

Dominik Heil

# Ontological Fundamentals for Ethical Management

Heidegger and the Corporate World

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# ONTOLOGICAL FUNDAMENTALS FOR ETHICAL MANAGEMENT

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# Ontological Fundamentals for Ethical Management

Heidegger and the Corporate World

*by*

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 Springer

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*To my family:  
Moshopyadi,  
Moora, Maximilian and Antonia*

# Preface

This book develops foundations for a more primordial managerial ethics derived from an inquiry into the ontological question relating to the very nature of the entity called ‘the corporation’ and to the activity of dealing with this entity – namely ‘corporate management’. It enquires into this question on the basis of the philosopher Heidegger’s thinking, which is hermeneutic phenomenology. Among the fundamental types of entities identified by Heidegger – physical objects, non-human organisms, humans and works – the corporation is identified as a case of a work. A work is the kind of entity that sets up a world and, in so doing, establishes the background against which human understanding becomes possible. In the case of the corporation, this world is, strictly speaking, not a world, but ‘em-bankment’: a way of revealing all entities as assets and in purely instrumental terms. Corporate management enacts the continuous repetition of em-bankment. Within em-bankment, humans are endangered in their very nature, since, in their very nature, they are world-acquiring, something that cannot be revealed in terms of em-bankment. This danger to the very nature of humans cannot be overcome by endorsement, resistance or neutrality towards em-bankment, the corporation and corporate management. According to Heidegger, we can only come to terms with it by acknowledging it as *the* danger to the very nature of what it means to be human. This acknowledgement leads us back, in the first instance, to the very nature of humans. It furthermore opens up entrepreneurial governance as a way of leading businesses in a way that acknowledges entities, and particularly humans, in terms of their very nature. This type of business can then no longer be called a ‘corporation’, but is called an ‘enterprise’.

# Acknowledgements

Instrumental to this book was a repeated reminder of the ethical dimension of the work I did for my PhD thesis by my two co-lecturers of the MBA elective ‘Philosophy of Management’ – Louise Whittaker and Bobby Godsell. Without them I would most likely not have had the inclination to put the work I did on exploring the very nature of the corporation from within Heidegger’s thinking into the context of an ethical discourse.

The core of this book was developed in writing a PhD thesis under the supervision and guidance of Louise Whittaker. I am certain Martin Heidegger would have approved of the way that she provided a space for this thesis to emerge and I am quite sure he would have liked her idea of translating the German word ‘Ge-stell’ as ‘em-bankment’.

A very special acknowledgement goes to my late maternal grandmother, Maria Zenger. More than once, when I was at a loss for understanding the meaning of a word in Heidegger’s difficult vocabulary, I reverted to a simple exercise: I imagined my grandmother, who happened to speak the same dialect as Heidegger, using this word in context. And more than once this exercise gave me a hint of how to understand and translate the word. Language always takes on a more primordial meaning when spoken by someone with unconditional love.

A big thanks goes to my parents, for their ongoing interest in the progress of my work and for providing the financial security that was vital for me to concentrate on the success of this endeavour while having to provide for a family of three children.

I wish to express my gratitude to the people of South Africa. South Africa, like war and parenthood, seem to continually bring out the best and worst in people. Johannesburg, in particular, has been the cradle of some of the greatest leaders of recent times and also a prime example of the consequences of failed leadership. This provided a background of challenge and humility that was vital for the endeavour of writing this thesis. The people of South Africa, in their awesome diversity, provided the inspiration, challenge and freedom from which the thoughts of this book were developed.

No one deserves more gratitude than my companion for life, Moshopyadi. On countless days she generously gave me the time and space to write this book. She



looked after our three children while I locked myself away to work; she was prepared to forego the extra income that could have been earned during the time of writing. More importantly she provided a home and garden in which my thinking could take root and flourish.

## Note on Translations and System of Abbreviations

Using Heidegger as the guiding thinker for the undertaking at hand poses a series of challenges. Since Heidegger was German and wrote in German, the issue of appropriate translation is a crucial one. Many of the core texts and lectures of Heidegger have been published as translations into English. Since Heidegger uses the German language in many ways that are not common in German itself – and since any good translation can never be a mechanical process but must always be guided by the question of how meaning can be ‘transported’ from one vocabulary to another – the challenge of translating Heidegger is always to articulate his thinking in the target language in ways that come as close as possible to the message that was originally intended. For this reason, some of Heidegger’s texts have been translated more than once. In a number of cases, the German original had connotations that are critical to the undertaking at hand that did not emerge sufficiently in existing English translations, or connotations were added in English translations that do not seem to be intended in the original. In addition, some of the translations are unnecessarily sexist beyond the connotations in Heidegger’s original. This was to be avoided in this text. Therefore, all the translations used here are the author’s and, although they draw heavily on existing translations, these were altered where it seemed appropriate. The referencing will show both the original source and the English translation(s) that informed the actual wording. It thus has to be understood that, ultimately, all the translations are the author’s. Owing to the nature of the undertaking at hand, Heidegger’s works deserve particular prominence and will be cited frequently. This justifies the use of abbreviations for his works, which are listed in this section.

*Sein und Zeit* (English: *Being and Time*) has been translated into the English language first by Macquarrie and Robinson (published in 1962) and then by Stambaugh (published in 1996). References and citations of *Sein und Zeit* are denoted with the abbreviation ‘BT’ and in each case refer to the page in the earlier translation by Macquarrie and Robinson, even though the quotations presented in this book also draw heavily on Stambaugh.

All quotations are spelt in British English, regardless of their spelling in the original. All references and abbreviations within quotations have been altered to correspond with the references and abbreviation in this book. Both German and English sources are referenced, whenever references were available.

