis of the behavioural modes of strategy theory. The current behavioural basis of rigour in the field of strategy theory needs to be revised.

In Chapter 5, we saw how the question of organizational strategic being as an ontological unity comes to the fore most clearly when organization is understood as a temporal kind of being. In the light of this, we considered extant processual perspectives of organization: the Whiteheadian-inspired process ontology of organization, and Weick's sensemaking theory of organization. These prominent processual frameworks of organization, which do indeed take temporality seriously, nevertheless involve framings of temporality wherein the ongoing organizational engagement with the future is understood either as a derivative temporal dimension of processual change (in the Whiteheadian PROS ontology), or as theoretically inscrutable (in the sensemaking theory of organization). As a result, in these primarily *retrospective* process frameworks, organizational strategy is construed either as a derivative epiphenomenon, or as involving conduct which cannot be theorised since it is not observable in retrospect. This exposes the lack of a processual ontology of organizational being as *futural* and as *inherently* strategic.

Yet, it is this very lack which troubles the process theorists and leads them to turn to and borrow from Heidegger's philosophical thinking, albeit in a manner that leaves their own perspectives unaffected thereby. Hermeneutic phenomenology is thus proposed as a more fitting philosophical perspective for addressing *organizational strategy* in a way that attends to it as a primarily futural phenomenon that is *ontologically* implicated in organizational being.

Chapter 6

The futurity of Dasein

Self-projection upon the ‘for-the-sake-of-oneself’ is grounded in the future and is an essential characteristic of *existentiality*. *The primary meaning of existentiality is the future.*

Heidegger, 1962/BT

In this first chapter of Part II, we consider the notion of futurity in the context of Heidegger’s early philosophical project. In Section 6.1, an overview is given of this seminal project. In section 6.2, the analytic of Dasein is described with an emphasis on the interpretations of Dasein’s futurity.

6.1. An overview of Heidegger’s early philosophical project

In Section 2.3 a broad description is given of the hermeneutic phenomenological approach used in this study, and in Section 5.4 hermeneutic phenomenology is proposed as an alternative to extant process perspectives in Organization Theory. In this section, we delve more deeply into the descriptions and interpretations that Heidegger gives as implications of a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to finding out “the meaning of being” (Richardson, 2012) – “*das Erfragte*” (1962/BT) of his early project. The emphasis here is on this philosophical project which is “crystallized in the magnum opus *Being and Time*, published in 1927” (Richardson, 2012). *Being and Time* marks the literary culmination of a philosophical project which Heidegger pursued from the early 1920s. Kisiel and Sheehan (2007) trace “the first public airing of some of the most central themes of *Being and Time*” to Heidegger’s lecture entitled “The Concept of Time” which was delivered in

1924. The contrast between this lecture and an earlier 1915 lecture on time, “The Concept of Time in the Science of History”, “while evidencing Heidegger’s early fascination with the concept of time, also reveals the distance that separates his 1915 understanding of time and history from the one that would find expression a dozen years later in *Being and Time*.” (Kisiel and Sheehan, 2007).

Although understood as having “two main stages or phases” inflected by a “turning” around the mid-1930s (Richardson, 2012), the sense of the early Heidegger that is used here should not be taken in strictly chronological terms, nor should it be taken as a project which is limited to a single work such as *Being and Time*. For example, the essay titled “The Question Concerning Technology”, which was delivered as a lecture in 1953, is nevertheless “rooted in his very earliest phenomenological attempts to elucidate the meaning of being and human existence” (Ruin, 2010) and shows that Heidegger’s turnings should not be taken to indicate the relinquishment of his early philosophical project. Thus, a number of Heidegger’s works are taken to form a constellation with *Being and Time* at its crux, and which are taken together in this study as constituting Heidegger’s early project.

The idea here is not to describe Heidegger’s early project exhaustively. Albeit uncompleted in pursuit of the meaning of being in general, the early project does deliver a complex and coherent ontico-ontology of human being-in-the-world which in its full extent and intricacy is beyond the scope of this study. However, it is also not cogent, for the same reasons, to try to carve out the notion of futurity from this philosophical complex as a notion which can be excised and considered in isolation.

Heidegger’s early project may be described in *précis* as an attempt to discover the meaning of being in general (*das Erfragte*) by first interpreting the ontological structure of temporal human being-in-the-world. Thus, we focus

on the interpretations of Dasein, the being “which is interrogated” as “*ein Befragtes*” (1962/BT), that is the centre of attention in Being and Time. In doing so we attend especially to the ways in which the temporality of Dasein is described. This puts us in a position to bring out the ways in which the futurity of Dasein is thought and described in the successive rounds of the hermeneutic circling which Heidegger undertakes.

Heidegger undertakes a hermeneutic phenomenology of the *temporal being* of human beings, a task which he calls “the analytic of Dasein”. Heidegger distinguishes hermeneutic phenomenology from Husserl’s phenomenology and approaches this task from a commitment to the full-fledged temporality of human being rather than as a merely present actuality. Heidegger describes Dasein as being-in-the-world and so also reverses Husserl’s reduction which brackets off the world. The aim in carrying out this task is to interpret and describe the ontological structure of Dasein in terms of its most basic characteristics. As a totality, this ontological structure is prior to and thus conditions *all* other characteristics of human being including consciousness and intentionality, and all other concrete behaviours and properties of human beings in a formally indicative way. In this way, Heidegger overcomes Husserl’s dichotomy of subject and world and discloses the ontological structure of Dasein which underlies both the theoretical and everyday practical attitudes. Thus, Dasein also ontologically *precedes* the theory-practice disjunction.

According to Davis (2010), the analytic of Dasein proceeds from three conceptual points of departure which are claimed as crucial. Firstly, Heidegger identifies time in traditional metaphysics “as the horizon of every understanding of and interpretation of being” (1962/BT). However, the ways in which being is thought in terms of time in this tradition is critiqued as narrow and constrained to “presence”, “the present”, and “present actuality”. Against the prevailing metaphysics of being as “constant presence”, a curtailed

temporality exemplified in Aristotle's notion of substance as the meaning of being, Heidegger posits a more full-fledged understanding of the temporality of human existence which "is not simply immersed in the present, but also lives out towards the future and back towards the past" (Davis, 2010). Thus, Heidegger describes a full-fledged notion of temporality which incorporates all three temporal ecstases of Dasein's existence: its ecstatic "standing out" into future, past and present. In this way, Heidegger introduces into ontology and phenomenology a consideration of past and future – or better, of the past-ness and future-ness of Dasein - which the traditional metaphysics of presence elides completely.

Secondly, Davis (2010) says that for Heidegger, Dasein "is the site of the occurrence of being" – a site in and through which to approach the meaning of being in general. It is a peculiar feature of human being that its own being is an issue for it and this indicates that Dasein is involved in a privileged connection with being in general. An interpretation of temporal human being thus gives access to the meaning of being in general. Hence, the project in search of the meaning of the being of beings must first go through an interpretation of Dasein. It is the interrogation of Dasein's ontological structure that is the aim of the analytic of Dasein.

Thirdly, for Heidegger, "being never reveals itself completely" (Davis, 2010); rather, the truth of being involves "a twofold event of revealing/concealing". This is in contrast to the "epistemological demand for certainty" which is associated with the Husserlian assumption of the immediate givenness of phenomena to human intentional consciousness as constant presence. For Heidegger, the descriptive interpretation of phenomena is a process of discovery to be approached with some scepticism; phenomena must be thought in terms of "their appearing" as phenomena rather than focusing on phenomena as "that which appears" (Figal, 2010). For Husserl, who brackets off the world, the appearing of phenomena occurs entirely in human consciousness, whereas

for Heidegger the appearing of phenomena occurs in Dasein as being-in-the-world. An important difference then is that Husserl takes phenomena as occurring ‘in time’ and as appearing as a present actuality to human consciousness, whereas for Heidegger the appearing of phenomena is in the clearing (*Lichtung*) which is opened up in Dasein’s very being as a thoroughly temporalized kind of being that “ek-sists” simultaneously across the temporal ecstases of past, present and future. Davis’s (2010) synopsis reveals not only the centrality of temporality in Heidegger’s early project, but also that the commitment to the temporality of *being* is a point of departure for that project. Another synoptic view of Heidegger’s early project is the one we find in the report (Kisiel and Sheehan, 2007) of a lecture that he delivered in 1924 entitled “The Concept of Time”. According to Kisiel and Sheehan (2007), this occasion marks the “first public airing of the most central themes of Being and Time itself” which are laid out with “brevity” and “hard-core simplicity”. Heidegger begins by analysing Aristotle’s notion of time as “that within which events take place and run their course”, and the modern scientific notion of time as having “the character of measuring” time in terms of the uniform and homogenous units of clock time. These notions of time, which are independent of human being and the human experience of time, when they are thought in relation to human being, give rise to new ontological questions: “do I dispose over the being of time?”, “am I myself the now and is my Dasein time?”, “or is it ultimately time itself that provides itself with the clock in us?”

Heidegger’s response draws on Augustine’s insight that the “disposition that remains” towards things which change in time is rooted in Dasein. The word Heidegger uses for this disposition is *Befindlichkeit*: the state of being of finding oneself already disposed towards time and change, which is prior to the measurement of time and thus leads to the new questioning of time as ontologically implicated in human being.

For Kisiel and Sheehan, the “nub and guiding thread” of the lecture is the movement

from the formal indication [of Da-sein as] “to each its while”, to the ontological conclusion that each Da-sein is its time, its while, the quality of which is determined by how it is taken up and carried forward, whether it be past, present, future, and in particular the way in which they are invested with unity.

Here again, the centrality of the full-fledged notion of the “temporality proper” of Dasein is evident from the outset of Heidegger’s project. Moreover, we see how the notion of *futurity* is already implicated from the very beginning in Heidegger’s early thinking of the ontological structure of Dasein as “that entity familiar to us in its be-ing as human life” (Heidegger, 2007/TCT).

6.2. The futurity of Dasein in Heidegger’s early thinking

Dasein “means the self as the there (*Da*) of being (*Sein*), the place where an understanding of being erupts into being” (Stapleton, 2010). For Figal (2010), “[t]he essence of human life or “Dasein” ... is uncovering or disclosing” of everything that is, which “is thinkable in its “unconcealment” only on the basis of Dasein”. For Heidegger, “Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it *is* ontological.” (1962/BT). Dasein is ontological in that its being is an issue for it:

This entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term “Dasein”.

The analytic of Dasein must be “understood as an attempt at a *non-categorical* ontology” (Stapleton, 2010). Heidegger thus questions the primacy of the Aristotelian metaphysical category of substance and the adequacy of the temporal category of the present actuality. Instead, the analytic of Dasein is carried out by identifying the “*existentialia*” of Dasein, the basic ontological characteristics which are constitutive of the being of Dasein. These “existentials” are not accidental ontic properties of human beings and their

concrete behaviours, rather, they are essential, ontological characteristics which taken together constitute the being of Dasein as a totality. As ontological characteristics, the *existentialia* of Dasein are prior to and thus condition all of Dasein's ensuing properties.

The most basic of the *existentialia* of Dasein is signified by the conjunction: "being-in-the-world":

Dasein as being-in-the-world means: being in the world in such a way that this be-ing means: having to do with the world, sojourning within it in the routines of working, of managing and taking care of things, but also of examining, interrogating, and determining them by way of examination and comparison. Being-in-the-world is characterised as concern. (1977/TCT)

Being-in-the-world indicates the ontologically basic and unified mode of existence of Dasein which overcomes the traditional subject-object dichotomy. Human beings are not centred subjects over against a world of objects, nor are they merely conscious yet worldless subjects. Rather: "Both the unity and structure of experience ... are determined by the unity and structural integrity of the phenomenon of being-in-the-world" (Stapleton, 2010).

For Heidegger, the world is "that wherein a factical Dasein as such can be said to live." (1962/BT) The world should not be understood as the sum of all things which exist. Rather, the world "belongs to Dasein's being" (Stapleton, 2010) in the sense in which we might speak of "the world of an artist [or] of a person inhabiting a religious world". The world is also not understood in terms of subjectivity, in the sense that each Dasein has its own world, but rather as the general "contextual milieu of meaning" in which Dasein always is. In order to uncover the *a priori*, universal features of the "worldhood of the world" in which Dasein has its being, Heidegger eschews the accidental features of perception and knowing since taking these as a point of departure "mistakes the part for the whole" and relies on "an understanding of being as presence-at-hand" (Stapleton, 2010). Instead, he finds a beginning in the "everyday

world in which we continually live”, a world of “practical engagement” (Stapleton, 2010) and readiness-to-hand. The idea being to disclose the *a priori* structures “that belong to and make possible my engagement with the everyday surrounding world”. The worldhood of the world is a “structural totality” (Stapleton, 2010) which Heidegger calls an “assignment-context”. Everything in the world is encountered within a structured context of assignments of references, uses, and goals which form a referential totality of significance. This assignment-context is universal in that it applies both to praxis and to theoretical endeavours. “The world, then, is that through which beings are “determined” as beings: that through which they are “freed” for their being.” (Stapleton, 2010).

Dasein is that being which is temporality proper. This is the temporality of “*Existenz*” to refer to the unique kind of being that Dasein *is*” (Stapleton, 2010): a standing out in all three ecstases of temporality, a being stretched out across the dimensions of time. Dasein’s existence is thus ineluctably projected and futural. Heidegger describes the primordial temporality of Dasein thus:

The character of “having been” arises from the future, and in such a way that the future which “has been” releases from itself the Present. This phenomenon has the unity of a future which makes present in the process of having been; we designate it as “*temporality*”. (1962/BT)

Central in Heidegger’s thinking is the precedence of possibility over actuality which plays out in an interpretative description of Dasein as a primarily futural kind of being. The ontological characteristics of Dasein that Heidegger describes are all temporal in a full-fledged sense, however, Dasein’s temporality is such that its future ecstasis is primary. Neither Whitehead, nor Weick, as processual thinkers, would disagree with Heidegger that temporality also involves the future. However, for Heidegger, primacy is given to the future ecstasis of Dasein’s existence. The future is at sway in the present in a way that

is fundamentally different to the derivative status given to it by Whitehead, Mead, and Weick.

According to Colony (2009), Heidegger uses the term futurity in different senses in his earlier and later works. Colony (2009) points out the difference between the *Dasein* of Being and Time, and the hyphenated *Da-sein* of Heidegger's later Contributions to Philosophy:

Firstly, whereas in Being and Time Dasein was the starting point for a fundamental ontology, in Contributions Da-sein describes what human beings must become. ... Secondly, whereas in Being and Time the temporality of Dasein was understood as the horizon for the question of being, in Contributions Da-sein is understood as standing within the more original openness of being itself.

The temporality of Dasein is of central importance in the descriptive interpretation of Dasein as being-in-the-world that we find in Being and Time and other works of the early Heidegger. In this dissertation the treatment of the notion of futurity is restricted to the former sense which occurs in Heidegger's early project and especially in terms of the interpretation of the temporality of Dasein as being-in-the-world.

Martinon (2007) provides a detailed definition of futurity in the foreword of his book titled "On Futurity: Malabou, Nancy and Derrida":

... the word 'futurity' has one overall meaning: it concerns the times ahead of us, the future times that we can sense coming: for example, a promising young horse, the possibilities of a scientific breakthrough, or more prosaically, our retirement, our old age, our death. In this way, futurity constitutes the present space of the future, what can be seen today as the future. From this understanding of the word 'futurity', one can then proceed to 'gaze' or 'peep' into futurity, while knowing all too well that this gazing, or peeping, is only that afforded by our present situation. Alternatively, if one is more inclined to take action, one can either 'proceed carefully' or 'throw oneself' into futurity, again from the basis of options available to us today. The meaning of the term is therefore unambiguous: that which can be identified here and now as the future.

Although this definition brings together several colloquial usages of the term futurity, it does so as a precursor to Martinon's "deliberate mistranslation of a French verbal expression *à-venir* ['to come']." His aim in doing so is to reinvent *à-venir* in direct contrast to the colloquial usage of futurity by taking it instead "as signifying what can *never* be reduced to the simplicity of a future present". Here, Martinon sets out to address the same question posed by Marias (2005) who wonders about the strange power that the future has over us beyond what we know and see of it.

However, Martinon's interpretation of "futurity" as the "times ahead of us" is already a misinterpretation, although in this case a non-deliberate one. In grammatical terms, both 'futural' and 'futurity' are adjectival and typically refer to a characteristic of grammatical subject, as in "Dasein as futural" and "the futurity of Dasein". The word 'futurity' cannot stand on its own in the way a noun does. That is, Heidegger's notion of futurity is rooted in and descriptive of *being* rather than referring to a temporal dimension such as the "the times ahead of us". In any case, Martinon's setting up of his approach to the notion of futurity ignores Heidegger's work which may plausibly be claimed as an original source of the terms "futural" and "futurity" in their developed philosophical senses.

Let us turn then to the early Heidegger's notions of future, futural, and of the futurity of Dasein. The terms "futural" (*Zukünftig*) and "futurity" (*Zukünftigkeit*), only appear in the latter part of Being and Time in the more fine-grained ontological descriptions of the temporality of Dasein as an ontological totality. In Division two, Chapter three, Section 65 of Being and Time (1962/BT), Heidegger lays out for the first time what he means when he uses the term "futural":

By the term 'futural', we do not here have in view a "now" which has *not yet* become 'actual' and which sometime *will be* for the first time [that is, as a 'present future']. We have in view the coming [*Kunft*] in which Dasein, in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being,

comes towards itself. Anticipation makes Dasein *authentically* futural, and in such a way that the anticipation itself is possible only in so far as Dasein, *as being*, is always coming towards itself – that is to say, in so far as it is futural in its being in general.

We should guard against the temptation to regard futurity only as a conceptual *consequence* simply because it appears late in Division Two and by this name. Although it gets named later, the notion of the futurity of Dasein is implicit in Heidegger's earliest thinking and even conceptually precedes the description of Dasein as being-in-the-world. This much is clear in the 1924 lecture "The Concept of Time". We should also guard against regarding futurity as a distinctive feature of only "authentic Dasein" and not of primordial Dasein more generally:

Only in so far as Dasein has the definite character of temporality, is the authentic potentiality-for-Being-a-whole of anticipatory resoluteness ... made possible for Dasein itself. (1962/BT)

According to Inwood (1999), *authentic* Dasein "anticipates, 'runs ahead' to its own death":

Authentic or [resolute] Dasein runs further ahead into the future than everyday Dasein and recoils correspondingly further back into the past, before it comes to rest in the present and does what it has to do now. (Inwood, 1999)

However, Inwood points out that this capacity "depends on Dasein's constantly being ahead of itself" - *authentic* Dasein's orientation to its own death depends on Dasein's primordial futurity. What is distinctive about authentic Dasein is that it runs ahead to its futural limit, the possibility of its own death, and thus disposes of its possibilities in a way which accords with the fact of its prior futurity.

Futurity should not be approached as what Dasein *knows* of *its* future or 'the future'. Futurity is not in essence a future-perfect representation of what is yet to come, it is not fundamentally epistemological. Rather, it is in the first

instance an ontological feature of Dasein's being. As Heidegger (1962/BT) says:

... it is not because I have an idea of the future that my being is transported [*entrückt*] into the future; I can only represent what is future because my being as Da-sein has the basic feature of letting what is coming [*Kommendes*] come towards it, of being transported into the coming [*in das Kommen*].

Of all Heidegger's notions, it is that of the distinctive temporality of Dasein – its futurity - which is both a crucial beginning of his early project and is imbricated throughout the analytic of Dasein. The meaning of the futurity of Dasein is also an important aspect of the culmination of the project in the interpretation of Dasein as a whole and the description of Dasein's modes of being which are treated in more detail in Chapters 7 and 8 below.

Primordial futurity

Futurity is a central ontological notion in Heidegger's (1962/BT, 2007/TCT) early project and refers to the temporality of human being that is fundamentally oriented toward possibility: "being out toward what is not yet, but can be" (Polt, 2010). The futurity of '*Existenz* [is] the self-projecting by the self of its possibilities' (Gadamer, 2007). As "primally" futural, as having futurity as a "basic feature" of its being, Dasein is involved in a crucial and primary relation with and towards the future which may be expressed variously as:

... *vorlaufen*, which pertains to the authentic future, and the neutral *vorweg*, there are
1. *gewartigen*; *gewartig*, 'await, be prepared (for); awaiting ... 2. *warten*, 'to wait (for)';
3. *Erwarten*, 'to expect' (Inwood, 1999).

Heidegger goes further than to claim *being futural* as an ontological feature of Dasein together with *being past* and *being present*; he also accords primacy to *being futural* among Dasein's constitutive temporal relations. *Being futural* indicates an aspect of Dasein's temporality, whereas *Dasein's futurity* signifies

the whole of its temporality when *being futural* is accorded primacy. As Heidegger says:

In enumerating the ecstases [of temporality], we have always mentioned the future first. We have done this to indicate that the future has a priority in the ecstatical unity of primordial and authentic temporality. (1962/BT)

The modalities of Dasein's futurity

For Heidegger (1962/BT), “temporality does not first arise through a cumulative sequence of the ecstases”, rather, the ecstases are taken to be “equiprimordial”. We cannot speak of temporality in terms of a sequence “in time” from past to present to future, nor can we claim that any ecstasis is derived from or produced by any other. The present ecstasis is not the product of the past ecstasis, just as the future ecstasis is not the product of the present. Thus, Heidegger’s concept of temporality is fundamentally different from that of Mead’s “specious present” which is explicitly posited as an emergent product of the past. However, Heidegger qualifies this equiprimordiality in a way that is crucial for understanding the notion of futurity as a “formal indication” of Dasein’s temporality which plays out in modally different ways:

... within this equiprimordiality, the modes of temporalizing are different. The difference lies in the fact that the nature of the temporalizing can be determined primarily in terms of the different ecstases. (1962/BT)

Temporality temporalizes differently depending on the way in which the interrelation between the ecstases are ordered in their equiprimordiality. Dasein’s temporality involves an “aheadness and return” which opens up each Dasein’s “while”. As futural, Dasein is oriented towards the future and this projection is reflected back upon the past and the present. This is the basic notion of futurity which is already implicated in Dasein as being-in-the-world and in its projection and thrownness. For Heidegger, Dasein’s very ontological

structure follows from the recognition that Dasein's temporality is such that the future ecstasis is accorded priority among the temporal ecstases.

Yet, this basic notion of futurity is not a static principle but is rather, a formal indication of Dasein's temporality - Dasein's primordial futurity can play out in *modally* different futurities:

The priority of the future will vary according to the ways in which the temporalizing of inauthentic temporality itself is modified, but it will still come to the fore even in the derivative kind of 'time'. (1962/BT)

According to MacQuarrie and Robinson (in a footnote to their 1962 translation of Being and Time): "Here Heidegger is contrasting the authentic kind of time in which Dasein 'comes towards' itself ... futurally with the inauthentic kind of time which ... is derived [*abkommt*] from it". Thus: the description of primordial Dasein involves the description of its primordial futurity; every ensuing *mode* of Dasein involves a distinctive mode of futurity; and, futurity is also involved in individualizing each Dasein in its *own* elaborated futurity.