The following abbreviations of Heidegger's works, indices and dictionaries have been used in this book:

### German:

AED	Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens, Verlag Günther Neske, Pfullingen, 1986; can also be found in GA 13; (English: TaP)
BWD	Bauen, Wohnen, Denken, in VA: 139-156 (English: BDT)
DD	Das Ding, in VA: 157-180 (English: TT)
EM	Einführung in die Metaphysik, Max Niemeyer Verlag, Tübingen, 1976 (English: IM)
EPAD	Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens; in ZSdD: 61-80 (English: EPTT)
FD	Die Frage nach dem Ding, Max Niemeyer Verlag, Tübingen, 1987
FnT	Die Frage nach der Technik in VA: 9-40, (English: QCT)
GA 13	Gesamtausgabe Band 13: Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1983
GA 22	Gesamtausgabe Band 22: Grundbegriffe der antiken Philosophie, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1993
GA 24	Gesamtausgabe Band 24: Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1997 (English: BP)
GA 25	Gesamtausgabe Band 25: Phänomenologische Interpretationen von Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1987
GA 27	Gesamtausgabe Band 27: Einleitung in die Philosophie, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1996
GA 29/30	Gesamtausgabe Band 29/30: Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1992 (English: FCM)
GA 39	Gesamtausgabe Band 39: Hölderlins Hymnen 'Germanien' und 'Der Rhein', Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1989
GA 65	Gesamtausgabe Band 65: Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis), Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1994 (English: CtP)
GA 79	Gesamtausgabe Band 79: Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1994
Gel	Gelassenheit, Verlag Günther Neske, Pfullingen, 1985 (English: DoT)
Hw	Holzwege, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1994
Hum	Über den Humanismus, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1981 (English: LoH)
ID	Identität und Differenz, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart, 2002 (English: IaD)
NI	Nietzsche, Erster Band, Verlag Günther Neske, Stuttgart, 1998
SvG	Der Satz vom Grund, Verlag Günther Neske, Pfullingen, 1997
SZ	Sein und Zeit, Max Niemeyer Verlag, Tübingen, 1984 (English: BT)
UdK	Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes (1935/360) in Hw: 1-74 (English: OWA)

ÜdM	Überwindung der Metaphysik, in VA: 67-96
ÜSTS	Überlieferte Sprache und Technische Sprache, Erker Verlag, St Gallen, 1989
UzS	Unterwegs zur Sprache, Verlag Günther Neske, Pfullingen, 1986 (English: OWL)
VA	Vorträge und Aufsätze, Verlag Günther Neske, Stuttgart, 1997
VWdW	Vom Wesen der Wahrheit, in WM: 177-202 (English: OET)
WB	Wissenschaft und Besinnung, in VA: 41-66 (English: SR)
WhD	Was heißt Denken?, Max Niemeyer Verlag, Tübingen, 1984 (English: WCT)
WD	Wozu Dichter, in Hw: 269-320 (English: WAPF)
WiM	Was ist Metaphysik?, in WM: 103-122 and 365-384 (English: WiMe)
WM	Wegmarken, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1996 (English: PM)
ZdW	Die Zeit des Weltbildes (1938), in Hw: 75-114
ZuS	Zeit und Sein (1988), in ZSdD: 1-25 (English: TaB)
ZS	Zollikoner Seminare, ed. Medard Boss, Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1994 (English: ZSem)
ZSdD	Zur Sache des Denkens, Max Niemeyer Verlag, Tübingen, 1988 (English: OBaT)

**English:**

AWP	The Age of the World Picture, in QCT: 115-154 (German: ZdW)
BDT	Building, Dwelling, Thinking, in BW: 343-363 (German BWD)
BP	The Basic Problems of Phenomenology, Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 1988 (German: GA: 24)
BT	Being and Time (translated by Macquarrie, J. and Robinson, E.), Blackwell, Oxford UK and Cambridge USA, 2001 (for further reference also see Being and Time (translated by Stambaugh, J.), State University of New York Press, New York, 1996) (German: SZ)
BW	Basic Writings, Harper, San Francisco, 1993
CtP	Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning), Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 1999 (German: GA 65)
DoT	Discourse on Thinking, Harper & Row, New York, 1966 (German: Gel)
EPTT	The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking, in BW: 427-449, (German: EPAD)
FCM	The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics, Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 1995 (German: GA 29/30)
IaD	Identity and Difference, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2002 (German: ID)
IM	An Introduction to Metaphysics, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1987 (German: EM)
LoH	Letter on Humanism, in BW: 213-265 (German: Hum)

- MFL Metaphysical Foundations of Logic, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1984
- OET On the Essence of Truth, BW: 115-138 (German VWdW)
- OTaB On Time and Being, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2002 (German: ZSdD)
- OWA The Origin of the Work of Art, in BW: 139-212(German: UdK)
- OWL On the Way to Language, Harper & Row, New York, 1982 (German: UzS)
- PLT Poetry, Language, Thought, Harper & Row, New York 1971
- PM Pathmarks, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006 (German: WM)
- QCT The Question Concerning Technology, Harper & Row, New York, 1977 (German: VA: 9-40; GA: 68-77)
- SR Science and Reflection, in QCT: 155-182 (German: WB)
- TaB Time and Being, in OTaB: 1-24 (German ZuS)
- TaP The Thinker as Poet, in PLT: 1-14 (German: AED)
- TT The Thing, in PLT: 163-186 (German: DD)
- WAPF What Are Poets For? in: PLT: 91-142 (German: WD)
- WCT What is called thinking? Harper & Row, New York (German WhD)
- WiMe What is Metaphysics? in: PM: 82-96 and 231-238 (German: WiM)
- ZSem Zollikon Seminars, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois 2001 (German: ZS)

## Indices and Dictionaries

- HDic A Heidegger Dictionary, by Inwood, M., Blackwell Publishers, 1999
- Index Index zu Heidggers 'Sein und Zeit,' Feick, H., Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1991
- OxDic The Concise Oxford Dictionary, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992
- OxDicPhil Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy (by S. Blackburn). Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Towards the Foundations of Managerial Ethics