The most important differentiation that Heidegger makes of the modes of Dasein's being is that between authentic and inauthentic Dasein. It is the quality of Dasein's futurity which plays out in its way of being and the authenticity or inauthenticity of its way of being. It is not enough for Heidegger to merely know *that* human being is futural in its temporality. That much seems to be clear from the beginning. It is also not enough to understand that human "existence" is primally characterized by futurity, a temporal ordering of the ecstases wherein the future ecstasis is prioritised. Also required is an interpretation of the *how* of human futurity since this *how* is involved in the closeness of human being to being in general.

Authenticity is not about values or morality. Dasein is authentic when it is in accord with the fullest possibility of its being, and then comes closest to and gives access to the being of beings. Inauthentic Dasein misunderstands and even evades the facts of its being and its relation to being in general. In this

fallen mode, Dasein is un-true to its own potentiality-for-being. Inauthentic Dasein is not ‘bad’ Dasein (what Heidegger refers to as “Dasein of the night”). Rather, primordial Dasein incorporates a falling; Dasein is fallen into “the they” (*Das Man*) and is inauthentic when this fallenness reigns in its way of being. Dasein is also inauthentic when it evades the certainty of death and so misunderstands its own potentiality-for-being.

Dasein as an inherently *strategic* kind of being

Going back to Augustine (1961)¹³, the engagement with what is yet to come is said to involve ‘the present of future things’, epistemologically available in the present as ‘anticipation’. The formulation “the present of future things” may be transposed into ontological terms as *the future-ness of being*. Koselleck’s (2004) notion of “expectation” provides some support for this transposition in that it accords more with *the future-ness of being* than with Augustine’s notion of “anticipation” as the “present of future things”. For Koselleck:

... expectation also takes place in the today; it is the future made present; it directs itself to the not-yet, to the nonexperienced, to that which is to be revealed. Hope and fear, wishes and desires, cares and rational analysis, receptive display and curiosity; all enter into expectation and constitute it.

Here we see that Augustine’s notion of anticipation accords more with Schutz’s notion of thinking in the future perfect tense, whereas Koselleck’s (2002) notion of “expectation” is not self-evident in the images of future perfect thinking. Rather, *expectation is constituted in a mode of being* that is always already *futural* prior to any *anticipations* that such a being might imagine. According to Koselleck, expectation involves knowing entwined among other facets of temporal being: affectiveness, concernfulness, purposiveness. For Koselleck, following Heidegger, expectation is the crucial

¹³ Parts of this section appeared in Naidoo (2018).

engagement with what is yet to come that is grounded first and foremost in the futurity of human being.

For Heidegger, Dasein is primally futural, the futurity of Dasein is an *existentiale* which also unfolds modally and is thus involved in Dasein's elaboration. Dasein involves a crucial concerned engagement with the future – and its own future - because its “being is an issue for it” and it is projected into its potentiality-for-being. Dasein's primordial futurity is the engagement with the future which is reflected back and is constitutive of its temporal being as an ontological unity. In the authentic mode Dasein comes to terms with the limit of its futurity in the possibility of its certain death, and in so doing, gains access to its fullest possibility for being. In the inauthentic mode, Dasein ignores, misconstrues, and covers over its limit and its ultimate end, and in so doing foregoes its fullest potentiality for being.

Both primordially and in any of its modes, *Dasein is inherently a temporal being that exists as engaged with the future for the sake of the significant; that is, Dasein is a strategic being in an ontological sense.* For Heidegger, among all the beings that he identifies in his ontological constellation, only Dasein, in virtue of its full-fledged futurity disposes of this strategic engagement, and only Dasein is capable of being authentically strategic.

Chapter 7

Thinking from Dasein's being-in-the-world to *organizational* being-in-the-world

In Chapter 6, we saw that Heidegger's early project issues from an abiding concern with the temporality of being and indeed with human being *as* temporal. Futurity names Dasein's distinctive temporal existence in which the future ecstasis is accorded ontological primacy. Dasein cannot be described in terms of its present actuality. Rather, Dasein is disclosed as a distinctive kind of being-in-the-world that exists as thrown and projected towards the future for the sake of its own potentiality-for-being. Understood in this way, in terms of ontological possibility, Dasein incorporates a crucial engagement with the future for the sake of what is of highest significance. In this sense we may say that Heidegger describes Dasein as an inherently *strategic* kind of being.

In this chapter, *organizational being-in-the-world* is interpreted and described using the analytic of Dasein as an ontological analogue. In Section 7.1, we consider the analogical approach taken in thinking from Dasein to organizational being. We also attend here to Heidegger's treatment of technology to bolster the description of organizational being. In Section 7.2, we consider the structural items of Dasein's being-in-the-world to see to what extent they may be transposed to a description of organizational strategic being. In Section 7.3, a summative description of organizational being-in-the-world is given.

7.1. Thinking from primordial Dasein to organizational strategic being

Thinking the question of organizational strategic being in the philosophical attitude of hermeneutic phenomenology

From a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective, the prevalent characterizations of organizational strategy in theory and in practice are problematic in respects that were specifically critiqued by Heidegger. For Heidegger, the “theoretical attitude” is one wherein beings are approached as substantial entities which are characterized by their presence and which display categorial properties which appear as immediately given in consciousness (Stapleton, 2010). This attitude is exemplified in the attitude towards the phenomenon of organizational strategy that is taken in the field of strategy theory whereby strategy is categorially approached as an accidental organizational behaviour, further categorised into the ideal-typical modes of such behaviour, and rigorously theorised on this basis. The theoretical attitude is one which is “necessary for theory itself” (Stapleton, 2010); that is, theorization operates by carving categories of things from their contexts in the world and by making scientific objects of them in terms of their present actuality, which are then taken as comprehensive descriptions of those things. Thus, strategy theory exclusively pursues ‘what is it?’ questions of the phenomenon of organizational strategy. The same attitude prevails in the field of Organization Theory where the ‘*what is it?*’ question of the phenomenon of organization gives rise to the extant research perspectives from which the various answers to this question are pursued with rigorous exclusivity (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Thus, organization is understood either as an irreducible phenomenon in its own right, as in the structural-functionalist or systems theoretic perspectives, or, as an epiphenomenon which is fully reducible to

other phenomena, as in institutionalist and practice theories. Since every organizational strategy theory proceeds from a prior, often deeply implicit theory of organization, we find that the same asking of only ‘what it *is*’ questions carries through from Organization Theory to the theorization of organizational strategy. Thus, in the theoretical attitude, organizational being and its behavioural properties are only mono-modally (that is, categorially) objectified as present actualities, and not at all in terms of futural possibility.

In contrast, in the practical attitude toward the phenomenon of organizational strategy, we find the appearing of an organizational ‘subject’ of strategy that is uniformly understood in practice, not as isolated from, but rather as connected intentionally to *its* strategy which is pursued multi-modally (that is, non-categorially). The appearing in practice of the organization as the centred subject of strategy is reminiscent of the “traditional phenomenology” of Husserl, which Heidegger also takes issue with. As Stapleton (2010) says:

Even when subjectivity is understood not as isolated from, but rather as connected essentially and “intentionally” to the objects of its experience (the position Heidegger associates with traditional phenomenology at that time), nothing changes with respect to the ontology at work.

That is, the Husserlian ontology is still that of the subject that consciously intends the objects of a present actuality, rather than as the be-ing¹⁴ that exists in the world as a full-fledged temporality and for whom its *possibility* for being is ontologically paramount.

Thus, the reference to the reified subject of strategy which we find in the practical attitude is taken only as suggestive of the deeper ontological connection between organization and strategy. The everyday notion of the organization as the centred subject of strategy is problematic and stands in need

¹⁴ The term be-ing accentuates the verb sense of being.

of further interpretative description to distinguish it from Husserl's centred and worldless subject.

Neither the extant theoretical nor the prevalent practical understandings of the relation between organization and strategy avail thematic descriptions of the nature of organizational strategic being. Thus, we must step back to a hermeneutic phenomenological vantage point in order to properly consider both attitudes and to address organizational strategic being. It is for this reason that the question of organizational strategic being arises in and belongs to the philosophy of organization theory, more so than to the social scientific field of Organization Theory.

So, how are we to approach the question of the nature of organizational strategic being from a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective?

What we learn from Heidegger's thinking of the essence of technology

Heidegger offers highly original and even surprising interpretations of phenomena which stay true to the essence of each phenomenon. Thus, the being of Dasein is *as* being-in-the-world, the being of technology is *as Gestell*, and the age of world pictures is *as* an age of representation. Heidegger's interpretation of the essence of technology and its relation with Dasein's existence avail interpretative resources for the task of describing the nature of organizational strategic being. Besides, the ways in which technology is described seem to resonate with how organization is generally understood and this calls for further investigation.

Heidegger approaches the phenomenon of technology as follows:

We shall be questioning concerning technology, and in so doing we should like to prepare a free relationship to it. The relationship will be free if it opens our human existence to the essence of technology. (1977/QCT)

The essence (*Wesen*) of technology is not merely *what it is* but how it dwells in being, the way it "pursues its course" and "remains through time as what it

is” (Lovitt, 1977). Thus, we cannot approach the essence of a phenomenon only by a scientific study of its present tokens or only in terms of their observable properties. Just as the essence of trees, the *tree-ness* “that pervades every tree” is not itself a tree, Heidegger says that the “essence of technology is not itself something technological”. Moreover, a “true” description of the being of technology, which underlies the scientifically ‘correct’ yet partial descriptions of this phenomenon, is available *through* an understanding of human existence, and not aside from it.

Analogously, as we saw in Chapter 3, when we only ask what organizational strategy *is*, we can only answer scientifically: “strategy *is* X”; and can then only offer rigorous, mono-modal theories of strategy-*as*-X. For example, if the basis of strategy is taken to be *what can be known of the contingent future*, then theorists must give rigorous theories of strategy-*as*-knowing. And if the basis of strategy is taken to be *strategic praxis* then theorists must give equally rigorous theories of strategy-*as*-practice. These are all correct theorizations since strategy undoubtedly involves behaviour and other properties that may be categorised as knowing or as practice. However, these ways of fixing *what strategy is* do not lead us to an understanding of the *essence* of organizational strategy in the *how* of its being. Indeed, the ‘correct’ and rigorous mono-modal theorizations of organizational strategy may even lead us away from such understanding because they involve the dissection of the phenomenon.

The field of organization strategy theory is pluralistic and the various competing perspectives therein each give partial explanations of the phenomenon of organization strategy. This is a peculiar predicament of theorization in the social sciences. The rigorous theories of organizational strategy are based in the first instance on epistemological access and reduction; not to the phenomenon as a whole, but to some observable aspect of it which is accorded epistemological primacy for the sake of rigorous theorization. In the process, the phenomenon of organizational strategy is cleaved into the

behavioural ideal-typical modes we considered in chapter 3: the knowing, adapting, making, and doing modes of organizational strategic behaviour. Thus, what is elided in rigorous strategy theory is the very possibility of posing the question of organizational strategic being as an ontological unity, a question which cannot be approached by rigorous dissection.

How far can a synthesis of the mono-modal aspects of organizational strategy get us towards a proper understanding of its essence? We saw in Chapter 4 that the multi-modal syntheses, such as scenario-based strategy and dynamic capabilities, are prevalent in practice. This suggests that the more we synthesize the mono-modes of rigorous strategy theory, the more we are led towards practical relevance. However, even as they gain in relevance by relinquishing mono-modal rigour, these syntheses still only point to organizational strategic being in a tentative and unthematic way. That is, in synthesizing the behavioural modes of strategy we are pointed to an *ontological* questioning of the *being* that disposes of all these behavioural modes. However, the essence of this being is not given in such a synthesis which still remains on the epistemological plane. The thematic question of the nature of organizational strategic being cannot be approached in this way. The essence of organizational strategic being is not to be found in its accidental properties since this essence is ontological and thus precedes and conditions the appearing of those very properties.

Is organization essentially something technological? Does organization share the essence of technology? One way to understand the similarities and differences between organizational being and the being of technology lies in the ways in which these kinds of being are understood to incorporate means and ends. According to Heidegger, technology is “correctly” characterised as “an *instrumentum*”, as “a means to an end”. However, in its essence, technology “is no mere means” which is at the disposal of an exogenous willing. Rather, the “true” essence of technology lies in understanding it as “a

mode of revealing” that is not a poietic “bring-forth” from nature but “a challenging”, “setting-upon” of nature such that:

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. Whatever is ordered about in this way has its own standing. We call it the standing-reserve [*Bestand*]. (1977/QCT)

Heidegger names the essence of technology “*Ge-stell*” (translated as enframing) which indicates how technology, in its passage, is an enframing revealing of nature as standing-reserve. Although technology is no “mere means”, enframing “is the way in which the real reveals itself as standing-reserve” – that is, enframing is an ongoing process of *means-ing*. Organization is also generally understood as incorporating the ordering of means in the form of equipment, capital, tools, workers, and so on; and, organization is also understood as incorporating the ongoing process of means-ing whereby nature and human beings are revealed as means that are at the disposal of the organization.

However, in contrast to the essence of technology, organization is also generally understood as incorporating ends and the ongoing process of *end-ing*, of always being towards some or other ends. Thus, whereas technologies are “completely unautonomous” (1977/QCT), organizations are generally understood as more or less autonomous in that they use *their* means to pursue *their* ends.

Nevertheless, implicit in Heidegger’s illustrative examples of the essence of technology, is the idea that organizations are also caught up in the *Ge-stell*. For example, the forester (or forestry company for that matter) is “commanded by profit-making in the lumber industry” and is thus “made subordinate” in the ongoing chain of means-ing from lumber to cellulose to the production of paper. In this example, the profit-making ‘end’ of the forestry company is also revealed as an enframing and nothing more; after all, profits are nothing more than means. Yet, we might plausibly also reverse this relationship such that the

enframing is subordinate to organization, especially in cases where organizations are oriented towards ends that are not reducible to means in the same way as profits. For example, a court of law orders an array of means to the *end* of dispensing justice; a public hospital does the same *for the sake of* dispensing healthcare. Thus, the crucial difference between the essence of technology and the distinctive essence of organizational being seems to hang on the nature of the *telic ends* and *end-ing* of organizational being - a characteristic which the being of technology as *means-ing* does not dispose at all.

Another way to understand the difference between organizational being and the essence of technology is to consider the temporality of these phenomena. Heidegger thinks of the essence of technology as an ongoing process, as a present-continuous enframing which does not involve any orientation towards or engagement with the future. Although the process of enframing has consequences in the future, this ongoing enframing is not conditioned by an *engagement* with the future. On the other hand, organizational being in its full-fledged temporality, is indeed oriented towards the future. Thus, Heidegger's interpretation of the essence of technology is not an appropriate hermeneutic schema for approaching the question of the nature of organizational strategic being.

Even though it is not an appropriate ontological analogue for our purposes in this study, Heidegger's interpretation of technology provides valuable insights. Heidegger's asking about the essence of technology it is not a *what* question nor is it a *who* question. Rather, it is the *that and how* of the essence of technology, "the way in which it shows itself", the way it "dwells in presence", and the *that* and the *how* of the "way the real reveals itself as standing-reserve" which does not "happen somewhere beyond all human doing" but which also does not "happen exclusively in man, or decisively through man" (1977/QCT). The essence of technology is entwined with Dasein's who-being but this

essence is not a derivative of Dasein's being and is not determined by it. The point is that, from the perspective of hermeneutic phenomenology, no being can be approached apart from Dasein, and the being of all other beings (technology, art, organization) must be approached as entwined with Dasein's existence as the clearing in which all beings show up as they do. This entwinement means that the nature of organizational strategic being begins from an understanding of the nature of Dasein. However, this does not mean that organizational being is reducible to individual intentionality or action or praxis, nor can it be collectivised exhaustively into a "we-intentionality". In this study, organizational being is identified as the proper *subiectum* of strategy that stands in need of thematic treatment as a full-fledged temporal ontological unity.

The analytic of Dasein as an appropriate ontological analogue

In Chapter 2, hermeneutic phenomenology is described in general terms as the philosophical approach to be used in this study of organizational strategic being. Hermeneutic phenomenology incorporates various procedures and it is important to note that Heidegger does not approach being in general, the being of human beings, and other phenomena from a pre-determined methodology in the prescriptive theoretical sense. Rather, hermeneutic phenomenology is flexible and responsive to the nature of that which is being interrogated. Thus, the analytic of Dasein (as content) is not clearly distinguishable from hermeneutic phenomenology (as method) in the same way that a scientific methodology is distinguishable from the content of a scientific theory. For example, the hermeneutic schema for approaching the essence of technology is different from the hermeneutic schema that Heidegger uses to approach and interpret Dasein, and this is also different in Heidegger's interpretation of the work of art. The point is that hermeneutic phenomenology is not a neatly packaged methodology which can be set out in isolation from the phenomena

which it is meant to disclose in their distinctiveness. As is evident in Heidegger's works, the essence of a phenomenon is disclosed by taking as many hermeneutic rounds as are necessary to give a comprehensive account of it; that is, the method must fit the phenomenon and not the other way around.

In the attempt to disclose the nature of organizational strategic being in terms of organizational futurity, it makes sense to closely consider the only other being that disposes of futurity: *Dasein*. If we are to gain an understanding of organizational strategic being it makes sense to use *Dasein*'s primordial futurity as an ontological analogue. However, to approach organizational strategic being as it shows itself also means that the analytic of *Dasein* cannot be uncritically used as if it were a template to be followed from start to end. The claim here is *not* that *Dasein* and organizational being are ontologically isomorphic. Rather, the analogy is first with the interpretative *schema* of the analytic of *Dasein* and only secondarily with the descriptive *content* thereof.

The task of this study, to undertake the analytic of organizational strategic being, is a *regional ontology*. We should keep in view that Heidegger's early project is foremost an ontological seeking after the meaning of the "being of beings" in general. The analytic of *Dasein* is a crucial "waystation" to this "fundamental ontology". As Heidegger says:

...*fundamental ontology*, from which alone all other ontologies can take their rise, must be sought in the existential analytic of *Dasein*. (1962/BT)

However, for Heidegger, the analytic of *Dasein* is not another merely "regional ontology":

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.

Because of this "constitutive state", *Dasein* "has a relationship" with being in general such that "this Being is disclosed to it" (1962/BT). For Heidegger, all regional ontologies must "take their rise" from the "existential analytic of

Dasein” because Dasein “has priority over other entities in several ways” (1962/BT).

So whenever an ontology takes for its theme entities whose character of Being is other than that of Dasein, it has its own foundation and motivation in Dasein’s own ontical structure, in which a pre-ontological understanding of Being is comprised as a definite characteristic. (1962/BT)

Dasein has an “understanding of the being of all entities of a character other than its own” and provides “the ontico-ontological condition for the possibility of any ontologies”. For Heidegger, it is only from an understanding of Dasein that we can properly approach other phenomena ontologically, even if it turns out that these phenomena impinge upon Dasein’s modes of being as in the interpretation of the danger of technology in its potential for enframing human being as standing reserve.

However, although the early Heidegger insists that all beings be approached from the prior analytic of Dasein, it is doubtful that he had in mind the possibility that there might be other kinds of being that *resemble* Dasein’s temporality and futurity. The only beings in Heidegger’s world are the ready-to-hand, the present-at-hand, the they, and Dasein. The phenomenon of organizational being does not feature in this ontological constellation. What kind of being in the world is organizational strategic being?

Following Heidegger, there is no “primal ground” (1962/BT) from which to derive organizational strategic being. As Heidegger says:

Like any ontological Interpretation whatsoever, this analytic [of Dasein] can only, so to speak, “listen in” to some previously disclosed entity as regards its Being.

In the same vein we may ask: what has been disclosed thus far about organizational being? Organizational being is not an ob-jective *what* that is merely present-at-hand; nor is it merely a ready-to-hand *instrumentum*; nor is it exhaustively reducible to an inter-subjective we or to subjective praxis. Rather, the prior condition of any organizational we and all organizational

subjective praxis is an organizational being that renders such we-ness and such praxis contextually meaningful in the first place. Organizational strategy is also not merely a ready-to-hand *instrumentum*, it is not firstly equipment in order to effect an *accidental* organizational engagement with the future. Rather, strategy is the *crucial* ongoing engagement with the future that is first and foremost an *ontological* characteristic of temporal organizational being. Organizational being is the proper ontological locus of strategy understood as the inherent engagement with the future, and any strategic instruments and tools can only appear as useful because of this prior characteristic.

The task henceforth is to investigate how far the interpretative schema and descriptive content of the analytic of Dasein can get us towards *positively* disclosing the structure of organizational futurity as the distinctive, full-fledged temporality that is constitutive of organizational strategic being as an ontological unity. What we are seeking is that which is always already ontologically there *before any manifestations* of organizational strategy as content, as communication, as work processes, as decision patterns, as subjective behaviour, and as collective identity. Thus, we must step back from these manifestations, which are taken as primary in the science of strategy theory, to describe the ontological structure of organizational strategic being, a structure which is named organizational futurity in this study. It is the description of this structure which may disclose the pre-theoretical grounds for a new kind of strategy theory.

7.2. Organizational being-in-the-world

In this section, we consider whether and how the constitutive items of Dasein's being-in-the-world may be descriptive of organizational being-in-the-world. Heidegger (1962/BT) points to further possibilities for hermeneutic

phenomenological analysis which are availed in the description of the structural items of Dasein's being-in-the-world:

If need be, there still remains the possibility of broadening out the analysis by characterizing comparatively the variations of concern and its circumspection, of solicitude and the considerateness which goes with it; there is also the possibility of contrasting Dasein with entities whose character is not that of Dasein by a more precise explication of the Being of all possible entities within-the-world. Without question, there are unfinished tasks still lying in this field.

The first possibility is about investigating the ways in which the ontological structures of Dasein may be exemplified ontically in a variety of modes of human being. The second possibility has to do with investigating further, the entities which are *not* Dasein and which, for Dasein, are "within-the-world" in the way that the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand are within-the-world. Heidegger does not pursue these possibilities because they are not crucial for describing Dasein as an ontological totality. The questioning of organizational strategic being pursued in this study does not flow from the first possibility since the aim here is not to broaden the description of Dasein by, for example, considering how primordial Dasein's characteristics are modified in organizational settings (although this is an interesting research possibility). This study is implicit in the second possibility which leaves open the addition of other kinds of being to Heidegger's ontological constellation.

According to Richardson (2012), the analytic of Dasein unfolds according to a schema of interpretative description of the different planes of Dasein's ontological structure: the "pragmatic", "existential", and "temporal" planes. This schema reveals the course of the hermeneutic spiral in the analytic of Dasein which, proceeding from Dasein's temporality, begins with Dasein as being-in-the-world and culminates in the description of Dasein as an ontological totality. Thus, in an analogical thinking of the futurity of

organizational strategic being, the holistic structure of Dasein may be parsed (but not dissected) provided it is not left in a disaggregated state.