After the 1990s was described as being obsessed with ethics (Coady and Bloch, 1996: 1) the first decade of the twenty-first century has seen a string of corporate scandals and a financial crisis that are widely interpreted as first and foremost being a failure in ethical management of corporations and entities<sup>1</sup> involved in corporations of a so far unknown magnitude. These corporate scandals had and still have disastrous consequences for many individuals and for society and the natural environment as a whole. At the same time, scandals are just the tip of the proverbial iceberg of the multitude of challenges in management and corporate governance that are often debated in a context of ethics. These include issues ‘inside’ the corporation such as questions of appropriate executive compensation, exploitation and alienation of employees, corporate human rights abuses in supply chains and financial finagling and issues regarding the effects that corporations have on entities ‘outside’ the corporation such as customers, the communities and nations they operate in as well as environmental pollution and degradation.

While the communal nature of being productive is a fundamental feature of being human, in the twentieth century and continuing into the twenty-first century, the way of working together has had a particular dominant form, which is called ‘the corporation’. In some instances, corporations are becoming more powerful on a macro scale than the power structure of the state. This fundamental shift in power is widely acknowledged.<sup>2</sup>

Two factors have led to an increase in the dominance of the corporation as an overarching power structure. On the one hand, globalisation seems to be leading to a loss of the sovereignty of nation states and supranational organisations have an

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<sup>1</sup>The word ‘entity’ is used throughout the book as a translation for ‘[ein] Seiendes’, which, in a number of existing translations of Heidegger’s texts, is also translated as ‘[a] being’.

<sup>2</sup>Brandt (1980), Brooke and Remmers (1970), Campbell (1995), Casson (1983), Chandler (1977), Dunning (1993), George (1976), Goldberg and Negandhi (1983), Goshal et al. (1999), Grunberg (1981), Gunnermann (1975), Hayter (1981), Hirst and Thompson (1994), Kujawa (1975), Lall (1983), Mansell (1994), Medwar and Frese (1982), Mirow and Maurer (1982), Morgan (1997), Ohmae (1993), Sampson (1978), Servan-Schreiber (1968), Tavis (1982) and Thomas (1979).

increasing influence on issues that were formerly the exclusive domain of national governments. On the other hand, there is a growing realisation that our economy is not so much driven by mere markets, but is driven foremost by corporations (Goshal et al., 1999: 9). Both developments have led to an increasing prominence of corporations in determining our shared and individual future. Significant change in our societies is determined by the way corporations ‘behave’ (Presthus, 1962; Goshal et al., 1999: 9–10).

Furthermore, in all aspects of our lives there is a tendency to corporatise existing organisations and communities. There is talk about the corporatisation of municipalities, universities, sports, arts, and even religious communities (The Economist, 2001). This corporatisation happens by either privatising tasks that were previously fulfilled by the state and are then delivered by a corporation or by the effort to run public sector institutions and non-governmental organisations by applying the principles and knowledge of corporate management. Even the whole phenomenon called ‘globalisation’ can be seen as the corporatisation of all human interaction enabled by increasing binary connectivity and decreasing transportation costs. In this sense, the logic that underlies the corporation has a defining effect on many aspects of human life that is beyond the corporation in its usually understood and used sense. As such, the issue of managing corporations ethically can hardly be overemphasised.

What does it mean when issues pertaining to corporations and corporate management are explored and debated in the context of ethics? Ethics is generally understood as ‘the study of the concepts involved in practical reasoning: good, right, duty, obligation, virtue, freedom, rationality, choice. Also the second order study of the objectivity, subjectivity, relativism, or scepticism that may attend claims made in these terms’ (OxDicPhil: 121). The word ‘ethics’ stems from the Greek word ‘ethos’, which Blackburn translates as ‘character’ (OxDicPhil: 121). As Aasland (2009) argues with reference to Levinas, ethics always also means the genuine concern for the other and others.

In the context of philosophy, ethics is regarded as a fundamental part of practical philosophy. Nevertheless, it is commonly understood that the field of ethics is not only concerned with ethical practice but also with the theory of ethics. The two are not disconnected. Every action is informed by a more or less articulated theoretical understanding of the issue at hand. Therefore, any ethical theory should also be judged by its capacity to lead to ethical practice and then in turn to ethically desirable outcomes.

As a practical philosophy ethics is concerned with action, particularly with ‘good’ or ‘appropriate’ action. It is immediately clear that managing is action and as such that ethical management would be concerned with the question what constitutes good and appropriate management. If we go by the notion of ethics as being concerned with character, then we would ask questions about the characteristics of a good or a bad manager. While corporations seemingly can have good or bad effects, it seems not all together clear whether corporations actually act or how otherwise they cause ethically desirable or undesirable outcomes or effects. Does it make sense to talk about corporations with a good or a bad character, and if so, what constitutes either type of character? If ethics is concerned with others, how should managers

who have a genuine concern for others act? Furthermore, can corporations actually have concerns in the first instance and is therefore the notion of corporations having a concern for others even a possibility?

To explore these questions in the context of contemporary society it is helpful to investigate how the legal system implicitly or explicitly understand and deal with them, since the legal system is presumably driven by the effort to lead to ethically desirable effects of corporations and to avoid unethical effects.

In legal terms the corporation is generally understood as a 'legal person'. However, as Cohen (2010) pointed out in conjunction with a legal case in the United States of America where an argument was made for a corporation to have its privacy protected the same way a person does, a corporation is precisely not a human being in the literal sense:

It is true that corporations are 'persons' under the law for some purposes, such as being able to own property or enter into contracts. (But not for others: 18-year-old corporations are not allowed to vote and they cannot be drafted.) It does not follow, though, that corporations have personal privacy. Until now, courts have interpreted Section 7(c) as applying to intimate personal details like health status, alcohol use, marital status and the legitimacy of children – information that could prove embarrassing to the individuals involved. (. . .).

Put simply, corporations cannot be embarrassed because they do not have emotions. They are nonhuman entities created to make money. They can be successful if they turn a profit, or fail if they show a loss – but they cannot feel good or bad about either outcome. (Cohen, 2010)

It is noteworthy that the legal system is based on the notion that the very nature of the corporation as being identical or at least in some way similar to that of a human being, which, as can be seen from the quotation above, is at least contested if not outright untenable. To understand the corporation as a human being would mean that corporations themselves would be the kind of entity that can take responsibility, can be held accountable, has a conscience and choice, can reason and many other such characteristics that are usually ascribed to be exclusively human. If however corporations are not humans, does this mean that our legal systems and their purpose to lead to ethical outcomes are built on fundamentally flawed assumptions? Even if we assume that corporations are humanlike with certain exceptions, what are the exceptions that should be made and where could guidance come from in this critical question? More importantly, we should then ask the question what a corporation actually is so that we can establish what its legal status should be and create norms and laws that actually deal with corporations in the appropriate manner.

It is noteworthy that the typical response of politicians and law makers to corporate scandals, but also to other on-going ethical issues regarding corporations, has been to tighten and increase the number of rules and regulations to prevent unethical behaviour. The creation of ever-new preemptory directives, tighter rules, regulations, legislation and codes of ethics such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act are a typical response to scandals such as Enron and WorldCom. This suggests, that there is the taken for granted assumption that to tighten and increase the number of rules and regulations is the obvious way to make corporations stop causing ethically undesirable effects and hopefully to limit themselves to causing ethically desirable effects.

Clearly new codes of governance did not prevent further scandals from happening and it is debatable to what degree they actually have led to ethical management and corporations causing ethically more desirable effects in a sustainable manner. There is an unarticulated assumption in the notion that ever increasing and tighter rules and legislation is the primary avenue leading to more ethical outcomes. This assumption is that humans (and possibly also corporations) are fundamentally not concerned with ethics, act always in accordance with only their narrow self-interest and have no genuine concern for the other or others. Laws are just a means to create an environment for these actions that makes unethical behaviour lead to consequences and punishment that are not in the actors' own narrow self-interest. As such the notion that laws are the primary avenue to get to ethical behaviour assumes that human beings and corporations are fundamentally not genuinely concerned with the other and therefore either inherently unethical or at least indifferent to ethical concerns.

A further avenue to explore how we understand ethical issues regarding corporations and their management in theory and practice in contemporary society is to investigate how prominent contributors to management thought implicitly or explicitly understand and deal with them. An insight into the thinking of arguably two of the most important contributors over recent decades, Milton Friedman and Peter Drucker, shall suffice as examples here. While Friedman acknowledges the notion of the corporation being an artificial person, at the same time he suggests that a 'business' itself cannot have responsibilities:

The discussions of the 'social responsibilities of business' are notable for their analytical looseness and lack of rigor. What does it mean to say that 'business' has responsibilities? Only people can have responsibilities. A corporation is an artificial person and in this sense may have artificial responsibilities, but 'business' as a whole cannot be said to have responsibilities, even in this vague sense. The first step toward clarity in examining the doctrine of the social responsibility of business is to ask precisely what it implies for whom. (Friedman, 1970)

When Friedman suggests that a corporation is an artificial person with artificial responsibilities, then this presumably means that it is not a real person, cannot really be held accountable or really take responsibility. In this context, notions of corporate citizenship and corporate responsibility would then be words that cannot be taken as literal, as corporations are not real humans and therefore cannot be citizens and are presumably not a possible locus of accountability and responsibility. This is in line with Drucker's thought, who states that managers are subject to ethics but corporations are not. He further suggests that there is no such thing as business ethics that is separate from ethics in general (Drucker, 1981). Both Friedman and Drucker agree that corporations cannot be thought of as ethical or unethical themselves. Both consider the main locus of responsibility as lying with executives. Here though the two thinkers diverge. While Drucker sees the manager as being subject to ethics, Friedman states that executives are to use their responsibility in the sole interest of the shareholders and are not permitted to act in accordance with a genuine concern for others beyond the shareholders:

In a free-enterprise, private-property system, a corporate executive is an employee of the owners of the business. He has direct responsibility to his employers. That responsibility is

to conduct the business in accordance with their desires, which generally will be to make as much money as possible while conforming to the basic rules of the society, both those embodied in law and those embodied in ethical custom. (Friedman, 1970)

In this sense this locus of responsibility the way Friedman understands it is once again artificial from an ethical perspective as executives are not afforded real choice to be ethical or unethical.

Interestingly, Friedman does not limit the issue of compliance in maximising shareholder value just to laws and regulations, but extends it to ethical custom. In other words, Friedman realises that corporations do need to comply with more than the written law but also need to appear ethical:

To illustrate, it may well be in the long run interest of a corporation that is a major employer in a small community to devote resources to providing amenities to that community or to improving its government. That may make it easier to attract desirable employees, it may reduce the wage bill or lessen losses from pilferage and sabotage or have other worthwhile effects. Or it may be that, given the laws about the deductibility of corporate charitable contributions, the stockholders can contribute more to charities they favor by having the corporation make the gift than by doing it themselves, since they can in that way contribute an amount that would otherwise have been paid as corporate taxes.