Heidegger draws a distinction between Dasein as “modally undifferentiated” and Dasein which “takes on a definite character” in either the mode of authenticity or of inauthenticity. Both of Dasein’s modes are “grounded upon that state of being which we have called *being-in-the-world*” (1962/BT). That is, Heidegger first sets out to interpret the “constitutive state” of being-in-the-world of “primordial Dasein”, before considering Dasein’s modal differentiation. To interpret organizational being-in-the-world alongside Dasein’s being-in-the-world, is to consider thematically how the structural items of Dasein’s being-in-the-world must be modified, relinquished or augmented in order to properly describe organizational being-in-the-world. Thus, although this is an exercise in analogical thinking we should be especially alert to the primordial *differences* between organizational being and Dasein.

Organizational *being-in-the-world*

Among the beings that Heidegger identifies we find Dasein, the they, the present-at-hand, and the ready-to-hand. Dasein is the ontological locus of this constellation and it is Dasein’s existence which is the “there”, the “clearing” in which all the things within the world can appear as they do. Dasein as being-in-the-world incorporates “the they” and encounters the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand in its different attitudes. Dasein is the only being characterized as being-in-the-world, whose primordial being is grounded in the “constitutive state” of being-in-the-world (1962/BT). Heidegger describes being-in-the-world as follows:

Dasein as being-in-the-world means: being in the world in such a way that this being means: having to do with the world, sojourning within it in the routines of working, of managing and taking care of things, but also of examining, interrogating, and

determining them by way of examination and comparison. Being-in-the-world is characterised as concern.

Being-in-the-world is an *a priori* state and is “among the most basic” of the *existentialia* of primordial Dasein. Being-in-the-world is the state of being of “circumspective concernful” (1962/BT) engagement in the world and with all that is encountered as “within-the-world”. Dasein is “thrown into a world” that is not of its own making and in which “it pro-jects [throws itself forward] itself into its possibilities of being” (Kisiel, 2010). Temporal Dasein does not merely subsist in the world but is always concernfully engaged with coping in its thrownness into the world which it shares with others like itself.

Organizational being may also be described primordially as thrown and projected being-in-the-world. In concrete terms, organizations are understood as “having to do with the world”, as being geared into the world, which is more often referred to in the organization studies literature as an openness and responsiveness to “the environment” which is understood to be beyond the control of the organization. Thus, organizations must cope with a sense of thrownness into the world. Taking account of the ubiquity of organizational strategy, organizations may also be described as concernful and circumspective beings that are projected towards possibilities.

Considered in broad strokes, organizational being-in-the-world is plainly analogous with Dasein’s being-in-the-world. However, although it is a unitary phenomenon, Dasein’s being-in-the-world has several constitutive items in its “triadic” structure: “in-the-world”, “being-in”, and “the entity or *who* which is as being-in-the-world” (Stapleton, 2010). This structure makes it possible to consider these *existentialia* items severally, and to fill out the description of organizational being-in-the-world in terms of its distinctive constitutive *existentialia*.

Organizational being as *in-the-world*

World refers to the “everyday world of practical engagement”, the “contextual milieu of meaning towards which Dasein is in its being” (Stapleton, 2010). The world can also be understood “as that ‘wherein’ a factual Dasein as such can be said to ‘live’” (1962/BT). Moreover, Heidegger says: “That world of everyday Dasein which is closest to it, is the environment.” (1962/BT)

According to Stapleton (2010): “This everyday world is not one of theoretical contemplation”, rather it is “one of practical engagement”. Things which are only present-at-hand or ready-to-hand are “within-the-world” in the spatial and “categorical” senses. These ways of being *within* the world are ontologically definitive of present-at-hand and ready-to-hand things. However, the world is not the sum total of the ontical entities within-the-world, nor is the world understood as an ontological result of these entities taken together since “the world has already been presupposed” (1962/BT) in our understanding of these entities:

The world is that in terms of which the ready-to-hand is ready-to-hand. (1962/BT)

Dasein is “in-the-world” in a different and more fundamental sense that has a bearing on its understanding of its own being. As Heidegger says: “the way the world is understood is ... reflected back ontologically upon the way in which Dasein itself gets interpreted”. (1962/BT) In this sense, Dasein is a “worldly” being in an ontological sense.

The “worldhood” of the world refers to “those structures that belong to and make possible my engagement with the everyday surrounding world” (Stapleton, 2010). It is through worldhood that things show up as meaningful to Dasein as tools or as equipment, for example. Without *a priori* worldhood these things could not have meaning or significance for Dasein *as* tools or *as* equipment. Worldhood is the totality of such assignments of meaning to what is found within-the-world. According to Stapleton, worldhood involves

assignments of the form: “with ... in ... in order to ... for the sake of ...”. All of Dasein’s everyday engagements in the world take this form which involves engaging *with* the ready-to-hand things within-the-world *in order to* bring about some effect *for the sake of* some aim. This *a priori* structural totality is an “assignment-context” in which things show up at all as useful for the sake of this or that aim. All Dasein’s practical and theoretical engagements in the world are conditioned in the assignment context of worldhood; without worldhood, Dasein could only stare blankly at things which could make no sense.

Analogously, organizational being is also worldly in that it is not and indeed cannot be thought of without a surrounding world and apart from the worldhood of the world. Both in theory and in practice, organizations are understood as involved in and with the surrounding world. Organizations are never understood as hermetically sealed off from the world. Rather, the ongoing organizational involvement with the world appears most often as the organization-environment relation which is of great significance for the self-interpretation of the organization. We see this, for example, in the emphasis which is placed on the notion of organizational fit and in the widespread practices of environmental scanning, situational analyses, benchmarking, customer surveys, and so on. In this way, organizational being is not only open to the world and engaged in the world but may also be described as a worldly being.

Organizations encounter things within-the-world as ready-to-hand in virtue of the assignment-context of worldhood. Organizational being as being-in-the-world is concernfully circumspective, where concern means being engaged primarily with what is ready-to-hand within-the-world. For organizations the ready-to-hand is what is of significance as *means* which may be directed towards ends. Indeed, one may go so far as to say that the concern of organizational strategic being is *only* towards that which is ready-to-hand. In

concrete terms, organizations keep track of *their* assets such as equipment, buildings, and cash which are all ready-to-hand and have meaning bestowed upon them in terms of often highly codified assignment-contexts. In this sense, organizational being disposes of the capacity for “circumspection” in regard to encountering the ready-to-hand. Thus, we conclude that organizational being shares with Dasein the ontological item of being *in-the-world* without any significant modification.

Organizational being as *being-in*

For Heidegger (1962/BT), being-in “is a state of Dasein’s being”. The *existential* state of being-in is the “sense of being-in as dwelling, residing among or being familiar with” (Stapleton, 2010). As Heidegger says:

Because Dasein is essentially an entity with being-in, it can explicitly discover those entities which it encounters environmentally, it can know them, it can avail itself of them, it can have the ‘world’. (1962/BT)

Being-in as such is the being of the “there” - “it *is* itself the clearing”, the *Da-* of Dasein’s “disclosedness”. For Heidegger: “The being which is an issue for [Dasein] in its very being is to be its ‘there’.” (1962/BT) Heidegger says furthermore:

To say that in existing, Dasein is its “there”, is equivalent to saying that the world is “there”; its *Being-there* is Being-in.

In laying out the existential constitution of the “there”, Heidegger identifies understanding (*Verstehen*), and how-one-finds-one’s-self (*Befindlichkeit*) as the equiprimordial, “constitutive ways of being the ‘there’”. (1962/BT)

Befindlichkeit, which is unsatisfactorily translated as “State-of-mind”¹⁵, is an *existentiale* of Dasein as being-in which indicates “the most familiar and

¹⁵ In MacQuarrie’s and Robinson’s (1962) English translation of Being and Time.

everyday sort of thing: our mood, our being-attuned” (1962/BT). *Befindlichkeit* means the state in which one already finds oneself:

A mood makes manifest ‘how one is, how one is faring’. In this ‘how one is’, having a mood brings Being to its “there”. (1962/BT)

Even in the everyday evasion of the ontological significance of its moods, the “there” is nevertheless disclosed. Dasein is characterized by “thrownness” into its “there”, this is the facticity disclosed in *Befindlichkeit*: the inexorable “that it is and has to be”. The existential disclosure of thrownness in *Befindlichkeit* is “prior to all cognition and volition” and discloses “being-in-the-world as a whole”. That anything can “*matter*” at all to concerned Dasein is grounded in *Befindlichkeit*.

In [Befindlichkeit] Dasein is always brought before itself, and has always found itself, not in the sense of coming across itself by perceiving itself, but in the sense of finding itself in the mood that it has.

Organizational being also exists as being-in in the sense of dwelling in the midst of an ongoing familiar setting. Concretely, organizations are characterised by an inertia of familiar routines and ways of doing things. Moreover, organizational being “encounters other entities”, classifies them from its own perspective and certainly “avails itself of them” as ready-to-hand means. In concrete terms, we see this in organizational accounting practice which records entities in various ways but always from the perspective of the organization. For example, an asset is encountered organizationally as property of the organization. The organizational concern for its continued existence and the achievement of its ends finds expression in organizational strategy where the organization itself is the locus of its own referential totality of significance. Organizational being *as strategic being* incorporates a sense of its state of being, a sense of how it is faring. In concrete terms, everyday organizational strategy involves an active working out of this very sense on an ongoing basis. The “analysis of the current situation” is a stock item of strategic planning. The

SWOT¹⁶ analysis of an organization, for example, can only be completed in terms of this underlying sense of an *organizational Befindlichkeit*.

However, organizational *Befindlichkeit* lacks something which is crucial to Dasein's way of being-in: it lacks the self-reflexive openness to its own being. The contention here is that organizational being is also constituted in a *Befindlichkeit* which nevertheless incorporates the sense of how it is faring: that is, the sense of its own state of being. This sense of its own state of being, however, is not given to it in the same self-reflexive way as it is for Dasein.

Understanding is the second existential item of being-in and is equiprimordial with *Befindlichkeit* as a "basic mode of Dasein's Being". 'Understanding', taken in a cognitive sense which places it alongside 'explaining', is the derivative form of the *existential "primary understanding"* that Heidegger is referring to here. Indeed, for Heidegger, "intuition and thinking are both derivatives of [primary] understanding". Heidegger describes understanding in the following quotations:

In the 'for-the-sake-of-which', existing being-in-the-world is disclosed as such, and this disclosedness we have called 'understanding'. (1962/BT)

In the understanding of the for-the-sake-of-which, the significance which is grounded therein, is disclosed along with it. (1962/BT)

Dasein's being-in-the-world is disclosed in understanding as its telic for-the-sake-of-which; in this way authentic Dasein's potentiality-for-being is disclosed in existential understanding as its ultimate for-the-sake-of-which. Dasein is "what it can be", it is what "it is not yet", it is "*thrown possibility* through and through". According to Stapleton (2010): "The understanding of

¹⁶ SWOT analysis refers to the commonly used conceptual tool for identifying an organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Strengths and weaknesses refer to endogenous organizational characteristics, whereas opportunities and threats reference exogenous environmental conditions and developments.

being that arises in Dasein has, as its terminus (the final term in its referential totality), Dasein itself.” As Heidegger says:

To say that the ‘for-the-sake-of-which and significance are both disclosed in Dasein, means that Dasein is that entity which, as Being-in-the-world, is an issue for itself.
(1962/BT)

In understanding its potentiality-for-being – or not understanding it - Dasein comes to ‘know’ - or cover over - “what it is capable of” as it “press[es] forward into possibilities”. This is because understanding essentially incorporates “projection” such that “Dasein is thrown into the kind of being which we call *projecting*”. Projecting is not about following a plan or “grasping” a particular future-perfect possibility. Rather, projecting describes in ontological terms “the kind of being of Dasein in which it *is* its possibilities as possibilities”.

Authentic understanding is the disclosure of Dasein’s fullest possibility for being as its for-the-sake-of-which of the highest significance. Inauthentic understanding emphasises Dasein’s “understanding itself in terms of its world”, rather than “arising out of [its] own Self as such”. The range of Dasein’s possibilities, the “leeway” of its potentiality-for-being is bounded by what can be existentially disclosed in projective existential understanding.

Organizational being is not self-aware in the sense conveyed in terms like self-consciousness and self-reflexivity. Indeed, we cannot attribute consciousness to organizational being, let alone self-consciousness. And if organizational being does not dispose of consciousness it cannot dispose of *self-reflective* thought of any kind. Yet, we may still ask: does organizational being-in-the-world involve something like Dasein’s existential understanding?

We may consider this possibility since Heidegger distinguishes existential understanding from cognitive understanding and knowing which he takes to be derivative. As Heidegger says:

The kind of dealing which is closest to us is as we have shown, not a bare perceptual cognition, but rather that kind of concern which manipulates things and puts them to use; and this has its own kind of 'knowledge'. (1962/BT)

Organizational being, although it does not dispose of consciousness and cognition, is nonetheless a concerned being that certainly incorporates the capacity for manipulating things and putting them to use. Organizational being *as strategic being* is also projected and presses ahead towards its own existential possibilities. Organizational strategic being is telic in that it always involves a sense of its own goal-directedness in a referential totality of significance which culminates in a sense of its own for-the-sake-of-which. Concretely, organizational strategy in practice emphasises this understanding of the organizational for-the-sake-of-which in various ways as strategic mission, purpose, and goals. As futural being, organizational strategic being is projected into its possibilities and thus also disposes of *existential understanding* in this way. The organizational knowing of means and ends is derived from this existential understanding.

The who of organizational being-in-the-world

The third item in the triadic structure of Dasein as being-in-the-world is “the “who” of Dasein”. For Heidegger, thinking human being in terms of its ontological *who-ness* rather than as an objective *what-ness* is a crucial step on the path towards the analytic of Dasein. A step which involves a new kind of thinking that is effectively ruled out in traditional metaphysics wherein “entities are grasped in their being as ‘presence’; [and] understood with regard to a definite mode of time – the Present” (1962/BT). Heidegger avoids a categorial understanding of human being as presence-at-hand which is associated with Descartes “I think” and Husserl’s “ego-pole” (Stapleton, 2010). According to Richardson (2012), Heidegger distances his thinking of Dasein from Husserl’s phenomenology which “is doomed at its root by its

subjectivism”. Thus, Heidegger is working with a notion of the “who” that we cannot equate with the Husserlian subject which is a “bare subject without a world” and an “isolated “I” without Others” (1962/BT) .

For Heidegger, Dasein’s concerned engagement stems from self-concern (Stendera, 2015). As Heidegger says:

That being which is an *issue* for this entity in its very being, is in each case mine. ... Because Dasein has in each case mineness [*Jemeinigkeit*], one must always use personal pronouns when one addresses it: ‘I am’, ‘you are’. (1962/BT)

Dasein is peculiar in that it is the only being in Heidegger’s constellation that disposes of *mine-ness* as an *existential* that underlies both the authentic and inauthentic modes of being.

To ask about the nature of organizational strategic being, in the same vein as Heidegger’s asking about human being, is to not to ask *what* it is, but *who* it is; and in the context of this study it is to ask of the behavioural manifestations of strategy: *whose* behaviour it is. However, the who of Dasein cannot be transposed to the who of organizational being without amendment. This item of Dasein as being-in-the-world needs to be considered critically as an analogue of the who of organizational being.

To describe the “who” of organizational strategic being – the “who” that disposes of its futurity - presents an immediate problem in that the first-personal perspective of mineness (*Jemeinigkeit*) and I-hood (*Ichheit*), which is central to describing the “who” of Dasein, simply *cannot* be transposed to our thinking of organizational being-in-the-world. That is, organizational being is a kind of being that essentially lacks *mineness* and *I-hood*. Dasein’s mineness which disposes of a first-personal point of view (I, me, mine) is taken in this study as straightforwardly inadmissible when talking about organizational being.

This is even the case in the understanding of organizations as legal persons. Organizations as juristic persons may be addressed by name and may be

referred to in the second-personal “you” in legal judgements, however, no legal statement has ever been received from an organization which uses pronouns like “I” and “my” or “mine”. Organizational being is not a kind of being that can *speak* in the first person (I), although it may be *addressed* in the second person (you) and *referred to* in the third person (it).

Yet, organizations are generally spoken of, are named, and are addressed *as if* they were capable of first-personal responses. In everyday discourse, such as in the media, we find organizations being represented in this way: “The UN demands”; “According to the UN”; “The UN said today”. We also saw in Chapter 4 that the who of organizational being is tentatively pointed to in the scenario-based framework of strategy as the notion of the “organizational self”. Thus, although organizational being-in-the-world is without the *existentiale* of mineness and does not dispose of I-hood, these everyday ways of speaking about organizations still point to the existential who-ness of organizational being.

Heidegger’s distinction between Dasein’s self-hood and I-hood lends some support to this conclusion: The following quote is intriguing in this regard:

But in that case there is ontologically a gap separating the selfsameness of the authentically existing Self from the identity of that “I” which maintains itself throughout its manifold Experiences. (1962/BT)

Thus, a distinction may be drawn between the who-ness (a self-hood that disposes of mine-ness) of Dasein’s distinctive being-in-the-world, and the distinctive who-ness (a self-hood *sans* mineness) of organizational being-in-the-world.

Organizational *being-amongst*

Heidegger proceeds from the understanding of being-in-the-world as “the basic state of Dasein by which every mode of its Being gets co-determined” (1962/BT) to a consideration other structures of Dasein:

By directing our researches towards the phenomenon which is to provide us with an answer to the question of the “who”, we shall be led to certain structures of Dasein which are equiprimordial with Being-in-the-world: Being-with and Dasein-with [*Mitsein und Mitdasein*]. (1962/BT)

Being-in-the-world means that Dasein encounters ready-to-hand and present-at-hand entities as things which are *within-the-world*. This involvement with that which is within-the-world includes “an essential assignment or reference” to *others* which are not equipment. The example Heidegger uses to illustrate this is that of the “work-world of the craftsman” wherein the work involves not only assignments to equipment but also assignments to “those Others for whom the ‘work’ is destined” (1962/BT) such as the wearer of a garment which the craftsman is cutting it *for* and whom it must fit when completed. Dasein has “being-with” as an essential characteristic which “lets the Dasein of others be encountered in its world” (1962/BT) *as* others who are also “circumspectively concerned being[s]-in-the-world”. Thus, Heidegger says:

The world of Dasein is a with-world [*Mitwelt*]. Being-in is Being-with Others. Their Being-in-themselves within-the-world is Dasein-with [*Mitdasein*]. (1962/BT)

For Heidegger, Dasein’s being-with is not to be interpreted in terms of concern “even though Being-with, like concern, is a *Being towards* entities encountered within-the-world” (1962/BT). Rather, as the *existential* of being-with, Dasein comports itself towards Others like itself, not out of a concerned dealing with the ready-to-hand, but out of care (*Sorge*) as solicitude (*Fürsorge*), a caring-for in the non-affective sense of taking care of the welfare of others.

In what sense might organizational being also incorporate being-with as an *existential*? How does organizational being encounter others?

A principle of recognition is involved in being-with which frees other beings-in-the-world for their appearing as others. Organizational being also involves the recognition of other beings-in-the-world. Quite routinely, organizations recognise and distinguish between human beings, other organizations, and the

state, for example. Organizations routinely encounter human beings as such, but only ever as ready-to-hand, *as means*. Workers are means to labour resources, shareholders are means to capital resources, and customers are means to profitable transactions. All these others are only meaningful as different others *of* organizational being. In the absence of organizational being such others cannot appear as they do.

We see this in accounting, which is perhaps the most legible aspect of everyday organizational discourse (*Rede*). The accounting treatment of employees as an expense on the income statement confirms that those human beings are simply not recognized as part of the organization, in spite of utterances to the contrary. That is, the employees are third parties who are contractually *associated* with the organization. The way in which organizational being encounters human beings is such that the appearing of human being therein is always as ready-to-hand, albeit not in the sense of equipment. Equipment is represented in accounting terms, not as an *other* with whom one may enter into a contract, but on the balance sheet under “Assets”. Organizations routinely encounter human beings as external others and not as equipment which *belongs* to the organization. Thus, organizational being encounters Dasein in non-equipmental ways but still always as others who are ready-to-hand within-the-world.

Moreover, organizations routinely encounter other organizations. We see this most legibly in organizational strategic discourse where other organizations appear as competitors, allies, suppliers, customers, legislators, and so on. In organizational strategic discourse, human resources are not spoken of in the same vein as *peer* organizational others. It is these *organizational others* who are the true peer beings-in-the-world *among* whom organizational being exists. Nevertheless, organizational being encounters both Dasein-others and organizational-others only as ready-to-hand. The implication is that

organizational being is not disposed to encountering others on the basis of Dasein's being-with as care. Organizational being does not go *existentially* beyond concern at all - it does not dispose of the existential capacity for "*Fursorge* (solicitude)". This is not a missing developmental characteristic which one may nurture in organizational being. Rather, it describes an existential being, *a who without the capacity for care*, since care crucially goes beyond the encounter with all beings as ready-to-hand within-the-world.

Yet, organizational being is existentially among others that it encounters *as others*. Some existential structure, other than being-with, is needed to account for the way in which organizational being is existentially among other beings-in-the-world. Organizational being comes closest to being-with in the encounter with its peer-beings *amongst whom* it exists. This way of being-in-the-world is not Dasein's being-with but is distinguished by naming it being-*amongst* other beings-in-the-world which does not ever go beyond circumspective concern. Organizational being-amongst is the more limited, ready-to-hand sense in which organizational being can be amongst others.

7.3. Summative description of organizational being-in-the-world

By analogy with Heidegger's description of Dasein, organizational being may also be described primordially as thrown and projected being-in-the-world. As a worldly being, organizational being is open and responsive to the surrounding world and must cope with its thrownness into the world.

Organizations encounter things within-the-world as ready-to-hand in virtue of the assignment-context of worldhood. Organizational being as being-in-the-world is concernfully circumspective, where concern means being engaged primarily with what is ready-to-hand within-the-world. Thus, organizational being shares with Dasein the ontological item of being *in-the-world*.

Organizational being also exists as being-in in the sense of dwelling in a meaningful context.

Organizational being *as strategic being* incorporates a sense of its state of being, a sense of how it is faring. Organizational being incorporates circumspective concern as the sense of its own state of being (that is, its sense of *organizational Befindlichkeit*). Yet, organizational *Befindlichkeit* lacks something which is crucial to Dasein's way of being-in: it lacks the self-reflexive openness to its own being. Nevertheless, organizational strategic being is telic in that it always involves a sense of its own goal-directedness in a referential totality of significance which culminates in a sense of its own for-the-sake-of-which. As futural being, organizational strategic being is projected into its possibilities and thus also disposes of existential understanding in this way.

Although organizational being-in-the-world is without the *existentiale* of mineness (*Jemeinigkeit*) and does not dispose of I-hood (*Ichheid*), the who of organizational being-in-the-world disposes of self-hood. Organizational being retains this self-hood as long as it exists and this self-hood is the proper locus - the *subiectum* - of organizational strategy.

Organizational being is also existentially among others that it encounters as others. However, this way of organizational being-in-the-world is not Dasein's being-*with* and is distinguished by naming it being-*amongst* other beings-in-the-world: organizational being-amongst does not ever go beyond circumspective concern. That is, organizational being is ontologically without care.