In each of these – and many similar – cases, there is a strong temptation to rationalize these actions as an exercise of ‘social responsibility.’ In the present climate of opinion, with its wide spread aversion to ‘capitalism,’ ‘profits,’ the ‘soulless corporation’ and so on, this is one way for a corporation to generate goodwill as a by-product of expenditures that are entirely justified in its own self-interest. (Friedman, 1970)

Presumably what Friedman refers to here is the notion of enlightened self-interest vs. narrow self-interest. Rather than being narrowly focussed on maximising shareholder value, in a more enlightened version, it is useful to note that sometimes to be looking after the well-being of others is to one’s own advantage. This, as Friedman also implies, is still a self-interest that does not show a genuine concern for the other and others for their sake and is therefore not genuinely ethical.

The realisation that the generation of goodwill and a favourable reputation is in many cases a critical prerequisite for the corporation to elicit the kind of support from stakeholders that is required to achieve critical strategic goals and indeed to survive is not new (Fombrun and van Riel, 2004). Building the required reputation can though be pursued in an honest or dishonest way. Reputation management can be an aspect of shareholders and executives being genuinely concerned with the well-being and equitable treatment of stakeholders and the pursuit to have the corporation to be appropriately known for being organised to fulfil such a concern where this is really the case. It can however also degenerate into mere spin-doctoring and generate perceptions of goodwill that can neither be backed up by the realities inside the corporation and nor is there a genuine concern for others among executives and shareholders. This raises the two fundamental questions that need to be answered before judgement can be passed about the honesty in managing corporate reputation: what constitutes the reality inside the corporation and what does it actually mean to be genuinely concerned with the other human beings?

Following Drucker’s statement that managers are subject to ethics and that there is no such thing as business ethics that is separate from ethics in general, it will

be helpful to look at the state of ethics. Clearly, despite the enormous efforts by scholars, educators, opinion leaders and many others in developing the theory and pedagogy of ethics there is a broad sense that this has not led to consistently high ethical standards in general and in corporate management in particular. There seems to be little confidence that we are moving towards an orientation in corporate management that would fulfil the promise of corporations being run in a way that leads to them protecting human dignity and the natural environment in a sustainable manner.

It is beyond the scope of this book to give a comprehensive and critical overview of the vast field of ethics in general and managerial ethics in particular and the content, theoretical and practical validity of different approaches to ethics such as, for example, eudaimonism, utilitarianism, hedonism or Kantianism. It seems though that overall the field of ethics and consequently also of business ethics has reached point of crisis. Halder and Muller (1993: 82–84), in their overview on ethics, state that all ethics is ultimately dependent on our understanding of the very nature of human beings.<sup>3</sup> For example, eudaimonism is a prominent line of ethical thought that is based on the notion of the pursuit of ‘happiness’, ‘well-being’, ‘success’ and ‘human flourishing’ which are all possible translations of the Greek word ‘eudaimonia’ (OxDicPhil: 122). The pursuit of happiness, well-being, success and human flourishing though raises the question what this actually means for human beings to be happy, well, successful and flourishing. As Blackburn explains with regards to eudaimonism and the pursuit to flourish as a human being, ‘the Cyreniacs stress sensual pleasure, the Stoics place emphasis on detachment from worldly good, such as health and friendship; Aquinas puts more emphasis on happiness as the eternal contemplation of god; and so on’ (OxDicPhil: 122). On which one of these aspects of happiness one put the emphasis depends largely on one’s notion of what a human being in its very nature actually is. To complicate matters further, ethical notions and the interpretation of particular approaches to ethics have changed over time. For example during certain epochs of human history slavery was considered ethically perfectly acceptable while this is now considered a fundamental violation of human dignity and human rights. The abolition of slavery came about by the public developing a certain sense of what it means to be human that made slavery being considered to be a fundamental violation of what it means to be human.

The question of the very nature of human beings though does no longer fall into the field of ethics but into the branch of philosophy called ‘ontology’. As Halder and Muller point out in reference to Heidegger and his *Letter on Humanism* (LoH/Hum), this causes the difficulty to formulate an ethics in the traditional sense as for the most part the very nature of what it means to be a human being has come into question (Halder and Muller, 1993: 82–84). In the context of investigating foundations for

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<sup>3</sup>This should obviously not exclude the concern for other living entities such as animals, but as will be argued later in this book, even our understanding of the very nature of for example animals is in many ways closely related to how we understand ourselves as humans.

ethical management, this is exacerbated by the fact that not only the very nature of humans is a highly contested issue, but it seems that a prominent entity that management is concerned with, namely the corporation, is even more contested and unclear.

Rather than a critique of the vast literature and the many approaches to ethics in general and managerial ethics in particular, the project of this book is to look at what determines the contemporary discourse on the theory and practice of ethics, which is already taken for granted at the most fundamental level. The starting point for the project of this book is the suggestion that there are fundamental ontological assumptions in the discourse of managerial ethics that we take so utterly for granted that they for the most part do not even occur to us any longer as assumptions or anything questionable. However, if these very assumptions prevent ethical management, it is critical to find a way to articulate and question them, as well as to develop new and more promising assumptions on which to build ethical management theory and practice. As such, the undertaking at hand is of a pre-ethical or proto-ethical nature. Typically this work is done in the fields of metaethics or analytic ethics, which analyse the language of existing ethics and the rational foundations of existing ethics. But unlike metaethics and analytic ethics, which analyse and deconstruct existing ethical systems for what is already taken for granted and assumed within their rationality, this enquiry starts out with a focus on what we take most for granted, which is a certain understanding of the very nature<sup>4</sup> of entities themselves and of Being.<sup>5</sup>

But how can we ascertain the very nature of entities and what does the word Being mean? And how does an understanding of the very nature of entities and Being relate to ethics? As alluded to earlier, the questions of the very nature of entities and of Being belong in the field of ontology in its broad definition. Ontology is, for the most part, asking about the very nature of entities, such as ‘what does it mean to be human?’ or ‘what is it that makes humans distinct from, say, an animal, a plant or a physical object?’ That the question of the very nature of an entity is closely related to ethics is relatively easy to understand. If one asks about the nature of human dignity one gets very quickly to the question of what a human being actually is and how humans actually have dignity; or what does it mean, for example, for human dignity to be violated. Questions of human dignity are of rather obvious ethical import and are therefore worthy of exploration in the project at hand. In this sense, in investigating the ontological question regarding its relevance to managerial ethics, we have to ask about the very nature of the entities involved in and that are

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<sup>4</sup>The words ‘very nature’ are used here as the translation of the German word ‘Wesen’, which is usually translated as ‘essence’ or ‘inner nature’. These two translations have been avoided here. ‘Essence’ is frequently read in a platonic sense as a nature that is independent of the entity itself, which is about as far away as it could get from the way the word ‘Wesen’ is to be understood in a Heideggerian sense, which is the sense used here. ‘Inner nature’ could be misinterpreted as certain characteristics that are somehow spatially ‘inside’ an entity.

<sup>5</sup>There is no word for the German word ‘Sein’ as a noun in the English language. To refer to ‘being’ as a noun, the word will be written with a capital ‘B’.



affected by managerial ethics. The entities that are predominantly involved in issues of managerial ethics are human beings, but also the natural environment and the communities that a corporation operates in. Finally we need to ask the question of what a corporation actually is, given that managers do manage corporations themselves and entities within corporations. From there we need to ask the question ‘how do corporations affect the above entities such as human beings or animals inside and outside the corporation?’

## Heidegger and Ethics

In the tradition of ontological questioning and the inquiry into Being, Heidegger stands out. Heidegger has been widely acknowledged as one of the most influential thinkers of the twentieth century and generations of philosophers, such as Arendt, Bourdieu, Derrida, Foucault, Gadamer, Habermas, Merleau-Ponty, Rorty and Sartre have acknowledged a debt to him (Dreyfus and Hall, 1992; Guignon, 1993). He, probably alongside Wittgenstein, was one of the most influential thinkers in the twentieth century philosophical discourse (Figal, 2000: 11; Guignon, 1993: introductory comment on first page). Heidegger is the thinker who is regarded as being the most prominent philosopher to ask the ontological question both regarding Being itself and the very nature of entities (Brugger, 1976: 277). The project of this book is to retrieve from Heidegger’s overall thinking what is relevant in asking these primordial ontological questions with a view to establishing a more promising ontological foundation for managerial ethics in theory and, ultimately more importantly, in practice.

It seems quite unusual, in the current academic mainstream, to develop a line of thinking predominantly out of just one thinker. The risk in doing this is to fall prey to this thinker’s shortcomings without proactively seeking other comparative opinions on the subject matter. This concern is exacerbated by Heidegger’s brief involvement or at least flirtation with Nazism, which has, in the eyes of many, disqualified Heidegger’s thought in general and with regard to an ethical inquiry in particular. However, focusing on one thinker presents the opportunity to dedicate oneself to understanding this thinker thoroughly rather than just glossing over what may be worthy of further consideration and what may be highly relevant. In approaching any thinker, Heidegger himself suggests careful consideration of which stance one needs to take to appropriately engage his or her thinking:

One thing is necessary, though, for a face-to-face converse with the thinkers: clarity about the manner in which we encounter them. Basically, there are only two possibilities: either to go to their encounter, or to go counter to them. If we want to go to the encounter of a thinker’s thought, we must magnify still further what is great in him. Then we will enter into what is unthought in his thought. If we wish only to go counter to a thinker’s thought, this wish must have minimised beforehand what is great in him. We then shift his thought into the commonplaces of our know-it-all presumption. It makes no difference if we assert in passing that Kant was nonetheless a very significant thinker. Such praises from below are always an insult. (WhD: 72/WCT: 77)



As such, the project here is to magnify certain aspects of Heidegger's thought which are relevant to develop an appropriate foundation for managerial ethics and then – once these have been magnified – to leave it to the reader to judge what still remains missing or unthought. In this sense Heidegger's brief involvement in Nazism is a positive challenge in disguise, as this alone suggests that we should never follow Heidegger blindly without thinking for ourselves and the implications of Heidegger's thought in the face of the continuing or recurring horrors of war, genocide and other evil committed on an unfathomable scale. Heidegger himself encouraged this kind of engagement with his thinking (WhD: 159).<sup>6</sup> Equally we should also guard against blindly falling prey to such public sentiment against Heidegger in this regard, but retrieve from his thought what can contribute to ethics in general and ethical management in particular.

One might compare this undertaking to develop ontological foundations for managerial ethics and the practice of ethical management from Heidegger's thinking to getting to the top of a mountain that has a walking path and a cable car leading to the top. It is obvious that walking up the mountain gives the mountaineer a very different appreciation of the mountain than taking the cable car would. Arriving at the top by cable car and making smart comments about walking up the mountain without actually having walked up it clearly lacks some of the appreciation of the mountain and the effort and experience gained in having walked up the mountain. Similarly the undertaking here is to 'walk' through the whole of Heidegger's thinking and then get an appreciation of its implications for management ethics and ethical management rather than approaching it from our commonsensical notions and criticising whatever seems counter to what we already assume. As Polt (1999: 7) points out, to benefit from an engagement with Heidegger's thinking does not require agreement with him either as a person or his thought. They are worth engaging in first and foremost not to give us definitive answers but because they have the potential to lead us into the engagement with a host of fundamental and interconnected issues that are worth raising. It is suggested that it is the quality and depth of this kind of engagement where the strength and foremost contribution of Heidegger's thinking lies. To enhance the direct encounter with Heidegger's thought ample use will be made of direct quotations of his writings throughout this book.