Organizational being is temporal, projected, and concernfully cirumspective. Organizational strategic being is being-in-the-world as a self-hood that is the existential locus of its engagement with the future for the sake of its own referential totality of significance. Thus, the phenomenon of organizational

strategy is an ontological characteristic of organizational strategic being that conditions, in a formally indicative way, the ontical manifestations of organizational strategy.

Chapter 8

The unity and primordial futurity of organizational strategic being

The task of carrying out in an appropriate way the ontological analysis of end and totality breaks down not only because the theme is so far-reaching, but because there is a difficulty in principle: to master this task successfully, we must presuppose that precisely what we are seeking ...

Heidegger, 1962/BT

In the previous chapter (7), using the analytic of Dasein as being-in-the-world as a schema, *organizational* being-in-the-world was described in a preliminary way. The preceding description provides a more filled out sense of the essential items of *organizational* being-in-the-world. However, the analogy with Dasein's being-in-the-world does not guarantee a comprehensive *positive* description of organizational being-in-the-world. For such a description we need to take the analogy further. Thus, trying to describe organizational being through the analogy with the description of Dasein's being is a "way-station" towards a more comprehensive interpretation of organizational strategic being as a distinctive ontological unity¹⁷.

In this chapter, organizational strategic being is interpreted as an ontological unity in a description of *primordial, undifferentiated* organizational futurity. In Section, 8.1, we consider Heidegger's treatment of Dasein's totality - its distinctive futurity - as an ontological synthesis of care and death. In Section, 8.2, we interpret organizational strategic being as an ontological unity in terms

¹⁷ The terms unity and totality are used interchangeably to refer to organizational strategic being as an *ontological* whole that comes into being.

of its distinctive *state of being*, which is *not* that of care, and in terms of its distinctive *being-towards-ending*, which is *not* that of Dasein's finitude and death. In Section, 8.3, the temporality of organizational strategic being is described in the conception of primordial organizational futurity.

8.1. Dasein's primordial futurity as an ontological totality of care and being-towards-ending in death

The analytic of Dasein culminates in a description of "Dasein's average everydayness" as:

Being-in-the-world which is falling and disclosed, thrown and projecting, and for which its ownmost potentiality-for-Being is an issue, both in its Being alongside the 'world' and in its Being-with Others. (1962/BT)

Heidegger presses on from this juncture to consider Dasein as an ontological whole. While being-in-the-world comprises structural "items" to properly describe Dasein's being in its everydayness, it is always understood as a "structural whole" that "is not to be reached by building it up out of elements" (1962/BT). Thus, the analytic of Dasein still calls for a "primordially unitary phenomenon" to be identified which permeates Dasein's being and also "provides the ontological foundation" for all the structural items in the being of this ontological totality. This seeking of the unitary way in which Dasein is disclosed proceeds from the disclosive items of being-in-the-world: understanding and *Befindlichkeit*. More precisely, it is a seeking after a unitary "understanding *Befindlichkeit*" which is Dasein's most primordial, "elemental" state of being which is "disclosed to itself in its Being" (1962/BT):

The way of disclosure in which Dasein brings itself before itself must be such that in it Dasein becomes accessible as *simplified* in a certain manner.

For Heidegger, Dasein's ontological unity cannot be approached on the basis of "everyday environmental experiencing [*Erfahren*]" which is directed only towards what is within-the-world, nor can it be described solely in terms of

“our immanent perception of Experiences [*Erlebnissen*]” which also privileges presence over temporality. Nor even may it be deduced “from an idea of man” which tends to involve as presuppositions the very aspects of ‘man’ that are to be interpreted. Rather, as a temporal being, Dasein’s totality resides in its holistic primordial futurity.

Dasein’s primordial state of being as care

In searching for Dasein’s being-a-whole, Heidegger finds a clue in the “phenomenon of *anxiety*” which is a basic state of *Befindlichkeit*: the general state in which Dasein finds itself to be in its thrownness and projection. The way in which Dasein is disclosed in its state of anxiety is thus taken as the “phenomenal basis for explicitly grasping Dasein’s totality of Being”:

That in the face of which one has anxiety is Being-in-the-world as such.

This basic *Befindlichkeit* of Dasein in anxiety unifies the structures of its being-in-the-world and prepares the way to an interpretation of Dasein’s state of being *as a whole* which, for Heidegger, “reveals itself as *care*”.

Anxiety throws Dasein back upon that which it is anxious about – its authentic potentiality-for-being-in-the-world.

Anxiety “individualizes” Dasein such that it is free to choose itself and take hold of itself in its way of being. As a *Befindlichkeit* which “makes manifest ‘how one is’” (1962/BT), anxiety is the feeling of not being at home (*unheimlich*) in the world which indicates Dasein’s “thrown being-in-the-world which has been delivered over to itself in its Being”. Anxiety concretely confirms the unity and facticity of Dasein’s existence as “thrown potentiality-for-being-in-the-world” and as “always also absorbed in the world of its concern”.

Care is an ontological term which signifies Dasein’s “ahead-of-itself-being-already-in-(the-world) as Being-alongside (entities encountered within-the-world).” (1962/BT) For Heidegger, Dasein’s distinctive being-in-the-world “is

essentially care”, a state of primordial Dasein’s being which underlies every ontical case. However, within this structural totality, Dasein may “comport itself towards its possibilities” in different ways. Whereas primordial Dasein is undifferentiated, *modal* Dasein is differentiated into modes of being. Dasein can be authentic by comporting itself towards its own potentiality-for-being as its “for-the-sake-of-which”. Or, it can remain inauthentic by covering over or even abandoning its own potentiality-for-being in favour of the levelled down for-the-sake-of-which of “the they-self”.

However, for Heidegger, the interpretation of Dasein as care still does not “bring the whole of Dasein” into view. Dasein’s basic *Befindlichkeit* of anxiety reveals care as its basic state of being, yet there is something open-ended about care in this state of projected thrownness. Thus, Heidegger says:

As long as Dasein *is* as an entity, it has never reached its ‘wholeness’. (1962/BT)

This signifies a “lack of totality” - an incompleteness - of Dasein interpreted only as care. Dasein as an ontological unity is not fully disclosed in terms of care: its essential, continuous ahead-of-itselfness towards its potentiality-for-being:

The ‘ahead-of-itself’, as an item in the structure of care, tells us unambiguously that in Dasein there is always something still outstanding which, as a potentiality-for-being for Dasein itself, has not yet become ‘actual’. (1962/BT)

Dasein cannot be experienced concretely as a whole. It lies beyond the reach of any science which seeks a comprehensive explanation of human being in the ‘what it is’ of this phenomenon. Such scientific endeavours are doomed to giving partial explanations of temporal phenomena because they end up attending objectively to the present reality of those phenomena which effectively elides the historical and futural dimensions of their existence. Thus, in the humanities and social sciences, temporal phenomena tend to be construed in curtailed terms as the ‘real presence’ of an intentional subject, or as the ‘real presence’ of an inter-subjective intentional “we” as a social fact.

An emphasis on the phenomenon of intentionality is a common feature of such attempts to explain human being because it apparently provides a basic yet distinctive, *present* phenomenon as a cornerstone upon which to theorize *what the human is*. An exclusively epistemological focus on presence covers over the full-fledged temporality of human being and especially its futurity which, as it turns out, is crucial for describing the being of human beings comprehensively.

Dasein's being-towards-ending in death as the horizon of care

Yet, Heidegger asks whether that which is temporal and always ahead-of-itself - that which is care - can be construed as a whole. The answer, for Heidegger, lies in:

the task of characterizing ontologically Dasein's being-at-an-end and of achieving an existential conception of death. (1962/BT)

The existential conception of Dasein's finitude and death is to be found by "defining the phenomena which are constitutive for it, such as "end" and "totality"" (1962/BT). Dasein's dying is its *ending* as being-in-the-world. Dasein's death is "by its very essence ... in every case mine", and "mineness and existentiality are ontologically constitutive for death" (1962/BT). For Heidegger, an ontological interpretation of Dasein's ending in death is not to be found in taking it as something "still outstanding" since this "not-yet" belongs to the "kind of being of something ready-to-hand". Nor is it to be taken as "fulfilling oneself" as in the ripening of fruit. Nor also is it "getting finished" or "disappearing" which also pertain to the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand. Rather, Dasein's "not-yet" is already included in its very being.

The "ending" which we have in view when we speak of death, does not signify Dasein's being-at-an-end [*Zu-Ende-sein*], but a being-towards-the-end [*Sein zum Ende*] of this entity. (1962/BT)

Thus, Dasein's "*dying* stand[s] for that *way of being* in which Dasein is *towards* its death" (1962/BT) rather than its death as merely an event which has not yet occurred.

The ontologically positive account of Dasein's death ("the end of Dasein") and its *being-towards-ending* in death must be given in terms of the fundamental characteristics of care as Dasein's basic state of being; that is, in terms of Dasein's being as existence (the ahead-of-its-self), facticity (the being-already-in), and falling (the being-alongside). In Heidegger's positive account, death is described as Dasein's "ownmost" and thus "non-relational", "uttermost" possibility.

As potentiality-for-being, Dasein cannot outstrip the possibility of death. Death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein. (1962/BT)

This possibility is disclosed to Dasein in its thrownness and in its being ahead-of-itself; "Dasein exists as thrown being *towards* its end". Dasein's temporality is not open-ended and eternal; Dasein is futural but not without end. However, Dasein, for the most part, "flees in the face of" its being-towards-death, and its factual way of dying is "by way of falling" into the world of its concern and into the "they". On this basis, Heidegger shows that in Dasein's everydayness "dying is grounded in care", and even though it tends to be evaded, it is nevertheless "constantly an issue for Dasein" (1962/BT).

Heidegger lays out "the full existential conception of death by rounding out the Interpretation of everyday being-towards-the-end" (1962/BT). An important aspect of this rounding out is to resolve the "ambiguous manner" in which the *certainty of death* comes across in everydayness, as something that happens "sometime, but not right away". Moreover, a scientific interpretation of the *empirical* certainty of Dasein's "demise" is also unsatisfactory for indicating the stringent, more apophantic certainty of Dasein's death:

The fact that demise, as an event which occurs, is 'only' empirically certain, is in no way decisive as to the certainty of death. (1962/BT)

The certainty of Dasein's death is such that "it is possible at any moment", its "when" is indefinite. Death is "a possibility which is certain and at the same time indefinite" (1962/BT). On this basis Heidegger gives the ontological definition of Dasein's death:

... death, as the end of Dasein, is Dasein's ownmost possibility – non-relational, certain and as such indefinite, not to be outstripped. Death is, as Dasein's end, in the being of this entity towards its end. (1962/BT)

Primordial Dasein as the unity of care and being-towards-ending

This being-towards-death that is grounded in care is the conception of Dasein's primordial being as a totality and provides a comprehensive description of Dasein's primordial futurity. This undifferentiated indication of Dasein's primordial being underlies its modal differentiation and individualises each Dasein since "in its being-towards-death Dasein has always decided itself in one way or another" (1962/BT). In terms of modal differentiation, Dasein, for the most part, is inauthentic in its being-towards-death by a "falling evasion" of the certainty of its death. However, "Dasein does not necessarily and constantly have to divert itself into this [inauthentic] kind of being". An authentic being-towards-its-end is possible for Dasein both ontologically and ontically. This is not the possibility of "actualizing" Dasein's death nor of "dwelling upon the end in its possibility" (1962/BT) as something awaited. Rather, authentic being-towards-death involves "*anticipation of this possibility*" "*as the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all*" (1962/BT).

Anticipation turns out to be the possibility of understanding one's ownmost and uttermost potentiality-for-being – that is to say, the possibility of authentic existence. (1962/BT)

Authentic Dasein understands its being-towards-death and its own possibility of being in its wholeness and is thus freed for its fullest potentiality-for-being. Inauthentic Dasein flees from its death and covers over its being-towards-

death, and in so doing, does not understand itself in its wholeness, and in this evasion its potentiality-for-being is misunderstood and curtailed.

It is clear from the interpretation of Dasein as an ontological unity that it is a primally futural being. Both care and being-towards-ending are engagements with possibility understood in ontological terms. As the totality of care-grounded-in-death, primordial Dasein's being is primally oriented towards the future. Moreover, Dasein's modal ways of being are also interpreted in terms of modes of futurity. Authentic Dasein's futurity is characterised as centred upon Dasein's own potentiality-for-being and its anticipatory being-towards-death, whereas inauthentic Dasein's futurity is fallen in being diverted from its own potentiality-for-being and by its evasion of its own death. The ontological notion of futurity is implicit in the very beginning of Heidegger's early project in the notion of the temporality of being-in-the-world, it is interpretatively woven into the analytic of Dasein, and it is vital to the description of Dasein's being an ontological unity.

8.2. The primordial futurity of organizational being as the totality of telic end-ing and as being-towards-ending in dissolution

Organizational being does not dispose of consciousness and so it is not a kind of being that can be *self*-conscious. Yet, as described in Chapter 7, organizational being interpreted as being-in-the-world disposes of a distinctive temporal self-hood without first-personal mineness. This conception of organizational self-hood is the locus of the ontological unity of organizational being. However, this self-hood, understood as the organizational *subiectum* of strategy, is merely a beginning of the description of organizational strategic being - it is the notion of *futurity* that avails a way to a disclosure of organizational strategic being as an ontological unity.

Dasein's futurity is ontologically determined by the connection between care as Dasein's basic state of being ahead-of-itself-already-in-the-world, and Dasein's being-towards-the-end in its death. *Organizational* being-a-whole may also be found in the connection between its *basic state of being* and its *being-towards-ending in dissolution*. The applicability of this schema is due only to the fact that organizational being, like Dasein, is an entity whose temporality disposes it to its way of being a *strategic* being-in-the-world. However, this is as far as the similitude of being between Dasein and organizational being goes in terms of descriptive *content*, even though we continue the *schematic* analogy which is still cogent for our interpretative purpose.

Thinking analogically, we have already found differences between the items of Dasein's being-in-the-world and those of *organizational* being-in-the-world, which as ontological differences are to be taken seriously. This is just as well since, heeding Heidegger's injunction, organizational being must ultimately be thought in terms of its distinctive way of being. Even though organizational being is entwined with human being, it is not to be confused or conflated with human being.

While neither Dasein's care, nor Dasein's being-towards-ending in death are indicative *per se* for organizational being, both care and being-towards-ending are synthetic interpretations of more basic *existentialia* of Dasein. Thinking schematically in this way leads us back to *thrown projection* and *being ahead-of-itself* as constitutive of Dasein's care; and, it leads us back from Dasein's distinctive finitude to the broader notion of *ending (in dissolution)*. This gives us the questions: If not care, what is the state of being of primordial organizational being?; And, if not in death, how does organizational being end? We turn first to the task of describing the *undifferentiated state of being* of organizational strategic being.

The primordial state of organizational being as telic end-ing

What can we glean from Dasein as care for our thinking of the state of being of organizational strategic being? Dasein as care is steeped in a reflexivity that organizational being does not dispose of. Care is how Dasein discloses *itself to itself*. That Dasein is “disclosed to itself in its being” is the point of departure for interpreting Dasein’s being-in-the-world as a totality. Both *Befindlichkeit* and understanding, the items of being-in-the-world which are especially relevant to disclosing Dasein’s being, involve self-reflexivity. Moreover, for Heidegger, the “pre-ontological confirmation” of Dasein as care is carried out by demonstrating that any expression of Dasein “about itself to itself” already rests upon having interpreted itself as care. However, the essential reflexivity of care should not be taken primarily in the sense of the “isolated attitude of the ‘I’ towards itself” (1962/BT). Heidegger explicitly distances “the *solus ipse*” of Dasein as care from the traditional conception of the I as an “isolated subject-Thing” that is “denuded of its world” (Kisiel, 2010).

Care is a *telic* state of being - its for-the-sake-of-which is Dasein’s potentiality-for-being. Care is Dasein’s general directedness, its being a *telic end-ing*, towards the final end of its own potentiality-for-being. For Aristotle (in *Metaphysics*, in Allen, 1966) “the end, is one of the causes”: the *causa finalis* or final cause:

the Final cause of a thing is an *end*, and is such that it does not happen for the sake of something else, but all other things happen for its sake.

Heidegger does not understand ends as specific ontic goals. Rather, following Aristotle for whom “the end is a limit” (Allen, 1966), Heidegger interprets the *causa finalis* of Dasein in ontological terms as the *limit* of its very being, the ultimate for-the-sake-which of its very existence. Thus, as the totality of care-and-death, primordial Dasein is ‘rounded out’ as a whole such that *care* is brought back to its potentiality-for-being from the truth of its uttermost ending

in death. Dasein is authentic when its distinctive telic end-ing (as care) is in accord with the truth of its ending in death. Dasein is inauthentic when its telic end-ing is out of kilter with the truth of its ending in death. In Dasein's futurity, which describes the ontological limits of this being, the senses of *ending in death* and the *telic end-ing of care* are equiprimordial. Death as such is not the *telic end* – authentic Dasein does not pursue its own death nor does inauthentic Dasein for the most part. The locus of authentic Dasein's referential totality – of its entire sense of significance – is its telic end-ing towards its ownmost potentiality-for-being.

Understanding primordial Dasein's state of being as care in this way gives us a way to approach the state of being of organizational being as a distinctive kind of telic end-ing which is *not* that of care. The *futurity* of organizational being as a totality - which describes the ontological limits of this kind of being - may also be thought from two ontological angles: as the being-towards-ending in dissolution of this entity; and, in the telic sense of an ontological *causa finalis*: as a general state of being of *telic end-ing*.

An indication of the futural orientation of organizations is that they are understood in everyday terms as being towards achieving some end or ends even if it is not always clear what these might be. The prevalent everyday understanding of organizations is that they are *teleological* entities directed towards ends. The idea of an organization without any ends at all is entirely foreign to this understanding.

The everyday ubiquity of strategy among organizations attests to this since it is the rubric under which the working out, measurement, and revisioning of organizational ends is undertaken on an ongoing basis. The working out and pursuit of organizational ends permeates the everyday practice of organizational strategy. Indeed, the formulation and execution of organizational-level ends is understood in practice as the *raison d'être* of

organizational strategy. Business organizations, for example, for the most part pursue profit maximization as the overt, primary organizational end. In such organizations the referential totality of significance is oriented towards this putative final end. In contrast, public benefit organizations pursue declared ends such as “to maintain price stability in the national economy” (SARB, 2019); or “to ensure the ability of the earth to nurture life in all its diversity” (Greenpeace, 2020). It should be noted here that organizations do not always issue such succinct and overt declarations of their final ends, and, of course, stated organizational ends are not always the same as operative ends. Moreover, even the operative ends of an organization can be pluralistic and in tension with each other. Yet, having ends is so much a part of the everyday understanding of organizations that this does not change even when there is confusion and strife about what the organizational ends are and ought to be, or even when organizational ends are secret and may even involve subterfuge.

Another way to clarify the meaning of *telic end-ing* is to counterpose it with ‘means-ing’. This neologism, which is coined to describe Heidegger’s interpretation of the essence of technology, cogently refers to the ongoing organizational process of making, finding, attracting, holding, and deploying *means*. Organizations certainly involve means, and organizational being incorporates means-ing; however, organizational means are always directed towards the pursuit of organizational *ends*, and organizational means-ing is ontologically subsidiary to the organizational state of being of *telic end-ing*. All other aims, goals, objectives, and outcomes of an organization are understood as pointed towards organizational ends which are typically expressed as visions, missions, ‘the bottom-line’, and so on, which operate at the level of the organization as a whole. Such final ends, which lie in the future and animate organizational activity, are of the highest significance in the referential totality of each organization. This pre-reflective, everyday understanding of organizations as always involving organizational-level ends

points decisively to the *existentiale* of the organizational state of being of telic end-ing.

Telic end-ing describes the state of organizational being that is pointed to concretely when we speak of organizational goals, objectives, visions, missions and purposes. Telic end-ing is the state of organizational being of purposiveness, it is the character of organizational being-in-the-world as concernfully oriented towards its possibilities. Telic end-ing is concerned organizational being-in-the-world that is temporal, ahead-of-itself, and the irreducible locus of its own referential totality of significance.

Together with being-towards-ending (in dissolution), telic end-ing is one of the ontological items that is definitive of organizational futurity. That is to say, telic end-ing is a crucial condition of the organizational engagement with the contingent future; organizational being exists in the state of being of telic end-ing and this accounts for its being an inherently strategic being. Telic end-ing is not merely about the many specific goals, aims, and objectives of organizations but is rather about how the very state of organizational being is to be always concernfully oriented towards ends. All specific organizational goals and purposes are conditioned by and belong to the underlying *existentiale* of organizational telic end-ing.

Dasein's state of being as care is always directed towards the end of its own potentiality-for-being. That is, care is a telic end-ing towards a specified final end. In contrast, the state of organizational being as telic end-ing is *indeterminate at the primordial level of description*. This is a major difference between primordial Dasein and primordial organizational being. Primordial organizational telic end-ing is more open-ended in that we cannot identify its for-the-sake-of-which at this level. Thus, organizational telic end-ing can only be fully described in *modal terms* when we may be able to fix upon the final ends which are *existentiell* differentiations of the primordial *existentiale* of

organizational being as telic end-ing. These modes of organizational telic ending are speculatively described in Chapter 9.

Primordial organizational being-towards-ending in dissolution

What can we glean from Heidegger's interpretation of Dasein's finitude and death? For Dasein, death is the uttermost ending of all its telic ends, whereas the ending of organizational being is not determined in this way. For Dasein, death is the constant yet indeterminate possibility of its *certain ending*, whereas organizational being, because it is not alive in the first place, does not end in death at all. This is not to say that organizational being is eternal being that does not come to an ending. Rather, it is to say that the ending of organizational being is ontologically different from Dasein's ending. Organizational ending is of a fundamentally different kind and *organizational being-towards-an-end* cannot be thought in terms of Dasein's way of dying.

Whereas the *when* and *how* of Dasein's concrete death is uncertain, the *that* of its death is an ontological certainty. The ending of Dasein is characterized as the constant possibility of *certain* death. In contrast, the *ending* of primordial organizational being is indeterminate both in terms of its *when* and in terms of its *that*. Thus, in contrast to Dasein's death, the ending of primordial organizational being is the constant possibility of *possible* dissolution. Although organizations are beings which can end and do end, they do not necessarily have come to an end.

Organizational *dissolution* is not the same as Dasein's death. This is a major difference since Dasein's death is a central fact of Dasein-as-a-whole. The implication of primordial Dasein's distinctive finitude is that it provides an ontologically determinate *ending* as the limit of Dasein's possibility. For Dasein, death is the horizon beyond which it cannot go *as* Dasein. It is in facing up to the certainty of death in "resolute anticipation" (rather than in expectation which awaits death) which brings authentic Dasein back to its potentiality-for-

being and frees it for its fullest potentiality-for-being. Organizational ending in dissolution does not include such a determinate horizontal ending as a universal fact of organizational existence.