The choice of Heidegger as a guiding thinker in the endeavour at hand may seem strange at first, not only because of his involvement with Nazism but because he never developed an ethic in the sense of creating a set of universal moral principles, values or a single general maxim.<sup>7</sup> As mentioned already, Heidegger, though, deals with the issue of ethics in his *Letter on Humanism* (LoH/Hum). Heidegger recognises the current situation that on the one hand we are more and more exposed to

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<sup>6</sup>Interestingly, the English translation of this book (WCT) simply leaves out this critical part without any mention or acknowledgement.

<sup>7</sup>As a matter of fact, Heidegger's thinking does not provide a practical philosophy at all (Gethmann-Siefert and Pöggeler, 1989).

being violated in the most fundamental ways and on the other hand contemporary ethics does not lead to the desired ethical behaviour and outcomes. He therefore appreciates that people long for peremptory directives and rules how we humans should live in a fitting manner (Hum: 43/LoH: 255). However, he does not respond to the request to write an ethics by putting together a theoretical framework or a set of guidelines or values for people to behave in a way that protects the very nature of humans in the way developed in his most prominent work *Being and Time*.

In typical Heideggerian fashion, rather than giving an answer on how to behave particularly towards humans, he investigates the origins of ethics both from the perspective of the history of philosophy and from an etymological perspective, exploring the origins of the word ‘ethics’.

Along with ‘logic’ and ‘physics,’ ‘ethics’ appeared for the first time in the school of Plato. These disciplines arose at a time when thinking was becoming ‘philosophy,’ philosophy *epistēmē* (science), and science itself a matter for schools and academic pursuits. In the course of a philosophy so understood, science waxed and thinking waned. The thinkers prior to this period knew neither a ‘logic’ nor an ‘ethics’ nor ‘physics.’ Yet their thinking was neither illogical nor immoral. But they did think *physis* in a depth and breadth that no subsequent ‘physics’ was ever able to attain. The tragedies of Sophocles – provided such a comparison is permissible – preserve the *ēthos* in their sagas more primordially than Aristotle’s lectures on ‘ethics.’ (Hum: 44/LoH: 256)

Heidegger says here that moral behaviour is not a function of ethics in the way we have known it since Aristotle and still know it today, but is brought forth by a more primordial thinking, which in the case of ethics refers to an understanding of ethos, the word that ‘ethics’ is derived from. Consequently, rather than developing yet another theoretical approach on ethics or a new framework or set of rules and guidelines by which practice should be guided, Heidegger investigates ethos as understood by the pre-Socratic thinkers, particularly one of his seemingly most favourite sources: Heraclitus. The Greek word ‘ethos’ is, as mentioned earlier, typically translated as ‘character’. Heidegger suggests with reference to fragment 119 of Heraclitus that the word ‘ethos’ is more appropriately translated as ‘abode’ and ‘dwelling place’:

The saying of Heraclitus (Fragment 119) goes: *ēthos athrōpoi daimōn*. This is usually translated as, ‘The man’s character is his daimon.’ This translation thinks in a modern way, not a Greek one. *Ēthos* means abode, dwelling place. The word names the open region in which the human being dwells. The openness of its abode allows that to show up what pertains to the very nature of the human being and in thus arriving resides in its nearness. The abode of the human being contains and preserves the advent of what belongs to the human being in its very nature. According to Heraclitus’s phrase this is *daimōn*, the god. The fragment says: The human being dwells, insofar as he is human, in the nearness of the god. (Hum: 45/LoH: 256)

In engaging with Heraclitus’ fragment Heidegger then offers a further translation of the sentence *ēthos athrōpoi daimōn*: ‘The (familiar) abode for man is the open region for the presencing of god (the unfamiliar one)’ (LoH: 258/Hum: 47). The meaning of the word *ēthos* has now moved from ‘human character’ to ‘dwelling’ and then to ‘the familiar abode’ as that which ethics is originally concerned with.

The sentence ‘The man’s character is his daimon’ and the sentence ‘The human being dwells, insofar as it is human, in the nearness of the god,’ which is then further clarified as ‘The (familiar) abode for man is the open region for the presencing of god (the unfamiliar one)’ clearly say something very different. In Heidegger’s estimation this difference in translation signifies the fundamental difference between contemporary ethical thought and the pre-Socratic notion of *ethos*. In contemporary ethics we look predominantly at character, and in this sense really the characteristics of a human being, while an inquiry into *ethos* really means an inquiry into our human way of dwelling, that which we already find ourselves in.

If the name ‘ethics,’ in keeping with the basic meaning of the word *ēthos*, should now say that ‘ethics’ ponders the abode of the human being, then that thinking which thinks the truth of Being, as the primordial element of the human being, as one who *ek-sists*,<sup>8</sup> is in itself the original ethics. (Hum: 47/LoH: 258)

As we see from this quote, Heidegger considers the truth of Being as that within which we as humans find ourselves in at the most fundamental level. He says that humans ‘*ek-sist*’, to signify with this unusual spelling an openness to the truth of Being as a fundamental aspect of the very nature of human beings’ way of being. Heidegger’s investigation into the very nature of the way of being of human beings is concerned chiefly with the relation and openness of human beings to Being. In *Being and Time* he calls this kind of investigation ‘fundamental ontology’ because it investigates what is most fundamental to the very nature of humans – this being their relation to Being (SZ/BT). The title of this book is to be understood in a similar way. To investigate the ontological fundamentals of ethical management in this sense means not only to investigate the very nature of entities involved in corporate management and their relation among each other, but also their relation to Being. The entities involved in corporate management are primarily human beings as the ones who are doing the managing and are managed, as well as the corporation – the entity that is both managed and that management occurs in.