Yet, any description of organizational being as a unity depends on the proper interpretation of its way of ending in dissolution. If not in death, how does primordial organizational being end? What is the existential limit of organizational strategic being that returns it to its state of being as telic ending? What is the “uttermost” possibility of organizational being-in-the-world? Stated in the register of Being and Time, this is firstly an asking about what the undifferentiated *ending* of organizational being is.

Organizational ending needs to be considered in its distinctiveness. We need to step back from Dasein’s death to consider the structure of organizational *ending in dissolution*. Organizational being involves selfhood and the constant concern that goes with it. Organizations are, for the most part, attuned to what is of existence-relevance. The empirical ubiquity of SWOT analysis is evidence of this constant attunement to threat, which at the level of organizational strategy is properly about *existence-relevant* threats. In its being a constant feature, organizational being-towards-the-possibility-of-ending is an *existential* of organizational being. Each organization is oriented towards its own ending as a constant yet *contingent* possibility.

Compared with primordial Dasein’s totality as care horizoned by death, the telic end-ing of organizational being gains some priority over its ending in dissolution since its possibility of dissolution is contingent rather than certain. Being-towards-the-*possibility*-of-ending, which is an *existential* of organizational being, is not the same as being-towards-the-*certainty*-of-ending which is an *existential* of Dasein. For organizational being, being-towards-ending is *ontologically* contingent.

Some organizations are understood concretely as perpetual beings, such as the UN or Amazon, for example, that do not have to face their dissolution as a certainty, whereas other organizations are understood as beings of limited duration, such as the Catholic Church, for example, which must face the certainty of its dissolution if it is to be in consonance with the certainty of the end of days of the Christian eschatology.

Both perpetual and temporary organizations must face the constant primordial *possibility-of-ending*. But only ‘temporary’ organizations must also face the constant *certainty-of-ending*, not as an essential feature of primordial organizational being, but as a *modal* feature which contingently determines the being of each durational organization. Hence, the ending of organizational being in its dissolution can only be fully interpreted modally. This task is undertaken in Chapter 9.

8.3. The primordial notion of organizational futurity

We considered Dasein’s futurity in Chapter 6. In doing so, the notion of futurity was taken as a beginning for the thinking of organizational strategic being. This may appear to be somewhat of a reversal of the order in which Heidegger lays out his project in *Being and Time*. “Futural” (*Zukunftig*) and “futurity” (*Zukunftigkeit*) appear towards the end of the book and are a culmination of the interpretation of Dasein. However, if we look away from the nominal, we find that the ideas associated with and denoted by the signifiers “futural” and “futurity” are implicated throughout Heidegger’s early project. Heidegger finds in the temporality of human being the crucial point of departure for a hermeneutic phenomenology distinguished from Husserl’s phenomenology. Hence Heidegger’s steadfast commitment to Dasein’s full-fledged temporality as the crucial ontological fact of its being.

The ontological truth of organizational strategic being also lies in its distinctive temporality. Properly interpreted as organizational futurity, the temporality of organizational being discloses the redundancy of the term ‘strategic’ in ‘organizational strategic being’. If we accept and consider the temporality of organizational being, we see that it is a kind of being-in-the-world that is futural and thus essentially engaged with the future. That is, it is an ontological fact of organizational being that it is a strategic kind of being. The distinctive temporality of organizational being is described in the ontological structure of *its primordial futurity* which is constituted in the interplay between its state of being as telic end-ing and its being-towards-ending in dissolution.

Telic end-ing as an ontological item of organizational futurity

Organizational being is thrown projection, it is always ahead-of-itself. This state of being, which we described as *telic end-ing*, is thoroughly futural in its directedness towards possibilities. The referential totality of organizational concern, meaning and significance is involved in this telic end-ing towards the organizational for-the-sake-of-which: its telic end or ends. Telic ends lie in the future and the state of being of telic end-ing is thus a determining feature of organizational futurity.

As a totality, Dasein’s own potentiality-for-being is its determinate for-the-sake-of-which. However, without mineness, primordial organizational being is cut adrift from such a *determinate* for-the-sake-of-which. The telic end-ing of organizational being is thus only partially described at the primordial level since the crucial aspect, the for-the-sake-of-which, is only discernable in the modal differentiation of telic end-ing (treated in more detail in Chapter 9). This follows from the conclusion that the *organizational* for-the-sake-of-which – its final end - *is ontologically indeterminate at the primordial level of description*. This leads us to the question: what does ‘being true to one’s being’ mean when thinking about organizational being? Does the idea of authenticity make any

ontological sense when we are talking about organizational being? Organizations can and do concretely and explicitly pursue their own potentiality-for-being, however, this is not an exhortative requirement for any notion of organizational authenticity. Without mineness, organizational being can be a telic-end-ing towards *any* for-the-sake-of-which. Thus, without having a specified for-the-sake-of-which, the only principle of organizational authenticity is that of the consonance of telic end-ing and being-towards-ending in dissolution, both of which are only discernable in modal terms. In this sense, primordial organizational being has wider range in its latitude for being because its for-the-sake-of-which is open-ended and modal rather than being limited and essential.

Organizations are widely understood as having aims, goals, objectives and purposes. These are the ontic manifestations of the ontological state of being of telic end-ing towards a modal for-the-sake-of-which. Organizations may or may not prioritise their own potentiality-for-being. Thus, organizations may also be instrumentalized in prioritising some other telic end or ends which supersede its own potentiality-for-being. The modality of organizational potentiality-for-being places it beyond the description of primordial organizational futurity. This is an important conclusion since it points to a thinner conception of primordial organizational futurity, yet with wider possibilities in the *modes* of organizational futurity.

Being-towards-ending in dissolution as an ontological item of organizational futurity

Organizational strategic being, in addition to its state of being of *telic end-ing*, also involves being towards the possibility of its own *possible ending in dissolution*. The word possible in the previous sentence is not a redundancy given the form of the description of Dasein's being-towards-death as being towards the constant possibility of *certain* death. Primordial organizational

being-towards-ending is also thoroughly futural in its being constantly towards the *possibility* of ending in dissolution. As long as primordial organizational being *is*, it involves the possibility of its own dissolution *as a possibility*, not as a certainty or necessity. Being-towards-the-*possibility*-of-dissolution is thus an *existentiale* of primordial organizational being and is a determining item of organizational futurity.

Primordial Dasein's existential possibility is horizoned by the certainty of its death. This is a decisive limit of its futurity beyond which it cannot be. In contrast, organizational being does not involve the certainty of its dissolution as an essential feature of its *primordial* being. The open-endedness of primordial organizational ending is thus more radically open to possibility than is the case for primordial Dasein. It is no wonder then that strategy reaches its highest form among organisations. Organizational being's existential possibility for being - its futurity - is not *primordially* limited in the way that Dasein's possibility for being is limited by its being-towards-ending in death. Organizational being involves a *modal plane* which Dasein does not dispose of in its being: that of the modes of *organizational being-towards-ending in dissolution*. Dasein has only one way of dying, whereas organizational ending in dissolution is open to *existentiell* modifications of primordial organizational futurity. Here again we see organizational futurity in terms of its *primordially* indeterminate way of being-towards-the possibility of its dissolution. The determinate ways of organizational being-towards-ending in dissolution belong entirely to the *modes* of organizational futurity rather than to its primordial conception. We can only get a comprehensive view of organizational strategic being by describing its *modes* of being-towards-ending in dissolution.

A summative description of primordial organizational futurity

Existent organization also “exists as that which is always running ahead of itself; always pressing ahead into possibility” (Bakken *et al*, 2013). In this study, the organizational engagement with the future is given priority among the ecstases of organizational temporality. This avails an alternative perspective to that taken in extant process theories of organization where the organizational engagement with the future is approached as derivative among the relations of organizational temporality.

The notion of organizational futurity helps us to understand that and how organizational being already involves a crucial futural orientation prior to any accidental organizational behaviour, and indeed what this might mean for such behaviour. Thus, the emphasis is shifted backwards from thinking how organization is a coping with in-principle contingency by bare knowing, adapting, doing, and making, to a more basic problematization of how organizational being is a coping with the prior fact of futurity. Organization already involves a standing toward what is to come – it is an inherently futural phenomenon. If prospective knowing is a straining, looking ahead to discern what is to come, and retrospective knowing is a looking behind to discern what has been in order to better understand what is to come, then organizational futurity is the prior orientation of engagement with the future which conditions both of these kinds of knowing.

Organizational futurity is constitutive of the organizational engagement with the contingent future. That is, the phenomenon of organizational strategy is constituted in organizational futurity. Thus, primordial organizational futurity underlies all the ideal-typical behavioural modes of organizational strategy. What is yet to become of each organizational being is not exhausted in the possibilities of organizational knowing, adapting, making, or doing. Organizational futurity is the basis of the crucial orientation of organization

toward the future that is presupposed in all strategy theories. We would read a strong commitment to prognostic knowledge as a modality, among other modalities, of organizational futurity; just as we would read retrospective sensemaking as a modality of organizational futurity. The behavioural processes of organizational strategy are conditioned by organizational futurity wherein significance and meaning are stipulated and sifted. In this way, we gain entry to understanding how organizational futurity precedes organizational strategic behaviour but may also exceed it. As the possibilities of organizational behaviour wax and wane, so the engagement with what is yet to come continues to be effected and is also sustained in the intelligibility and ongoing working out of organizational futurity.

Organizational being's primordial state of being is telic end-ing. Concretely, organizations all pursue purposes, goals, aims, targets, and so on, however, this kind of behaviour is grounded in the ontological notion of *organizational telic end-ing*. The outermost possibility of primordial organizational being - the limit of its telic end-ing - is only circumscribed by the possibility of ending in dissolution. Thus, the undifferentiated notion of organizational futurity is held equiprimordially in the telic end-ing and being-towards-the-possibility-of-ending in dissolution of organizational strategic being. The ontological distinctiveness of organizational telic end-ing and being-towards-the-possibility of ending is decisive for the distinctiveness of *organizational futurity*. Whereas Dasein's primordial unity was found in *care horizoned by the certainty of death*, organizational strategic being's primordial unity is found in *telic end-ing horizoned by the possibility of dissolution*. The horizational, existential possibilities of organizational being are thus circumscribed in organizational futurity.

Dasein's primordial futurity is a 'thick' ontological concept because it includes its death *as a certainty*; Dasein's death is not a modal condition. This is not availed in primordial organizational futurity which is a 'thinner' ontological

concept; a holistic account of organizational futurity cannot be given at the primordial level of interpretation. A comprehensive account of organizational ending can only be given modally. The primordial futurity of organizational being is formally indicative and so individuates organizations in their *own* futurities. Thus, organizational being's existential futurity is distributed as each organization's *existentiell* futurity.

Chapter 9

The modes of organizational futurity

The theses of the thrown projection and aheadness of human existence are Heidegger's most radical departures from Husserl's phenomenology. This leads him to describe Dasein's temporality in terms of its distinctive futurity rather than in terms of the appearing of what is present to subjective consciousness. In a schematically analogous way, the temporality of organizational being and the priority of the future ecstasis therein are posited in this study as constitutive of organizational strategic being. Thus, the ontological unity of organizational strategic being may also be described by interpreting its primordial futurity in terms its state of being as telic end-ing, and its being-towards-ending in dissolution.

However, in contrast to Dasein's futurity, *primordial* organizational futurity is a descriptively thinner notion since the items of organizational futurity, both the state of organizational being as telic end-ing and its being-towards-ending in dissolution, are indeterminate. At the primordial level of interpretation, organizational futurity remains indistinct. Hence, to get to a more filled out description of organizational futurity we must depart from the ontological schema of Dasein's futurity. To describe organizational futurity more fully we must turn instead to the *existentiell* modes of the ontological items of organizational being. What are the most basic ways in which the *existentiale* of organizational *telic end-ing* is differentiated? What are the most basic ways in which the *existentiale* of organizational *being-towards-ending in dissolution* is differentiated? These two dimensions of modal differentiation, when combined, disclose the basic ontico-ontological modes of organizational futurity.

In this chapter, we go from the primordial, undifferentiated notion of organizational futurity to an interpretative description of the basic *modes* of organizational futurity. In Section 9.1, we consider the treatment of organizational ends and endings in strategy theory and in the process ontologies of organization. In Section 9.2, we set out the modal principles of organizational strategic being which allows us to identify the basic modes of telic end-ing, and of ending in dissolution. In Section, 9.3, these separate modal dimensions are combined to describe the basic modes of organizational futurity in terms of the interplays between the modes of telic end-ing and the modes of ending in dissolution. In Section 9.4, the most prevalent of these modes are illustrated in brief interpretations of the concrete futurities of Amazon, the Catholic Church, and the South African Reserve Bank. Section 9.5 sums up the chapter.

9.1. Organizational ends and endings in strategy theory and process theories of organization

How are the ontological items of organizational futurity, telic end-ing and being-towards-ending in dissolution, treated in extant theory? In this section we consider whether and how these items appear in the discourse of strategy theory and in the discourse of process theories of organization.

The agnosticism of rigorous strategy theory in regard to organizational ends and ending in dissolution

The modes of rigorous organizational strategy theory that are identified in Chapter 3 are the various ideal-typical behavioural bases on which organizations in general are presumed to engage with the contingent future. However, these theoretical modes do *not* include specifications of organizational final ends. For example, the orthodox theory of strategic planning, which is in the strategy-as-knowing mode of theory, posits the

knowledge that comes from formal and rational strategic planning as *the* basis for working out and pursuing organizational ends, irrespective of what these ends might be. Similarly, general strategy theories in the adapting, making, and doing modes are also agnostic about organizational ends. Indeed, strategy theories typically posit the working out of the goals and final ends of organizations as *effects* of strategic behaviour. Thus, the theoretical modes of rigorous strategy theory do not disclose the *existentiell* modes of organizational telic end-ing which we are seeking here.

Of greater explicit significance in general strategy theory are the ways in which the different modes of strategy are mapped to different kinds of environmental conditions. For example, theories in the adapting mode of strategy tend to be grounded in claims about providing better explanations of organizational strategy in environments that are unstable and unpredictable, whereas theories in the knowing mode presume that the environment and environmental trends are stable and legible enough to inform strategic planning. The different modes of strategy theory all involve different explicit understandings of the relation between organizations and the environments in which they are taken to exist. In theory, the primary determinants of the modes of strategy are the different behavioural bases upon which organizational strategy is undertaken, and the different understandings of the nature of the organization-environment relation.

The agnosticism in strategy theory about organizational ends is also reflected in the modes that are identified in Ansoff's (1987) and Mintzberg's (1973) taxonomies of organizational strategy theory. This is to be expected since these taxonomies operate at a generic level and proceed from the background assumption that all organizations involve the pursuit of some or other ends. Even those theories of strategy which de-emphasise the teleological character of organizational strategy, such as the strategy-as-practice perspective for instance, do not deny organizational ends *as such*. Thus, the telic nature of

organizations as oriented towards organizational-level ends is presumed in strategy theory in a backgrounded way and is not an aspect which is problematised any further than this. Nevertheless, although general theories of organizational strategy are agnostic about organizational ends they do point implicitly to the telic end-ing of organizations as a basic characteristic. In its very backgroundedness and taken-for-grantedness, the telic end-ing of organizations is assumed pre-theoretically in general strategy theories and this gives some confirmation of the status of organizational telic end-ing as an *existentiale* of organizational being.

How are organizational ends treated in the special theories of organizational strategy? Special theories are those that are aimed at a specific category of organizations. For example, theories of *business* strategy aim to provide explanations of organizational strategy that are only applicable to the category of business organizations. The categorizations of kinds of organization that underlie such special theories are related to specific kinds of organizational ends. Business strategy theories are specifically about the category of organizations that pursue the end of organizational profits, whereas strategy theories of public benefit organizations are about organizations that pursue other kinds of ends. Thus, whereas general theories of strategy are agnostic about organizational ends, special theories often categorize organizations on the basis of the different kinds of final ends that they pursue. The more specific a special theory is, the more it brings particular organizational ends into view. Thus, the categorizations which underlie the special theories of organizational strategy point more decisively to the *modes* of organizational telic end-ing.

How is organizational ending in dissolution treated in strategy theory? Organizational ending in dissolution is not treated explicitly in general theories nor in the special theories of organizational strategy. Thus, we do not find any treatments in these theories of modes of organizational ending and certainly not any treatment of modes of the *existentiale* of being-towards-ending in

dissolution which we are interested in describing here. What we do find, however, is the converse in that the general theories of strategy include the implicit assumption that organizations are perpetual and open-ended rather than temporary phenomena. Although organizational dissolution is not attended to in strategy theory, it is discernable as an ever-present background possibility which is to be avoided by organizations which could, in principle, go on in perpetuity. Indeed, one of the primary arguments made for organizational strategy is that strategic organizations are in a better position to stave off the possibility of ending in dissolution.

Both of the ontological items of organizational futurity are discernable among the background assumptions of general and special theories of organizational strategy. The implicit assumption in general strategy theory is that organizations are perpetual phenomena that pursue some or other ends in the face of the possibility of ending prematurely in dissolution. However, these ontological items are rarely treated *thematically* in extant theories of strategy and of organization.

The relegation of organizational ends and ending in process theories of organization

In process theories of organization (as a verb) we find a more pronounced reticence about organizational ends and ending in dissolution. For example, Weick's sensemaking theory of organization emphasises the ongoing process of organizing but does not attend to any *ends* of organizing nor to its dissolution. We find the same tendency in the Whiteheadian-inspired PROS ontology of organization. In Chapter 5 we saw that Weick's sensemaking theory, and the Whiteheadian-inspired process ontology of organization offer *immanentist* accounts of organizing rather than teleological accounts. That is, these theoretical frameworks describe organisational being in terms of the operation of immanent processes that are constitutive of organizing in general

without any explicit reference to organizational ends nor to organizational ending in dissolution.

Weick's sensemaking theory describes the ongoing situated process of sensemaking as prior to the telic ends of organizing, and as independent of the possibility of its ending in dissolution. Organizing is constituted in sensemaking which is understood as an ongoing, continuous process of meaning-making in social psychological settings. Following Schutz, the futural orientation of actors in their ongoing everyday action is put out of bounds for sensemaking theory. Thus, how actors orient towards the ends of organizing, and how that organizing might end in dissolution fall outside the conceptual ambit of sensemaking theory.

The Whiteheadian-inspired process ontology of organization is also immanentist and accords priority to the unfolding of the organizational present-continuous on the basis of the past. As we have seen, this ontology accords derivative status to the organizational engagement with the contingent future and therefore does not avail a theory of strategy. In this ontology, organizational ends have no ontological pride of place since they are taken to be merely processual effects of underlying processes. And since continuity is emphasised, organizational ending in dissolution is ignored. This is to be expected since the very idea of organizational self-hood is ruled out.

What is common among these process frameworks is that they emphasise the idea of organization as a verb, as always underway, as a present-continuous process. The idea of *organizational self-hood* as the locus of organizational being is thus anathema. These process ontologies do not avail a *positive* account of the modes of organizational futurity which are grounded in organizational telic end-ing and being-towards-ending because they eschew organisational self-hood.

Heidegger's notion of ontological characteristics of being as prior to and formally indicative of all concrete instances is counterposed to the immanentist

understanding of ontological characteristics which is definitive of extant process theories of organization. In these theories, all organizational phenomena, including strategy and organizational ends and endings, are understood as immanent in and thus fully reducible to a sub-stratum of processual micro-phenomena. In contrast, in a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, the phenomena of telic end-ing and being-towards-ending in dissolution are accorded ontological priority.

9.2. The modal dimensions of organizational futurity: an interpretation of the basic modes of telic end-ing and being-towards-ending

How can we relate the foregoing discussion of the categorial conceptions of organizational ends to the *existentiale* of the organizational state of being of telic end-ing? And how can we relate the theoretical backgroundedness of organizational coming to an end to the *existentiale* of organizational being-towards-ending in dissolution?

We found in Chapter 8 that the primordial conception of organizational futurity is thin in the sense that both its constitutive items, its telic end-ing and its ending in dissolution, are modally indeterminate *at the primordial level of interpretation*. Thus, we need to interpret *both* items of organizational futurity by attending to their ontico-ontological modality, since we cannot rely on an analogy between primordial Dasein's death and primordial organizational being's ending in dissolution to do so.

In this section (9.2) we describe the modes of these items of organizational futurity separately, and then combine them in Section 9.3 to describe and illustrate the modal combinations of organizational futurity.

From the hermeneutic phenomenological perspective taken in this study, all concrete and categorial understandings of organizational ends and endings are grounded in and thus formally indicated in the existential modes of

organisational telic end-ing and ending in dissolution; and these basic modes, in turn, are formally indicated in the *primordial* items of telic end-ing and ending in dissolution which we described in Chapter 8. Thus, the approach here is not to extrapolate the modes of organizational futurity *empirically* from the concrete instances and categorial conceptions of organizational ends and endings. Rather, it is in interpreting these basic modes as ontico-ontological formal indications that we can properly relate the ontic manifold of organizational ends and endings to the ontological notions of telic end-ing and being-towards-ending in dissolution. However, this approach does not mean that the concrete and categorial may be ignored in our interpretations – if the everyday and theoretical conceptions of organizational ends and endings are understood as conditioned by prior ontological characteristics then we may take it that they also point more or less legibly *back* to these characteristics as prior, formal indications.

9.2.1. The modes of organizational *telic end-ing*

In Section 9.1 above, we find only tentative pointers in strategy theory to organizational telic end-ing and its modes, which remain conceptually backgrounded and even theoretically covered over. We also found that process accounts of organizing eschew the idea that organizing is a teleological process and so relegate organizational ends to epiphenomenal status. The theoretical agnosticism about and relegation of organizational ends is in stark contrast to the centrality of ends in the everyday understanding of strategy in practice that we found in Chapter 8. This pre-reflective, everyday understanding of organizations as always directed towards organizational-level ends points decisively to the *existentiale* of organizational telic end-ing. Here another difference between strategy theory and practice becomes apparent which is implicated in the rigour-relevance gap.

Primordial telic end-ing is the state of organizational being of projected purposiveness, it is the character of organizational being-in-the-world as concernfully oriented towards its possibilities. Telic end-ing is not merely about the many specific goals, aims, and objectives that permeate organizations but is more fundamentally about how the very state of organizational being is to be always concernfully oriented towards ends. The telic end-ing of organizational being is thus formally indicative of the categorial ends we find in theory and the concrete organizational ends that we find in practice. All specific organizational goals and purposes are conditioned by and belong conceptually to the underlying *existential* of organizational telic end-ing.

What can we glean about organizational ends in other fields? In Organization Theory and in economics we find holistic theories of organization that deal explicitly with organizational-level ends. In considering the modes of organizational telic end-ing here, it is these theoretical conceptions of the highest ends of organizations that are of special interest. From these generalizations of organizational ends we gain some positive insight to the modes of organizational telic end-ing.

Three basic modes of telic end-ing are discernable in everyday and extant categorial conceptions of organizational ends: (1) *economic* telic end-ing; (2) *homeostatic* telic end-ing; and, (3) *instrumental* telic end-ing. Each of these modes involve fundamentally different ways of organizational telic end-ing which are indicative of and condition specific organizational ends. These modes are summarised in Table 3 below, and are described in more detail thereafter.

The modes of organizational telic-ending	Description	Concrete exemplars	Theoretical exemplars
Economic	A state of organizational being that is dynamically oriented towards endogenous final ends which involve the maximisation and/or minimisation of variables under the condition of scarcity.	• Profit maximisation • Cost minimisation	• Maximum profits (Friedman, 1962) • Transaction cost minimisation (Coase, 1937)
Homeostatic	A state of organizational being that is dynamically oriented towards endogenous final ends which involve the maintenance or recovery of an organizational state or some state of equilibrium.	• Market share maintenance • Constant growth • Price stability	• The cybernetic model (Beer, 1984) • The autopoietic model (Luhmann, 1990)
Instrumental	A state of organizational being that is dynamically oriented towards endogenous instrumental ends and exogenously specified final ends.	• Bespoke project outcomes • Mandated outcomes	• Theories of project-based organization.

Table 3: Summary of the modes of organizational telic end-ing

The *economic* mode of organizational telic end-ing

In concrete terms, the economic mode of telic end-ing is most prominently at sway among business organizations and this typically involves the maximisation of profits as the overt organizational end. This mode is not

exclusive to business organizations and may also be expressed in non-financial terms. For example, it is also prevalent among contemporary public sector and public benefit organizations that operate on the basis of an efficiency principle in pursuit of service maximisation under the condition of fixed resource inputs. Other examples of organizational ends that are indicated by this mode include, for example, market share maximisation and marginal cost minimisation. Organizational economic ends among businesses are often represented in accounting terms in the constant measurement of return on investment (ROI), return on assets (ROA), earnings, and cost-to-income ratios. Strategy tools that are prevalent in practice are also indicated by this mode. For example, the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) growth/share matrix emphasises the maximisation of profits on the basis of market shares in different product/market segments.

The economic mode of organizational telic end-ing is most clearly exemplified in economic theories of the firm. The most prominent exemplar of a maximising theory of economic firms is that offered by Friedman (1962). Friedman explicitly theorizes the business organization as overtly in pursuit of “profit maximisation” (Friedman, 1962) as its final end which conditions all its subsidiary goals and aims. For Friedman (1962) the end of the business firm is:

... to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game.

In this view, business organizations are *for the sake of* “making maximum profits” (Friedman, 1962). Although Friedman emphasises “stockholders” as the recipients of the profits, there are other ways in which profits can be distributed. Apart from dividend payouts, profits can also be used to buy shares back from its stockholders, or be retained. Thus, the ways of distributing profits is not essential to understanding profit maximisation as an organizational telic end.

A prominent exemplar of a *minimizational* theory of economic firms is that offered by Coase (1937). In Coase's theory of the firm, the *raison d'être* of the firm is the minimisation of transaction costs. That is, firms exist because they are able to keep transaction costs below those that prevail in the market. For Coase, this is what explains why there are such things as firms at all rather than only markets. Coase is responding to the question of the firm in terms of Aristotle's first cause (the why or essence of a thing) rather than the question of its *causa finalis*. Thus, Coase's theory is agnostic about *final* organizational ends. The goal of transaction cost minimisation is thus not amenable to being cast as an economic organizational *end* since it is always pursued for the sake of achieving some other *final* end or ends which are left unspecified. Nevertheless, it is quite common for organizations to attach high significance to minimisation and this is reflective of the way in which the condition of scarcity shapes properly economic maximisational ends.

Economic ends, at the ontico-ontological level of interpretation, point to a distinctive mode of economic telic end-ing, Economic ends have the distinctive character of *maximising* under the general condition of *scarcity*. It is this character which qualifies ends as *economic* ends. This notion of economic ends is more general than the Aristotelian notion of the economic (in his treatment of the *oikonomia* of the household) which has "acquisition" as a "cause" of the household as an economic whole. As Aristotle says:

But besides the three factors [master/slave, marital union, and parental associations] which thus present themselves for examination there is also a fourth, which some regard as identical with the whole of household management, and others as its principal part. This is the element called 'the art of acquisition' (Politics Book I Section III, in Allen, 1966)

For Aristotle, it is the acquisition of means that captures the essence of the household holistically as an economic entity in terms of his first cause and

thus explains why this entity exists at all. Thus, Aristotle does not treat the household, as an economic entity, in terms of a *causa finalis*.

Having an economic end as a *causa finalis* means that organizational being is *for the sake of* that economic end. Thus, in ontico-ontological terms, the state of organizational being in the mode of *economic* telic end-ing is oriented towards an end or interrelated ends which are economic in that they are always qualified in terms of maximisation under the condition of scarcity. In this sense, for example, although profit *as such* is an economic notion it cannot serve as a specification of an economic end, whereas *profit maximisation under the condition of scarcity* does fully specify an economic organizational end. Maximisation is decisive here in that it qualifies the end and renders it as a principle of economic rationality which shapes organizational futurity in its telic end-ing.

Being in the mode of economic telic end-ing does not necessarily entail being oriented towards one unambiguous economic end, nor does it require the overt representation of economic ends. Organizations can be in this mode even if they have multiple economic ends which may be in a tension with each other. Moreover, organizations may be in this mode even if they make a loss, for example.

The economic mode of telic end-ing is distinguished from the instrumental mode discussed below in this section. In the economic mode the final ends of organizational being are endogenous to it, whereas in the instrumental mode the final ends are exogenous to organizational being. The economic mode is also distinguished from the homeostatic mode which is discussed next.

The *homeostatic* mode of organizational telic end-ing

If economic telic end-ing is depicted as an assertive organizational disposition towards maximisation, then homeostatic telic end-ing may be depicted as a stabilising disposition towards a state of equilibrium. In concrete terms, public sector organizations are often oriented towards ends in the homeostatic mode. Other kinds of organization may also be homeostatic in that they have fixed inputs and so seek to maintain steady outputs in order to maintain a balance between these or to maintain some stable standard of output. Examples of such organizations include publicly funded hospitals and schools. Business organizations, especially those in mature industries, may also be in the homeostatic mode in the same way. The accounting approach used in public organizations typically involves avoiding both deficits and surpluses, the ideal outcome being to achieve and maintain a net zero difference between income and expenses.

In Organization Theory, the homeostatic mode is indicative of especially *holistic* systems theories of organization. A prominent example is the “viable systems model (VSM)” of “organizational cybernetics” (Beer, 1984). According to Jackson (2003), the VSM is autopoietic and “[o]rganization, in this sense, is what defines a system and enables it to maintain autonomy and identity”. This model is not primarily about the description of particular structures or parts of organizations but is rather aimed at describing the “essential organization” as an autopoietic, systemic whole. Interestingly, the cybernetic model of organization is offered as generally applicable to all organizational systems including biological forms of organization. Although such theories are agnostic about final ends, they do highlight the importance of ‘self-making’ and self-reproduction which may also be construed as organizational ends.

Another example of a homeostatic theory is Luhmann's theory of organizations as "self-referencing autopoietic social systems" (Luhmann, 1990). For Luhmann (1990), organization is the ongoing autopoietic process of communicative decisioning. This process is irreducible to human action in that it incorporates a logic of its own. Decisioning involves the yes/no distinction at the heart of what happens in the organization. However, Luhmann's systems theory does not posit any organizational ends *per se*, but rather describes the immanent process of communication that is constitutive of organization and this identifies the essence (that is, Aristotle's first cause) and the *causa materialis* (its substrate) of organization rather than its *causa finalis*. Thus, although Luhmann's theory provides a homeostatic model of organization, it is agnostic about organizational ends and thus does not give us an example of a homeostatic organizational telic end as a *causa finalis*.

Homeostatic organizational ends have the character of continuing, maintaining and stabilising. In contrast to economic ends, homeostatic final ends do not involve maximisation. And in contrast to instrumental ends, homeostatic ends are endogenous to organizational being. The mode of homeostatic telic ending is indicative of concrete organizational ends such as the maintenance of future profits, surpluses, market share, levels of service provision, and even of future losses and deficits. This is not to say that homeostatic organizations do not pursue efficiency, for example. However, such subsidiary goals are not the *final* ends of the homeostatic organization. Rather, organizational being in the homeostatic mode of telic end-ing is oriented primarily towards the end of the continuance or achievement of a state of equilibrium which includes its own self-maintenance and re-production. In the homeostatic mode, organizational being is self-referencing in the sense that its own continued existence is always of significance as an inextricable part of the end of maintaining or achieving some state of equilibrium.

The *instrumental* mode of organizational telic end-ing

In concrete terms, the instrumental mode is indicative of the kind of telic end-ing of project-based organizations, cause-based organizations, and many public benefit organizations such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Such organizations are often, but not always, *temporary* organizations which are expected to cease to exist once a specified instrumental end is achieved. For example, a project-based organization that undertakes the construction of a large bridge is a temporary organization that is oriented towards a pre-specified instrumental end. The completion of the bridge is the *endogenous* instrumental end of the project-based organization, however, the bridge itself is for the sake of final ends which are *exogenous* to the project-based organization. The final ends of the bridge are determined exogenously; that is, they are 'given' and do not lie within the ambit of the project-based organization whose *instrumental* end is to complete the bridge to the specifications which are 'given' to it. Although these specifications may reference the final ends of the bridge they are not the *operative* final ends of the organization. Once the bridge has been built to specifications, the instrumental end of the project-based organization is reached and the organization comes to an end in its dissolution.

There are no extant holistic theories of instrumental organization in Organization Theory. This makes sense since holistic theories emphasise the endogeneity of organizational ends. The endogeneity of final ends is also apparent in the economic theories of the firm and in the systems theories that were considered above.

In the economic and homeostatic modes of telic end-ing, organizations pursue final ends that are *endogenous* to organizational being. That is, in these modes organizations have final ends which are pursued for the sake of what is significant as the organization. In contrast, in the instrumental mode,

organizational telic end-ing involves instrumental ends that reference *exogenous* final ends that are not for the sake of the organization itself. In this mode, the instrumental ends of the organization are understood as being for the sake of some still higher end which is given exogenously to the organization. As *instrumentum*, the organizational potentiality for being is displaced as the for-the-sake-of-which of organizational being. In this sense, instrumental telic end-ing is a restricted state of being since it is not oriented towards its own possibilities as an organisation but rather to its instrumental end. Yet, organizations in the instrumental mode are still organizational strategic beings since they are engaged with the contingent future for the sake of endogenous instrumental ends and exogenously given final ends.

9.2.2. The modes of organizational *being-towards-ending in dissolution*

We have described the modes of the organizational state of being of telic end-ing. Let us turn now to the description of the modes of the other item of organizational futurity: being-towards-ending in dissolution.

We saw that organizational dissolution is rarely treated thematically in extant theories and they do not avail conceptual resources for identifying the modes of the *existential* of organizational being-towards-ending in dissolution. That is, there is little in theory about the ending of organizations beyond the background recognition that organizations may and do come to an end, which is typically approached as a constant sense of existential threat. This backgrounded sense of the possibility of organizational dissolution points to the *primordial* notion of being-towards-ending but it does not illuminate its modes.

The futurity of organizational strategic being, can only be brought into clearer resolution once we have an understanding of the modes of being-towards-ending to go with the modes of telic end-ing that are identified in the previous section (9.2.1). To identify the modes of ending, in the absence of extant

theoretical treatments, we need to speculatively consider what the basic ways are in which organizational being can be towards its own dissolution, beyond the primordial concern for its continued existence and the constant threat of ending.

Organizations concretely come to an end in manifold ways. However, an empirical study of the concrete examples of dissolution point to, but will not disclose, the character of organizational being-towards-ending in dissolution. Even if we aggregate examples of dissolution, this information will not be decisive for identifying the modes of organizational being-towards-ending. The problem is that all the instances of the dissolution of organizations can only be understood in hindsight in an empirical study and will therefore not tell us about the ways in which organizational being may be towards the *future* possibility of ending.

The identification below of the modes of organizational being-towards-ending in dissolution is more speculative although it does draw on concrete examples, on interpretations of the relevant scholarly work in Organization Theory and from other areas of research where possible. Three basic modes of organizational being-towards-ending in dissolution are discernable on this basis which will be referred to in shorthand as the *perpetual*, *conditional*, and *temporary* modes. Table 4 below summarizes the three modes of organizational being-towards-ending and these are described in more detail thereafter.

The modes of organizational being-towards-ending	Description	Concrete exemplars	Organizational exemplars
Perpetual being	Organizational being is oriented towards the perpetuity of its being, and the constant possibility of ending in dissolution.	• Collapse • Insolvency	• Amazon • United Nations (UN) • The University of St Gallen (HSG)
Conditional being	Organizational being is oriented towards determinate conditions of its continued existence and/or dissolution, and to the constant possibility of ending before these conditions are met.	• Failure • Redundancy • Mothballing	• The South African Reserve Bank (SARB) • Greenpeace
Temporary being	Organizational being is oriented towards a determinate ending in dissolution, and the constant possibility of ending beforehand.	• Eschatological ending • Project delivery • Project retrenchment	• The Catholic Church • Project-based organizations

Table 4: Summary of the modes of organizational being-towards-ending in dissolution

The being-towards-ending of the *perpetual* organization

In everyday terms, organizations are often understood as perpetual. There is no other kind of being that disposes of this distinctively open-ended existence which may yet still end in dissolution. In practice, the perpetuity of organizations is assumed in a general sort of way but it is not something which is treated overtly in strategy-making wherein planning horizons are typically limited. However, in standard accounting practice, the valuation of business organizations, for example, is typically based on calculations of the present value of future cashflows *in perpetuity* (Ghosh and Ghosh, 2010).

In strategy theory, the prevailing understanding of organizations is that they are perpetual phenomena, although as we have seen this is very much in the background and is unthematized. In the process theories we have been considering, the process of organization (as a verb) is implicitly understood as an *ongoing* process and there is no sense in these theories of the determinate ending in dissolution of the organizing. Similarly, in the economic theories of the firm and in Luhmann's (1990) systems theory we can discern the background assumption that organizations are perpetual phenomena.

In Ackoff's and Emery's (1972) "purposeful systems" theory of organization, we find a more explicit reference to the perpetuity of organizations construed as "ideal-seeking social systems". In this holistic, teleological theory of organization, the ultimate end of the organization is "the ideal" which is unattainable since it involves the "continuous pursuit of more desirable ends as an end in itself" (Ackoff and Emery, 1972):

A purposeful system or individual is ideal-seeking if, on attainment of any of its objectives, it chooses another objective that more closely approximates its ideal.

Whereas both Aristotle and Heidegger understand the final ends of a being as terminal in the sense that there cannot be a higher end, Ackoff and Emery (1972) understand ideal-seeking as a perpetual process of pursuing an unattainable end. The notion of the "ideal" in Ackoff's and Emery's (1972)

teleological theory of organization is construed as an ongoing process of organizational telic end-ing, whereas their notion of an organizational “objective” refers to a currently operative organizational end.

What does it mean to say that an organization is perpetual in its existence? The perpetuity of organizational being must be distinguished from the eternity of God, for example. God is typically understood as an extra-temporal and eternal being that cannot come to an ending in dissolution. Organizational being, understood *modally* as perpetual being, continues in existence indefinitely but always faces the possibility of ending in dissolution. In contrast with God’s eternity and organizational being’s perpetuity, Dasein is a mortal being, a temporary existence that certainly ends in death. God’s eternity and Dasein’s mortality are not modal characteristics of their being, whereas in the case of organizational being, perpetual existence is a modal differentiation. This finding is important in that it provides critical grounds for curtailing the existence of perpetual organizations.

What does this mean for organizational being-towards-ending in dissolution? In the perpetual mode, organizational being is always oriented towards the possibility of its own dissolution - that it is a perpetual being does not remove the concern for its continued existence and the high degree of significance that is attached to it. In the perpetual mode we find a more intensive sense of the self-hood of organizational being and a higher degree of concern for its continued existence. Organizations that are perpetual in principle, can and do concretely end in dissolution. However, this aspect of being-towards-ending cannot be expressed by saying that a perpetual organization comes to an end *before its time* in the ordinary sense - since there is no endpoint in time for such an organization, *its dissolution is always untimely*. Only the primordial *possibility* of ending in dissolution is reflected back upon the telic end-ing of perpetual organizational being and influences the way in which organizational

ends are pursued. In this way, perpetual organizational being disposes of the widest latitude for its telic end-ing.

The being-towards-ending of the *conditional* organization

Although organizations are most commonly understood and depicted as perpetual beings, other temporal types of organizational existence are also discernable. The second mode of organizational being-towards-ending is that which indicates the *conditional* existence of organizational being.

A concrete example of conditional organizations are chartered schools in the USA which since 1991 have grown to “nearly 7000 schools” by 2017 (Kho, Zimmer and Buddin, 2020; The Economics of Charter Schools; Finn, Manno and Vanourek, 2000). Chartered schools augment the public schooling system but differ from public schools in terms of their mode of being-towards-ending in that chartered schools are *conditional* whereas public schools are understood as *perpetual*. Chartered schools are not established by the state, rather, they are authorised by the state to operate subject to conditions which are typically codified in legal contracts. Among these are *existential* conditions which directly affect the continued existence of the chartered school whose license to operate may be revoked or renewed accordingly.

Another example is the chartered company which has a long history. Although conditional charter companies and the “giants of an earlier capitalism” (Carlos and Nicholas, 1988), the chartered trading companies such as the VOC, were the more prevalent earlier form of business organization in the 17th and 18th centuries, this conditional form was superseded by the joint-stock chartered company (Jensen, 2008). According to Carruthers (1996):

Given the contingent nature of the rights enjoyed by joint-stock companies (what the King gives, the King can also take away), their relationship with the Crown was a crucial and problematic one of mutual dependence.

So-called ‘start-ups’ that are funded by venture capital firms are contemporary organizations that are also subject to such existential conditions. The continued

existence of such organizations often depends upon specific warrants and covenants being met (Kaplan and Strömberg, 2003; Cumming, 2008).

In the conditional mode of being-towards-ending, the continued existence of an organization depends upon *pre-specified* conditions. Such existential conditions may be understood in both negative and positive senses. In the positive sense, the organization *continues to exist* as long as the positive conditions are fulfilled; whereas in the negative sense, the organization *comes to an end* if the negative conditions come about. These conditions are *pre-specified* in the sense that they are constantly at sway for the organization.

The modal sense of the conditional existence of organizations here is distinguished from the primordial possibility of ending in dissolution which is applicable to all modes of organizational being. The modal sense of conditional organizational existence is indicated in the pre-specification of such conditions which are often codified in the founding documents of organizations or in some other contractual form. That is, in addition to the primordial *possibility* of ending prematurely in dissolution, conditional organizational being also faces the *certainty* of dissolution under specified conditions.

In the conditional mode of being-towards-ending, the conditions circumscribe the uttermost potentiality of organizational being and this is reflected back upon its way of telic end-ing. Concretely, conditional organizations may actually come to exist beyond their initial conditions or may perish beforehand, however, this can only be established and studied *ex post facto*. Being towards a conditional ending has a different temporal valence in that it is the orientation towards *ex ante* existential conditions. It is the prior understanding of these conditions that is always at sway in the telic end-ing of the conditional organization. Thus, there are no aims or goals that can be construed as significant that occur after the conditions are met or come about. In this sense the conditional mode of being-towards-ending is authentic if organizational being *is* towards its own redundancy.

The being-towards-ending of the *temporary* organization

While it seems commonplace now to think of business organizations as perpetual, the historical record shows that the early forms of business organizations tended to be *temporary* entities. For example, many early charter firms of the 17th century were explicitly defined by a duration. We find many contemporary examples of temporary organizations (Bechky, 2006) and temporary organizing (Bakker, DeFillippi and Schwab, 2016) in the theatre, film, and construction industries, and among other project-based organizations. According to Bakker *et al* (2016) from a practice perspective:

Temporary organizing captures the activities and practices associated with collectives of interdependent individual or corporate actors who pursue *ex ante* agreed-upon task objectives within a predetermined time frame (see Burke & Morley, 2016; Goodman & Goodman, 1976; Lundin & Söderholm, 1995). The temporality of these activities is directly tied to the expectation that this collaboration will terminate as agreed.

The temporary mode of organizational being has also been treated in the literature of organization studies as “ephemeral organizations” (Lanzerra, 1983) and as “disposable organizations” (March, 1995). In all these treatments, temporary organizations are understood from the start as being of a limited time span. Organizational being in this mode is thus oriented towards the certainty of ending in dissolution at some point in the future. This mode of pre-determinate ending always involves a limited duration but may also be set out in terms of specified ends such as the completion of a large-scale project for example.

Temporary modes of organization are not accounted for in Ansoff’s and Mintzberg’s taxonomies of general organizational strategy theory. Bakker *et al* (2016) consider whether Mintzberg’s “adhocracy” mode of strategy may accommodate temporary organizations, however, they find that even this mode does not explicitly account for the temporariness of organization. The mode of being-towards-ending of temporary organizations is most closely associated

with the instrumental mode of telic end-ing which we identified in the previous section.

Extant scholarly works on temporary organizations and organizing tend to emphasise the structure and inner workings and activities of such organizational beings. What is not attended to explicitly, however, are the ways in which *being temporary* reflects back upon these structures and activities. Being temporary is not a consequence of temporary structuring nor is it a consequence of the kind of activities that one finds in occasions of temporary organizing. Rather, it is the very being-towards-ending of the temporary organizational being which essentially conditions the appearing of these different kinds of structures and the different ways of human acting in such contexts.

In the mode of being-towards-ending of the temporary organization, dissolution is a certainty which is reflected back upon its sense of its possibilities. To be in this mode means that no goals or aims can be of any significance beyond its duration.

9.3. The modal combinations of organizational futurity

In the previous section, the modes of telic end-ing and being-towards-ending were treated separately. However, to describe the basic modes of *organizational futurity* we need to consider the *interplay* between these modal dimensions. Therefore, in this section we describe the combinations of the modes of telic end-ing and ending in dissolution. It is in terms of these combinations that we arrive at organizational futurity as a new basis for the critique of organizational strategic being. Moreover, it is these combinations that avail an ontological basis for rigorous strategy theory as an alternative to the current behavioural basis of rigour.

The three modes of telic end-ing combined with the three modes of being-towards-ending give us nine basic combinations of organizational futurity which are summarized in Table 5 below.

The modes and exemplars of organizational futurity		Being-towards-ending in dissolution		
		Perpetual	Conditional	Temporary
Telic end-ing	Economic	• Friedman's firm • Ideal-seeking systems model	• Joint-stock companies (regulated) • Warranted firms (Eg franchises, start-ups,)	• Charter firms
	Homeostatic	• Cybernetic systems model • Autopoietic systems model • Bureaucratic model	• Cybernetic stabilisers (Eg. central banks)	• Biological model
	Instrumental	• Public administration • Public benefit (Eg. hospitals) • Universities	• Cause-based (Eg. Greepeace)	• Eschatological • Project-based

Table 5: Summary of the modes of organizational futurity

Each of the modes of organizational futurity is a different ontico-ontological description of organizational strategic being as a unity. Each mode of futurity indicates a fundamentally different kind of organizational engagement with the

contingent future. It is these modes that ontologically precede accidental organizational strategic behaviour. That is, when strategists in organizations strategize they do so in the context of the mode of futurity of the organization. Organizational strategic behaviour does not occur in an ontological vacuum, rather such behaviour is always conditioned by a prior sense of the mode of futurity of organizational strategic being. This has significant implications both for the theorization and the practice of organizational strategy which are treated in more detail in Chapter 10.

It is not always clear what the mode of futurity of an organization is or ought to be. Yet, to ignore organizational futurity is to detach the thinking of the phenomenon of organizational strategy from its ontological conditions. To obtain such clarity requires an interpretative approach to disclosing the backgrounded and often withdrawn ontico-ontological underpinnings of organizational strategic being. Even if there is disagreement or ambivalence about which particular mode is applicable, any theoretical or concrete approach to the phenomenon of organizational strategy must take its rise from the priority of the modes of organizational futurity. The taxonomy of the modes of futurity which is set out here provides a beginning of such thinking.

The interpretative description of the modes of futurity of concrete organizations is illustrated in the next section (9.3.1). Among the modes of futurity, three are considered in more detail below using illustrative cases to enrich the interpretative descriptions of these modes. The aim of illustrating these modes is not to provide detailed and exhaustive descriptions but rather to bring out how crucial an understanding of organizational futurity is to any theoretical and practical understanding of the phenomenon of organizational strategy. More detailed work on describing organizational futurity is required and this task belongs to the new research possibilities that are opened up by bringing organizational futurity into the foreground.

The three modes of futurity that are briefly considered below are taken to be the most prevalent contemporary modes of organizational futurity: the perpetual/economic mode; the conditional/homeostatic mode; and, the temporary/instrumental mode.

9.3.1. The eschatological futurity of the Catholic Church

In the light of the foregoing abstract analyses of the modes of organizational futurity, how might we understand the concrete futurity of the Catholic Church as an organizational being? In interpreting the futurity of the Catholic Church we seek to describe the ontico-ontological basis for its distinctive organizational engagement with the contingent future. In doing so we do not seek to describe the strategy of the Church nor to evaluate its concrete strategies in hindsight. Rather, the emphasis is on laying out only that which belongs to its way of being which conditions its ongoing engagement with the contingent future and is thus formally indicative of all its practical strategy-making and the content of its strategies. To do this we need to identify and describe the distinctive interplay between the Church's mode of telic ending and its mode of being-towards-ending.

The Catholic Church is among the oldest organizations having been in continuous existence for almost 2000 years. The Church is understood as a faith-based organization that is founded upon the Catholic doctrine of the Christian faith. In Acts I of the New Testament, the Apostle Luke writes to Theophilus of the commission of the faithful which is given to the apostles by Jesus in His last words to them before being taken up to heaven:

Jesus said to them, "The times and occasions are set by my Father's own authority, and it is not for you to know when they will be. But when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all Judaea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (The Good News Bible, Acts I:7)

Within a few days after the ascension, the small group of believers of "about a hundred and twenty in all" (Acts 1:14) grew to over 3000 baptized members

and continued to grow at a rapid rate. At its very beginning the early church was an organized *movement* but it soon became a large, international, complex organizational being. The contemporary Catholic Church is one of the largest organizations in the world with about 1,2 billion members, over 5 000 Bishops, and over 400 000 priests (Vatican, 2019).

The Catholic Church, also called “the missionary Church”, pursues ends that are given to it in Christian doctrine. This doctrine thus supersedes and circumscribes the ends of the Church. The Church cannot veer from or go beyond these ends and still stay true to doctrine. According to Kuzniar (1985), the “*Heilsgeschehen*” has a “teleological structure” which exogenously undergirds the telic end of the Church:

... I shall use the term “telos” to refer to this ultimate aim or beatific end which mankind hopes to reach in the course of time. Thus the term telos, as I use it, maintains a notion of futurity about it.

This gives us a principle of the authenticity or inauthenticity of the Catholic Church: the Church as telic end-ing is authentic as long as it is in accord with doctrine. The upshot is that the authentic Church as an organizational strategic being is always oriented towards final ends which are exogenously *given* to it. That is, the Church is an instrument of the Christian faith. In this reading, the authentic orientation of the Church towards its ends is to be in the mode of *instrumental* telic end-ing, and it is inauthentic if it exists in any other mode.

Kieser (1987), for example, points out how the very rationality of medieval monasteries shifted from a doctrinal ideal of “asceticism” to that of a this-worldly “accumulation of wealth”. This shift and the dilemma it occasioned may also be read in terms of the telic end-ing of the monasteries as a shift from the primacy of doctrinal *instrumental* ends to the pursuit of *economic* ends as primary.

The Church surely includes within its telic totality various goals which are economic or homeostatic in character. For example, the investment portfolios

of the Church are also approached in terms of the maximisation of returns. However, although such goals are pursued, they are only authentic if they are subsidiary to the instrumental ends of the Church which are given to it in doctrine. At the top of the referential totality of the Church are its instrumental ends which are of highest significance for it. Thus, the ordering or priority which is given to its goals and ends is also important – to misunderstand goals for ends renders those ends inauthentic. The authentic Church as a whole is an instrument of Christian faith and is *for the sake of* that faith.

What about the being-towards-ending in dissolution of the Church? The Catholic Church may be understood as a *temporary* organization given the doctrine of Christian eschatology which circumscribes it. The Catholic Church, if we understand it as an organizational being that is in keeping with the doctrine of the certainty of the coming of “the last days”, cannot be understood as a perpetual organization. To do so would, strictly speaking, be heretical and thus inauthentic. Although it is not known when judgment day will come (Kuzniar, 1985), it is held in faith that the duration of this world, in which the church belongs, is limited. The ending of the Church is thus a certainty which it can only deny if it is inauthentic. Nor can the ending of the Church be understood authentically as conditional - its ending is not contingent upon any conditions. Thus, the authentic being-towards-ending of the Catholic Church is to be oriented towards the certainty of its ending in dissolution at the ending of the world.

This being-towards-ending is eschatological in character. According to Barwasser (2015), in a review of Wolfe (2013), Heidegger offers an “Eschatology without Eschaton, which means an eschatology without a positive designation of the ‘whereupon’ of human existence.” Thus, Dasein’s being-unto-death is an eschatology which is distributed to each of us rather than being towards an exogenous eschaton. Dasein’s eschatology is endogenous to its being. This, of course, makes a difference to Dasein’s

authenticity and its orientation towards its own potentiality-for-being. Dasein's being strategic plays out differently from that of the believer of the Christian faith, and this is on the basis of their different ways of being-towards-ending. They will have different strategies because they would see their possibilities for being differently.

To the first believers of the early church the end of the world was imminent. However, the expectation of the eschaton was gradually pushed outwards into the more distant future (Kuzniar, 1985) so that what was once understood as an *imminent* certainty has come to be understood in our times as a paradoxical *indefinite* certainty. This shifting out of the eschaton is what first allows the church as an organization to expand its temporal horizon beyond the imminence of the end. Here we see how the being-towards-ending of the Catholic Church is decisive for the construal of its potentiality-for-being. The horizon of possibility of the Catholic Church - its futurity - becomes more expansive than that of the early church in the very shift from being towards an imminent ending to being towards an indefinite yet certain ending. The early church was oriented towards the future in an overt way that was radical for the time. Yet, it is safe to say that the Apostle Paul would balk at the idea of taking 200 years to build a cathedral.

A more detailed interpretative description of the futurity of the Catholic Church is possible and would be very interesting, however, such a detailed undertaking lies outside the ambit of this study and must wait among the further research possibilities that it avails. The idea in using the Catholic Church here is to interpret and illustrate the temporary/instrumental mode of organizational futurity, and to show how the Church's futurity is the ontological basis of its ongoing engagement with the contingent future. The Catholic Church is an organizational strategic being and we have shown how it is that all the ensuing strategy-making that is associated with it is conditioned by its distinctive futurity as the horizon of its potentiality-for-being. We are

thus better able to critique the Catholic Church, not only in terms of what has occurred, but also in terms of its ongoing engagement with the future.

9.3.2. The voracious futurity of Amazon: the danger of organization as *Gestell*

Amazon is one of the largest business organizations in the world. It is an online retailer which has grown from less than 200 employees in 1996 to over 840 000 by early-2020 (Amazon, 2019).

We do not think of Amazon as an organization that must come to a determinate ending at some point in the future. In terms of the kind of being that it is, it *may* come to an ending, but it does not *necessarily* have to come to an ending. Unlike the Catholic Church which is a temporary organization, and the South African Reserve Bank which is a conditional organization, Amazon is understood as an organization that is oriented towards its own perpetuity.

We see this, for example, in its emphasis on the “long term” (Amazon, 1997; 2019):

Who we are: Amazon is guided by four principles: customer obsession rather than competitor focus, passion for invention, commitment to operational excellence, and long-term thinking.

Thus, Amazon’s being-towards-ending is immediately discernable as being in the mode of perpetuity. This means that it is only oriented towards the *primordial* possibility of its ending in dissolution.

It is also immediately apparent that Amazon is in the *economic* mode of telic end-ing. In terms of its organizational end, Amazon seeks long-term value maximization. That Amazon seeks to maximise its economic value is evidenced by the following statements which appeared in its CEO’s first letter to shareholders in 1997 and which has been appended to all the annual letters to shareholders since then:

We believe that a fundamental measure of our success will be the shareholder value we create over the long term. This value will be a direct result of our ability to extend and

solidify our current market leadership position. The stronger our market leadership, the more powerful our economic model. Market leadership can translate directly to higher revenue, higher profitability, greater capital velocity, and correspondingly stronger returns on invested capital. ... When forced to choose between optimizing the appearance of our GAAP accounting and maximising the present value of future cash flows, we'll take the cash flows. (Amazon, 1997)

By early-2020, Amazon's market capitalisation stood at \$1,3 trillion (Amazon, 2020) making it one of the most 'valuable' companies in the world.

Thus, as is the case for most business organizations, Amazon's mode of futurity is interpreted as *economic/perpetual*. In this mode, Amazon is oriented towards the maximisation of its market value in perpetuity.

It is in this light, that we see the *danger* of the voraciousness of such organizational beings. Interestingly - and worryingly - it is the very danger which Heidegger identified in the essence of technology. Amazon exemplifies an organizational futurity that is not only without a determinate ending but also without a determinate telic end as a *causa finalis*. Amazon is perpetual and pursues wealth maximisation as an end. However, wealth by definition is nothing more than *means* - in Aristotelian terms wealth cannot be construed as a proper *causa finalis* since wealth is itself always for the sake of something else. That is, the telic end-ing of Amazon is that of organizational being that is fallen into a *perpetual means-ing without end*. Interpreted in this way, Amazon's remarkably open-ended futurity may thus be understood in terms of the essence of technology as *Gestell*: the enframing revealing of the world as means. As a perpetual means-ing, Amazon's futurity is such that its ontological limit is the end of the world as something other than means. Put more starkly, *Amazon seeks to make means of the world and to thus become the world of means*.

Of course, Amazon is only one exemplar of organizational strategic being in the economic/perpetual mode of futurity. In our time, perpetual business

organizations like Amazon have become pervasive and more powerful. Thus, the prospect of a world turned into means and nothing but means is frighteningly real, yet it is a prospect that is covered over in our misunderstandings of organizational strategic being in this mode.

Understanding organizational being in terms of the modes of futurity allows us to address from a new perspective the challenge that Pettit (2015) raises:

One of the most important challenges for political theory is to identify the extent to which corporations should be facilitated and restricted in law. ... we need to develop a view about the nature and potential of corporations and indeed of corporate bodies in general.

Organizational futurity gives us insight to the “nature and potential of corporations” and thus provides a basis for a critical argument to limit the futurity of *perpetual economic* organizations by legal means. After all, even Friedman’s (1962) voracious firm can be influenced by the law, and indeed according to him, may *only* be influenced by the law. The argument to bring the law to bear on limiting business organizations rests on the ontological differences between the futurity of the human and the futurities of organizational being as the only subjects of strategy and of law. This is an argument that needs to be made in more detail and lies beyond the ambit of this illustrative sketch.

How does authenticity figure in this story of Amazon’s futurity? If we follow Heidegger, we would have to say that Amazon is indeed authentic in that its economic telic end-ing is in consonance with its being-towards its own perpetuity. That is, both items of Amazon’s futurity are radically open-ended. Amazon is an *end-less* futurity in the sense that it is without a determinate ending in dissolution and without a true *causa finalis*. Here we see how Heidegger’s notion of authenticity plays out paradoxically in the *fallenness* of Amazon into a telic end-ing that is subverted to means-ing.

The unbridled futurity of the contemporary business organization is an ontological threat not only *in* the world but *to* the world as such. The end-less futurity of the perpetual economic organization must be circumscribed in the interest of the common weal, it must be given limits in the sense of giving it an ending and ends. This can only be achieved concretely in and by public interest law.

9.3.3. The futurity of the South African Reserve Bank: the conflict of endogenous and exogenous ends

The South African Reserve Bank (SARB) was “established in 1921 in terms of a special Act of Parliament” as a central bank in the wake of the “financial and economic turmoil in the period after the Great War” (SARB, 2011). The Bank is the oldest central bank in Africa, having issued its first banknotes on 19 April 1922, and has since grown into a large and complex organization.

Over the past 30 years the Bank’s declared aim has changed several times:

In 1990 the SARB accepted a formal mission statement for the first time, which stated that *its aim was to protect the internal and external value of the rand*. This objective, albeit in a revised format (i.e., to protect the value of the currency), is also contained as the primary goal of the SARB in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. Between 2000 and 2004 the SARB’s mission statement described its primary goal in the South African economic system as *the achievement and maintenance of financial stability*. From 2005 it was changed to *the achievement and maintenance of price stability*. (SARB, 2011, emphases in the original)

However, these shifts in its ends, have not entailed a shift in the Bank’s basic mode of *telic end-ing*. Even though its end shifted from *exchange rate* stability to *financial* stability and then to *price* stability, the above quotation suggests that it has always remained in the homeostatic mode in virtue of the ongoing emphasis on “achieving and maintaining” the *stability* of one or other of these macro-economic variables. That is, stability is the common factor in the history of its changing organizational ends. Although both maxima and minima are used to signify various relevant economic levels that the Bank seeks to

stabilise, it is clearly not in the mode of economic telic end-ing in that it does not pursue the maximisation or minimisation of any economic variable as a final end.

Yet, the Bank's mode of telic end-ing may also be interpreted as *instrumental* rather than as homeostatic. Whether the Bank is in the homeostatic or instrumental modes turns on whether its final end is endogenous or exogenous to it. It is in the instrumental mode if it is oriented towards a final end which is organizationally *exogenous* to it, and it is homeostatic if its end is endogenous to it. This question of the correct interpretation of the Bank's mode of telic end-ing lies at the heart of a fierce debate about the role of the Bank in the South African economy. On one side are those who believe the Bank should shift its emphasis to the *exogenous* instrumental end of stimulating economic growth; and on the other side are those who believe the Bank should continue in its *endogenous* emphasis on price stability as its proper homeostatic end.

We see the attempt to bridge these opposing positions in a statement of the final ends of the Bank:

The primary purpose of the SARB is to achieve and maintain price stability in the interest of balanced and sustainable economic growth in South Africa. Together with other institutions, it also plays a pivotal role in promoting financial stability. (SARB, 2011)

However, despite the concession in this statement that the Bank does indeed play some role in economic growth, the debate has largely been resolved, at least from the perspective of the Bank, in favour of the homeostatic interpretation. Thus, the final end of the Bank is understood to be endogenous to it and it continues in the homeostatic mode of telic end-ing. This interpretation is supported by the continued assertion that the Bank should retain and even increase its independence. That the final ends of the Bank are endogenous to it is made clear in the following statement of the present Governor of the Bank:

The Constitution tells us what to do, but it is not explicit about how we do it. We had to figure out a monetary policy framework for ourselves. In fact, it took us a few years to arrive at the approach we use now: the Constitution was passed in 1996, but we only started inflation targeting in 2000 – after a false start using the so-called ‘eclectic approach’ that included a failed attempt to control the exchange rate. (SARB, 2019)

Thus, the Bank was able since 2000 to re-orient itself towards the endogenous final end of *price* stability despite the constitutional decree that it should pursue the endogenous end of exchange rate stability, and in spite of the pressure that was put on it to instead orient itself towards the *exogenous* final end of economic growth. Although it would appear that the debate is about the telic *ends* of the Bank, this interpretation suggests that it is more fundamentally about the Bank’s mode of telic *end-ing*. Here we see that the mode of telic end-ing of the Bank is indicative of the kinds of final ends it orients towards and which conditions all of its ensuing strategic behaviour.

If the telic end-ing of the Bank is in the homeostatic mode, what is its mode of being-towards-ending? The founding Act of Parliament which brought the Bank into existence, the Currency and Banking Act of 1920, initially provided for its establishment “for a period of 25 years” (SARB, 2011). Thus, the Bank started out as a *temporary* organization. However, this was revised in 1944 and the existence of the Bank “was extended in perpetuity”. On this basis it seems reasonable to interpret the Bank as being in the mode of being-towards its own perpetuity.

However, such an interpretation only holds if the Bank’s telic end is also understandable in perpetuity. In other words, an organization cannot be coherently oriented towards perpetuity if its final end can be achieved beforehand. Nor can it be oriented towards perpetuity if its final end is the condition of its continued existence. The underlying condition of the bank’s existence, which we read off its final end, is the instability of prices in the national economy, the stabilisation of which is the *raison d’être* of the bank.

Should it happen, for whatever reason, that prices were no longer unstable, the Bank would become redundant since the condition of its telic end will have vanished. Thus, the legislative pronouncement of the perpetuity of the Bank does not necessarily confer perpetuity to it in terms of its being-towards-ending. A more fitting interpretation is that the Bank is in the *conditional* mode of being-towards-ending, rather than being in the perpetual mode. In the conditional mode the organization comes to an ending in dissolution on condition that its final end is achieved or fulfilled. Thus, the Bank's mode of futurity is interpreted here as homeostatic/conditional. In this case, we find that the Bank's telic end and the condition of its ending intersect such that the achievement of the end, or the disappearance of the condition, brings about the dissolution of the organization. If the Bank's futurity is indeed in the homeostatic/conditional mode then we conclude that it is *authentically* oriented towards its own redundancy.

Following Heidegger's notion of ontological authenticity, the Bank's futurity is authentic if its mode of telic end-ing is in consonance with its mode of being-towards-ending. Whatever its mode of telic end-ing and its mode of being-towards-ending, it is in the consonance between these modes that the Bank as an organizational strategic being is oriented to its fullest possibilities on the basis of a coherent futurity. If the Bank is caught between futurities, such ambivalence can only detract from its potential. This is not to say that the Bank should not change or even be made to change its mode of futurity; yet, it is also remarkable how resilient its homeostatic mode of telic end-ing has been through the major historical shifts over the past century of its existence.

9.4. Summation

Organizational futurity incorporates the temporality, thrownness, and aheadness of organizational strategic being in its orientation towards the contingent future. In this conception, organizational being is understood as a

kind of being that is under the sway of its futural possibilities rather than being merely a present actuality that has emerged out of the past and *is* merely as it *is*. The notion of organizational futurity does not refer at all to ‘the future’ as a chronological consequence of the present, nor does it refer to the ‘content’ of the future as one finds in predictions and prognoses. Rather, the futurity of organizational strategic being is an ontological description of this being that is existentially prior to any predictions, plans, sensemaking or future-perfect thinking that are undertaken on its behalf by human strategists.

Primordial organizational futurity is the ontological condition of strategy theories and of everyday strategizing. In everyday terms, strategists have an implicit understanding of the priority of organizational futurity which is reflected in the way that the organization is generally presumed to be the subject of strategy in practice. However, in strategy theory we find that the phenomenon of organizational strategy has been dissected in pursuit of rigour, with the result that organizational strategic being can only be understood as a behavioural consequence. Thus, we see that approaching the “strategic organization” as a performative consequence of strategists’ behaviour, rather than as an ontological antecedent, gives an upside-down view of the phenomenon of organizational strategy.

The meanings that organizational strategists have or make or enact in the practical process of strategizing are grounded in the futurity of organizational strategic being. Strategists cannot ever strategize in an ontological vacuum – there is no site of ‘pure’ strategy which is devoid of a *subiectum* of strategy to begin with. Rather, the strategic thinking and behaviour of human strategists can only begin once a strategic being has been posited beforehand as the for-the-sake-of-which of the strategizing. Overt strategic behaviour is grounded in the futurity of the strategic being that is the prior ontological locus of all the ensuing ways of being strategic.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

Let us sum up the line of thinking in this study for the sake of clarity: (1) *strategy* means the engagement with the contingent future for the sake of the significant; (2) the phenomenon of *organizational strategy* is the organizational engagement with the contingent future for the sake of the significant, where organizational being, is the proper, holistic *subiectum* of organizational strategy; (3) understanding organizational being as a temporal kind of being entails an acceptance that this futural engagement is ontologically *inherent* to organizational being rather than merely accidental to it; (4) this means that the phenomenon of organizational strategy has an *ontological* basis in organizational being which is prior to its appearing to theorists as accidental organizational *behaviour*; (5) thus, organizational strategy is opened up to a an *ontological* questioning of *organizational strategic being as an ontological unity*; (6) the philosophical approach and analogue for this ontological way of thinking the nature of organizational strategic being are found in Heidegger's analytic of Dasein, a being which is also disclosed in terms of its *futurity* as an *inherently strategic being*; (7) this thinking discloses the nature of organizational being as a distinctive *being-in-the-world* that disposes of self-hood but *not* mineness or I-hood; (8) organizational strategic being is constituted as an ontological unity in the *existentiale* items of organizational futurity: its state of being as *telic end-ing* and its *being-towards-ending in dissolution*; (9) the futurity of this primordial unity can only be fully described *ontico-ontologically* in terms of the *modes* of telic end-ing and being-towards-ending; (10) the *modes of organizational*

futurity are described in the combinations of the modes of telic end-ing and being-towards-ending of organizational strategic being as an ontological unity. In this final chapter, the interpretative findings of Part II of this study are summarized in Section 10.1. These findings are related back to the motivations for this study in Section 10.2. The implications of these findings for theory and for a nascent philosophy of organization are considered in Section 10.3. Specific issues pertaining to these findings are raised, and further research possibilities are suggested in Section 10.4.

10.1. Summative description of organizational futurity

In Part II, a hermeneutic phenomenology of organizational strategic being discloses *organizational futurity* as the ontological basis of its ongoing engagement with the contingent future for the sake of the significant. That is, organizational futurity describes organizational strategic being as a totality. This is in response to the ontological sense of the question posed at the outset: what does it mean for organizations to *be* strategic? Stated ontically, organizations incorporate an ongoing engagement with the contingent future *on the basis of their prior futurity*. All organizational strategic behaviour at the macro- or micro-level, including what human strategists in organizations say and do, is conditioned by the prior structure of each organization's futurity. Stated more generally and in response to the focal question of this study: the nature of organizational strategic being as an ontological unity is disclosed in the descriptive interpretation of its distinctive primordial futurity and elaborated in the descriptive interpretation of the ontico-ontological modes of organizational futurity.

Organizational futurity describes what it is about temporal organizational being that accounts for its being an inherently strategic being. That is, the notion of organizational futurity holds together the ontological characteristics

of organizational strategic being as the necessary and proper *subiectum* of organizational strategy. Organizational futurity incorporates the full-fledged temporality of organizational being such that primacy is accorded to the future ecstasis as the horizon of possibility. Organizational futurity is the comportment of temporal, thrown and projected organizational being-in-the-world towards its possibilities for being and thus conditions its ongoing engagement with the contingent future for the sake of the significant.

Organizational futurity describes the temporalized comportment of organizational being towards its possibilities which are constituted by its being a telic end-ing and its way of being-towards-ending in dissolution. Thus, organizational strategy is not a separate phenomenon ‘caused’ by the phenomenon of organizational futurity and which comes ‘after’ it as an analytically separable consequence. Rather, organizational futurity should be understood as the *formally indicative* ontological basis of organizational strategic behaviour. In this account, organizational strategy is not an accidental behavioural property of some organizations. Rather, the phenomenon of organizational strategy is inherent in and springs from the futurity of organizational strategic being in its ongoing engagement with the contingent future for the sake of its telic ends which are of highest significance for it.

Organizational futurity is described primordially and modally. *Primordial* organizational futurity marks the ontological horizon of the possibility of organizational strategic being in terms of two existential characteristics: the state of organizational being as *telic end-ing*; and its *being-towards-ending in dissolution*. In other words, the fullest sense of organizational possibility is demarcated in the interplay of these ontological items of primordial organizational being.

Telic ends are the *final* ends of organizational being in the Aristotelian sense; that is, telic ends are what organizational being is ultimately *for the sake of* and

this marks its limits. Telic ends are of the highest significance for organizational being such that all other organizational goals, aims and objectives lie ahead of and are thus conditioned by these ends. To say that the basic state of organizational being is telic end-ing means that organizational being is always concernfully and dynamically oriented towards telic ends which are the pinnacle of its referential totality of significance. As telic end-ing, organizational being is permeated by myriad goals, aims and objectives which all point back to its telic ends. In this sense, telic end-*ing* is an ongoing process of *purpose-ing* rather than referring only to a fixed, specified purpose or purposes. The primordial characteristic of telic end-ing belongs to organizational being as an ontological whole and is thus irreducible to the telic end-ing of the human beings that are associated with organizational being. Rather, human strategists strategize for the sake of an organizational being which is disposed towards its own ends in the state of being of telic end-ing.

The characteristic of telic end-ing is indeterminate at the primordial level of description. Whereas Dasein as care is primordially described as a telic end-ing towards its own potentiality-for-being (its ontological for-the-sake-which), organizational being as telic end-ing is primordially indeterminate. That is, organizational being as telic end-ing is constituted in the *existentiell* modifications of primordial telic end-ing.

The ontological characteristic of organizational being-towards-ending in dissolution marks the uttermost possibility of organizational being there at all. At the *primordial* level of description, organizational being constantly faces the possibility of its own dissolution and this is the source of the ongoing organizational sense of concern for its continued existence. Thus, the organizational concern for its own continued existence, its basic orientation towards the possibility of its ending in dissolution, is reflected back upon and influences its telic end-ing. However, at the primordial level of description, organizational dissolution is not a certainty – primordial organizational being

does not *have* to come to an end. This ontological open-endedness means that organizational being-towards-ending is also constituted in its *existentiell* modifications.

At the primordial level of description, the constitutive items of organizational futurity cannot be filled out. Both telic end-ing and being-towards-ending need to be elaborated further, otherwise we are left with somewhat vacuous primordial descriptions which are already taken for granted in everyday organizational strategy. And, although the primordial description of organizational futurity allows us to critique strategy theory and the extant process ontologies of organization for evading telic end-ing and ending in dissolution, it does not avail incisive possibilities for the critique of everyday organizational strategic being and beings in terms of their futurities. This is so because the description of primordial organizational futurity does not yield a productive description of the *interplay* between telic end-ing and ending in dissolution beyond the recognition that the constant possibility of ending in dissolution influences telic end-ing in a general sense. A more productive description of organizational futurity is needed which elaborates the interplays between telic end-ing and ending in dissolution at the *modal* level.

More detailed descriptions of the items of organizational futurity are availed by interpreting their ontico-ontological modality. Both telic end-ing and being-towards-ending require and are amenable to *modal* elaboration. It is the description of these modes that puts us in a position to consider the interplays between telic end-ing and being-towards-ending in dissolution. To say that these modes are ontico-ontological means that they are *existentiell* (ontic) modifications of the ontological conceptions of these items of primordial organizational futurity. In describing these modes, we can relate the ontological character of these items to the ontical ways in which it plays out. This is crucial in this study since we have critiqued rigorous strategy theory

for being belated and irrelevant to ontical organizational strategy and we should not fall into the same affliction.

The modes of telic end-ing and being-towards-ending that are identified below are not posited as exhaustive of all the possible modes of these items. Rather, the emphasis is on describing ontologically coherent modes that are pointed to theoretically and which are most prevalent historically and ontically. This leaves open the possibility of identifying other coherent modes of the items of organizational futurity. Although the identified modes are fundamentally different from each other they should not be understood as mutually exclusive *categories* in the sense of a typology. Thus, for example, organizational being may be modally conflicted in its fallenness between the modes of futurity.

Three modes of organizational telic end-ing are speculatively identified and described: *economic* telic end-ing, *homeostatic* telic end-ing, and *instrumental* telic end-ing. We found that we could not rely on strategy theory and the extant process ontologies of organization to identify the modes of telic end-ing; rigorous theories of organizational strategy at the general level of explanation are agnostic about organizational ends; and, the process ontologies we considered simply do not attend to organizational ends nor to the process of telic end-ing. Thus, we looked to other holistic theories of organization which do indeed posit organizational ends more explicitly, and we considered everyday understandings of organizational ends to identify the three modes of telic end-ing.

Three modes of organizational *being-towards-ending in dissolution* are speculatively identified and described: being-towards-*perpetuity*, *conditional* being-towards-ending, and being-*temporary*. We also found here that organizational ending in dissolution is rarely treated in organization studies. Although it is generally understood in a backgrounded sort of way that organizations may and do come to an end in dissolution, the *existential* of

organizational being-towards the possibility of its own dissolution is not attended to thematically in strategy theory. Thus, the modes identified are more speculatively drawn from the concrete ways in which organizations are oriented towards ending in dissolution.

The modal dimensions of telic end-ing and being-towards-ending in dissolution are combined and so give us the nine ontico-ontological modes of organizational futurity which are summarised in Table 6 below.

The modes and exemplars of organizational futurity		Being-towards-ending in dissolution		
		Perpetual	Conditional	Temporary
Telic end-ing	Economic	• Friedman's firm • Ideal-seeking systems model	• Joint-stock companies (regulated) • Warranted firms (Eg. franchises, start-ups,)	• 18th century charter firms
	Homeostatic	• Cybernetic systems model • Autopoietic systems model • Bureaucratic model	• Cybernetic stabilisers (Eg. central banks)	• Biological model of organisms
	Instrumental	• Public administration • Public benefit (Eg. hospitals) • Universities	• Cause-based (Eg. Greenpeace)	• Eschatological • Project-based

Table 6: Summary of the modes of organizational futurity

Although these are all possible modes, they are not equally prevalent. The most prevalent modes of organizational futurity are the economic/perpetual, the homeostatic/conditional, and the instrumental/temporary modes. These modes are illustrated in Chapter 9 in interpretative sketches of the organizational futurities of Amazon (as Economic/Perpetual), the South African Reserve Bank (as Homeostatic/Conditional), and the Catholic Church (as Instrumental/Temporary).

10.2. Linking back to the motivations for this study

A primary motivation for this philosophical study is to develop a more incisive critical approach to organizational strategy which is responsive to the futural nature of this phenomenon. Another primary motivation is to better understand the rigor-relevance gap between strategy theory and practice. These motivations are interrelated. Firstly, both the rigour-relevance gap and the poverty of critical capacity are problems *in* and *of* the field of organizational strategy theory. Secondly, these problems are related in that the amelioration of the rigour-relevance gap immediately translates into an increased capacity for the critique of organizational strategy in practice. Thirdly, both problems may be traced to the problematic theoretical assumption that organizational strategy is an *accidental* behavioural phenomenon.

10.2.1. Expanding the critique of organizational strategy

How has this study contributed to developing the capacity to critique organizational strategy? Firstly, it is founded on a critique of strategy theory in terms of the problematic field-wide assumption that strategy is an accidental behavioural property of organizations. This assumption is problematic because it legitimates a hindsight epistemology to try to explain a futural phenomenon. That is, the temporality of strategy is lost in its theoretical

objectification as past strategic behaviour. This explains the remarkable reticence about time and temporality in strategy theory which Kornberger (2016) highlights. This assumption is also problematic in that it elides the possibility of an ontological connection between strategy and organization. That is, taking strategy epistemologically as an accidental property of organizations means that strategy does not form part of what it means to *be* an organization. This critique of a pre-theoretical assumption that prevails in the field of strategy theory contributes to an area that is not amenable to theorization, but which is also rarely treated in organization studies.

Secondly, this study contributes to enhancing the critical capacity of strategy theory in regard to strategy in practice. Currently, strategy in practice is only critiqued *ex post facto* from the perspective of theory; there is a paucity of critical attention to organizational strategy that is in consonance with its futural temporality. The descriptions of organizational futurity provide a new conceptual basis for the theorization of strategy that is more consonant with the temporality of organizational strategy and its ontological implication in organizational strategic being. Such consonance, as a point of departure, holds the promise of yielding theories which are both rigorous *and* relevant to practice, and this yields more incisive critical potentials.

10.2.2. Ameliorating the rigor-relevance gap

That strategy theory is temporally out of step with everyday organizational strategy is seen quite clearly in the persistence of the rigor-relevance gap. How does this study contribute to better understanding the rigor-relevance gap? In Chapter 2 we found differences between the theoretical and everyday understandings of organizational strategy which help us to diagnose the problem conceptually. Firstly, organizational strategy is universally understood in theory as an accidental behavioural property whereas in practice the prevailing sense is that strategy is normatively and existentially necessary

to organizations. This difference is fundamental and is a root cause of the rigour-relevance gap.

Secondly, strategy theory is subject to a demand of scientific rigour which plays out in the dissection of the phenomenon of organization strategy at its *behavioural* joints. Rigorous strategy theories all take a pre-theoretical stand on a particular behavioural mode of strategy which is then taken to be the mono-modal basis of explanation. This is evidenced by the ease with which strategy theories can be arranged taxonomically into the various behavioural mono-modes of strategy theory. In contrast, everyday organizational strategy typically involves syntheses of these behavioural modes. The evidence for this is found in the acceptance in practice of conceptual frameworks of strategy, the scenario-based and dynamic capabilities frameworks of strategy, which synthesise multiple behavioural modes. That is, the more multi-modal a framework of strategy is, the more relevant it is to practice. Concrete organizational strategy, especially under the condition of higher-order contingency, involves all the ideal-typical strategic modalities of knowing, adapting, making, and doing. Moreover, it is in these conceptual frameworks that we find tentative descriptions of the *organizational self* as the proper *subiectum* of organizational strategy. That is, the more the organization as a whole is made the subject of strategy in a framework of strategy, the more aligned and relevant it is to the practical attitude. The organizational strategist does not engage with the future on her own behalf but for the sake of '*the organization*' which is often construed in everyday strategizing as a person or as a collective we. Nor does the organizational strategist ever begin strategizing from a point before '*the organization*' which is then performatively produced as a strategic organization. Thus, the rigor-relevance gap is the result of the assumption that strategy is an accidental organizational behavioural property and the scientific procedure of dissecting this behavioural property into its modes for the sake of scientific rigor.

How does the specific analysis of organizational futurity help us to ameliorate the rigour-relevance disjunction? Organizational strategy theories, especially at the general level, are agnostic about organizational ends. And organizational dissolution is hardly ever treated. Thus, both items of organizational futurity are not treated thematically in rigorous strategy theory. Yet, in practice, organizational ends are taken seriously as matters of the highest concern and the possibility of dissolution is a constant issue under the condition of higher-order contingency. The very matters which keep organizational strategists up at night are the very matters which are relegated to insignificance in strategy theory.

The problem is with the current *epistemological* basis of theoretical rigour that underlies the field of organizational strategy theory. The rigorous theorization that proceeds exclusively on this basis is doomed to practical irrelevance by its pre-theoretical definition of rigour. The description of organizational futurity, the items of futurity, and their modes avail a new *ontological* basis for the theorization of the phenomenon of organizational strategy. This is a radical shift from an understanding of rigor that is grounded *epistemologically* in the one-dimensional modes of accidental strategic behaviour, to that of rigor grounded *ontologically* in the bi-dimensional modes of organizational futurity. Since organizational futurity is always already formally indicative of organizational strategy in practice, it provides a new basis for theoretical rigour *that proceeds from practical relevance*.

10.3. Other implications

Apart from the above implications for strategy theory, this study also has implications for Organization Theory, and for the nascent field of the philosophy of organization theory.

10.3.1. Implications for organization theory

In positing the ontological status of organizational strategy, we traverse the divide between the fields of Organization Theory and organizational strategy theory. In doing so, this study makes two contributions to Organization Theory. Firstly, it contributes a new process theory of organizational being that takes the temporality of this be-ing seriously. If we take the temporality of organization seriously then it becomes clear that the engagement with the future is crucial to what it means to be an organization. Thus, in ontological terms, organizational being is a *strategic being* prior to its manifold ways of *being strategic*. The description of organizational strategic being is an alternative to extant process theories of organizing. The extant way, taken in Whiteheadian-inspired process ontology (the PROS ontology) and in Weick's sensemaking theory, is to give a strong processual account of organizational being (as a verb) in terms of the constitutive immanent processes of organizing. In this way, organizations are denied the ontological status of being holistic entitative beings of explanatory significance. Rather, organizational being is exhaustively dissolved by reduction to a micro-processual substratum. A central tenet of this approach is that the future ecstasis of organizational being is construed as a derivative dimension of the temporality of organizational phenomena; and the epistemological consequence thereof is that organizing can only be explained in retrospect. The alternative way, which is taken in this study, is that of a hermeneutic phenomenology of organizational strategic being (as a verb and a noun). This way affirms the wholeness of organizational being *as a temporal totality* and gives ontological priority to the organizational engagement with the future. This study is about disclosing the nature of this distinctive engagement. From an alternative hermeneutic phenomenological perspective, the *ontological* relation between organization and strategy is brought into view.

Secondly, this study contributes methodologically by demonstrating a thoroughgoing hermeneutic phenomenological approach to organizational phenomena. Although hermeneutic phenomenology is recognized among the interpretative approaches in organization studies, it remains a peripheral perspective. Moreover, as we have seen, while specific ideas and concepts are drawn from hermeneutic phenomenology in process theory, it is rarely used in a comprehensive way.

10.3.2. Implications for a nascent philosophy of the organization sciences

This study contributes to the case for a philosophy of the organization sciences. In raising questions that do not fit neatly in either the fields of strategy theory or Organization Theory, we see how questions like these may fall through the disciplinary cracks in organization studies. More specifically, this study exposes the problem of the lack of a disciplinary ‘home base’ for working on the extra-scientific and meta-theoretical questions in the umbrella field of organization studies. Such ontological and epistemological questions cut across the many separate scientific fields in organization studies and this study hopefully shows that it is time for the philosophy of organization theory to be constituted as a recognised academic field so that these questions may be treated with the philosophical attention that they deserve.

10.4. Issues and further research possibilities

10.4.1. Issues and limitations of this study

Several issues arise from this study which have not been addressed within the ambit of the hermeneutic phenomenology of organizational strategic being that has been undertaken. Moreover, within its ambit, this study is limited in important respects.

What about human agency within organizations?

The emphasis on organizational being as the proper *subiectum* of strategy in Part I and the focus on describing organizational strategic being as an ontological *whole* in Part II result in the relegation of human agency *within* organizations. This emphasis allowed us to delimit the ambit of this study by setting aside the buzzing complexity of what happens inside organizations as assemblages of human action, equipment, space, institutionalised practice, and so on. The position taken in this study is that organizational futurity is *ontologically* prior to and conditions these internal characteristics and properties.

In an intriguing passage, Heidegger describes how Dasein's being is taken hold of in collective endeavour:

The Being-with-one-another of those who are hired for the same affair often thrives on mistrust. On the other hand, when they devote themselves to the same affair in common, their doing so is determined by the manner in which their Dasein, each in its own way, has been taken hold of. (1962/BT)

However, this not to say that human action in organizations is inert. Human beings certainly have the capacity to influence and alter organizational modes of futurity even though, as we found in the illustrative cases, this may be very difficult and rare. For example, a perpetual organization can in principle be remade into a temporary one, and a homeostatic organization can be instrumentalised. The point though is that each of these alterations are *ontological* alterations that do not so much *change* an organizational being but rather bring about a new kind of organizational being. To change the futurity of an organization is to change its very way of *being*.

Both the subjection of human beings to the futurities of organizational being, and the ways in which human beings may influence and change the modes of organizational futurity are not attended to in this study. The hope is that these

important questions may be seen in the new light of the description of organizational futurity.

The authenticity and inauthenticity of organizational strategic being

What does it mean to be authentic or inauthentic in the modes of organizational futurity? This distinction, which is crucial in Heidegger's description of Dasein's modes of futurity, has not been fully worked out in this study as a way to cogently describe organizational futurity. For Heidegger, authenticity is not a moral principle, rather, it is a principle of the ontological consonance of Dasein's state of being of care and its resolute being-towards-ending in death. Dasein is authentic in striving towards its fullest potentiality-for-being. When it comes to the modes of organizational futurity, there are two problems with relying on Heidegger's principle of authenticity. Firstly, in the case of the instrumental mode of telic end-ing, as exemplified by the Catholic Church, organizational being is oriented towards an *exogenous* final end rather than towards its own potentiality-for-being. Thus, the authenticity of the Catholic Church which we interpreted in terms of a consonance with doctrine is a different principle from that which Heidegger uses to describe authentic Dasein. Secondly, in the case of the perpetual/economic mode, exemplified by Amazon, organizational being may be authentic in Heidegger's sense, but is paradoxically *fallen* in that it is not an authentic telic end-ing as a *causa finalis*. More work needs to be done in this area to develop principles of authenticity that may flow from the modes of *organizational* futurity.

The tension between multi-modal futurities and the unity of organizational strategic being

The emphasis in this study is on describing the ontological *unity* of organizational strategic being and this may suggest that it can only *be* in one definitive mode of futurity. However, in the illustration of the futurity of the

South African Reserve Bank (in Section 9.3.3) we see how organizational being may involve an ambivalence in its mode of futurity. That is, for better or worse, concrete organizations may incorporate more than one mode of futurity. This raises interesting questions about the possibilities of and implications for organizations that incorporate multiple modes of futurity. These questions have not been treated in this study and present an opportunity for further research that may be related to existing work especially in the area of pluralistic organizations and pluralistic organizational rationalities. The modes of organizational futurity may be used as an ontological basis for new understandings of organizational rationalities.

10.4.2. Further research possibilities

Apart from the implications for research in the preceding sections of this chapter, the explication of organizational futurity is productive of further possibilities for research.

Addressing the epistemological problem of apprehending and describing organizational futurities

How do we approach organizational futurity epistemologically? In Chapter 9, very brief illustrations of organizational futurities were undertaken on the basis of publicly available information. The modes of organizational futurity provide a bridge between the ontological description of primordial organizational futurity and the ontic manifestations of organizational futurities. However, there is a need to further develop the methodological means for apprehending and interpreting organizational futurity. In doing so, the findings of this study may be translated into a new and interesting kind of strategy theory that takes its rise from the notion and modes of organizational futurity.

Theorising the contemporary shift in the contingency condition of strategy¹⁸

What is it about the contemporary age of strategy that awakens and intensifies the everyday sense of the necessity of strategy to organizations? Strategy is conditioned by future contingency, it is the *sine qua non* of strategy as the engagement with the contingent future for the sake of the significant. Future contingency is most often construed as Aristotelian in-principle future contingency. However, in the age of strategy, the very condition of strategy has shifted from Aristotelian in-principle contingency to higher-order contingency.

In our time, the in-principle contingency of the future has been greatly compounded by historically-induced *higher-order contingency*. Generally accelerating change, higher degrees of social multiplicity and complexity all give rise to Knightian uncertainty (Knight, 1921). For Koselleck (2004), modernity is characterized by the increasing “divergence between experience and expectation”. For Luhmann, uncertainty is pervasive, the future is fundamentally unpredictable, even unknowable (Best, 2012). Organization itself, as Orlikowski (2015) says, ‘is [also] contingency all the way down’.

While Aristotelian in-principle future contingency is the limit condition of prospective knowing, historically induced higher-order contingency cuts both ways and also attenuates retrospective knowing. This is the qualitative difference: under higher-order contingency we suffer the devaluation of hindsight, memory and tradition as epistemological bases for approaching what is yet to come, just as we suffer the erosion of foresight, anticipation and utopias as the epistemological bases for approaching what is yet to come.

We no longer live and organize under mere in-principle contingency. We must now live and organize in an age of *higher-order* future contingency which is

¹⁸ Parts of this section appeared previously in Naidoo (2018).

both quantitatively and qualitatively more intense. If the future is to be approached as increasingly contingent (Orlikowski, 2015; Beckert, 2013, 2014), “non-calculable” (Callon, 1998), “incalculable” (Arendt, 1958), and ever less amenable to “rational prognosis” (Koselleck, 2002, 2004), then the very condition of strategy has shifted. The meaning of strategy, which has since ancient times been approached as involving in-principle contingency, must now be approached as involving higher-order contingency.

We see this shift in the unfolding of organizational strategy theory over the past decades especially in the critique of orthodox strategic planning which relies heavily on prospective knowing. We also see it in the addition of new modes of organizational strategy theory such as the adaptive mode which eschews prospective knowing as untenable. Yet, the shift in the contingency condition of strategy has not been treated explicitly in strategy theory. This historically induced shift deserves further research attention if strategy theory is to become more relevant to strategy in practice. The thinking of organizational futurity in this study hopefully provides a better basis for addressing this shift theoretically.

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Curriculum Vitae

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Seelan Naidoo is a practitioner and academic specialising in the improvement and study of public organisations. He has extensive experience in the public, NGO, and higher education sectors. In the public sector, he served as an executive of several national public entities where he led successful turnaround and organisational development programmes, and he has undertaken strategic-level consulting projects for diverse public organisations. In the academic sector, he served several universities as a management consultant, researcher, lecturer, and research supervisor focusing on organisation studies.

Seelan hails from and lives in South Africa. He is the principal associate of Public Ethos Consulting and is an associated researcher at the Centre for Humanities Research at the University of the Western Cape.