As it was one of Heidegger’s core concerns to investigate the very nature of humans, particularly with regard to their relation to Being, this book will in this respect for the most part merely seek to summarise his thinking. More challenging and equally critical for the undertaking at hand is the requirement to establish the very nature of the entity called ‘the corporation’ and the relation of the corporation to Being. Gaining a clearly worked out fundamental ontological understanding of humans and corporations will provide the platform for understanding the very nature of the activity called ‘corporate management,’ which is concerned with shaping and directing corporations. This will allow for a clarification of the very nature of actions that qualify as corporate management or, to be more precise, as dealing with the corporation as an entity itself. Such an understanding will then serve to guide the development of appropriate avenues for understanding the very nature of the practice of corporate management in general and ethical corporate management in particular.

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<sup>8</sup>Heidegger uses the spelling ‘*ek-sist*’ to denote the ecstatic relationship that humans have to Being.

## The Unasked Question About the Very Nature of the Corporation and Corporate Management

While the following remains concerned with establishing the ontological foundations for ethical management, it is noteworthy that a number of challenges in corporate management, such as the need for innovation, creativity and extraordinary entrepreneurial initiative, cannot be fully met with the currently dominant implicit understanding of the very nature of corporations and their management either. The following reflections are, therefore, as it turns out, not just occupied with a task that is prior to this question of how to resolve the challenges of ethical corporate management in the traditional sense of the word 'ethics', but happens to be occupied with the other challenges of corporate management as well. This prior task is to ascertain the very nature of this challenge. The clarification of the very nature of the challenge of corporate management should ultimately lead to a significant contribution to the development of appropriate approaches for actually meeting the challenge posed by corporate management. In order to understand the very nature of the challenge called 'corporate management,' it is critical to clearly establish the very nature of the entity that corporate management is dealing with in the first instance, namely the nature of the entity called 'the corporation,' and then to ascertain the very nature of those actions that appropriately handle, manage or deal with this type of entity. By clarifying the very nature of the corporation and its management, a much wider domain and increased clarity on the very nature of possible actions that bring forth and shape the corporation are opened up.

There is a significant body of literature on suggested approaches to deal with the challenge of organisational and corporate management.<sup>9</sup> This literature overlaps with publications in the field of organisational and corporate strategy, which itself is 'vast and, since 1980, has been growing at an astonishing rate' (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 18). The body of literature about organisational theory presumably started with Weber (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 294) and his book, 'The Theory of Social & Economic Organization', which was first published in 1924 and translated into English in 1947 (Weber, 1947). It is as much a sociological book and a book about economics as it is a book about organisational theory, as the title indicates. It also demonstrates the interdisciplinary nature of the study of organisational and corporate issues. Coase's article on 'The Nature of the Firm' (Coase, 1937) is widely regarded as a landmark publication in the economics of organisations (Williamson and Winter, 1991). Probably the most popular book on corporations specifically is Drucker's 'Concept of the Corporation', which was first published in 1946 and then published in a second and reworked edition in 1972 (Drucker, 1972). Besides these seminal works on organisations and their economic logic and their role in society, there are numerous other authors who have defined and prominently contributed

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<sup>9</sup>A collection of some of the most prominent examples of how to deal with the challenge of management itself can be found in Pugh and Hickson (1996), Williamson (1995), Etzioni (1969a, b) and Mintzberg et al. (1998).

to the field of organisational thought.<sup>10</sup> It remains undisputed that they all make important contributions to this field of study, although the reader of all these works will not find an explicit articulation of the understanding of the very nature of the corporation in the ontological sense that is used in this book.

In ‘The Concept of the Corporation’ Drucker makes an appeal that ...

... [t]he job of this generation is not to abolish the large-scale organisation. It is to make it perform – for individual, community and society alike. This job presupposes, above all, that we understand the large-scale organisation and know how to make it work. (Drucker, 1972: xxi)

Besides a further need to clarify what the word ‘performance’ means when there is talk of ‘the performance of the corporation’, the project at hand is in harmony with this appeal to understand the corporation. However, Drucker himself never gives an ontological account of the corporation and the reader of Drucker’s work would be hard pressed to find any further ontological explanation besides the reference to the corporation, business or the firm as an ‘institution’ (Drucker, 1972: ix; 1974: 3ff.) and occasionally as a ‘social actuality’ (Drucker, 1972: 5) and a ‘social reality’ (Drucker, 1972: 9), without him giving the reader any guidance about his understanding of the notion of an institution, a social actuality or a social reality in the ontological sense. Similarly, Chandler defines the modern business enterprise or corporation as an institution (Chandler, 1977: 5), without ever giving an ontologically satisfying account of institutions in general and of the corporation as a type of institution in particular.

In the above-mentioned publications, the organisation and the corporation are often defined via their purpose (e.g. Parsons, 1960), although, as Lawrence and Lorsch (1969) point out ...

... [w]e tend to think of organisations as having a purpose, but this is not literally the case. *People* have purposes; organisations do not. A simple organisation may, of course, specialise in one thing, such as the manufacture and sale of shoes. We call this its purpose, but this is acceptable only as a shorthand way of speaking. (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1969: 2–3)

It is precisely this shorthand way of speaking that this book intends to expose in order to establish a way of speaking that is no longer shorthand, but a literal, accurate and authentic account of the corporation and its organisation. In this case, Lawrence and Lorsch (1969) seem to suggest that, to talk about organisations as having a purpose, one ascribes to them a human nature, which, according to these authors, is inappropriate when literally ascribed to the organisation, since it is presumably a different kind of entity from a human being. Lawrence and Lorsch go on to define the organisation as ‘the coordination of different activities of individual contributors to carry out planned transactions with the environment’ (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1969: 3). This definition, however, does not give any insight into the very nature

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<sup>10</sup>i.e. Chandler (1962, 1977), Crozier (1964), Etzioni (1964), Fayol (1949), Lawrence and Lorsch (1967a, 1969), Lindblom (1968), March and Simon (1958), Mintzberg (1979, 1980, 1983 and 1993) and Mintzberg et al. (1998), Morgan (1997), Parsons (1960), Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), Porter (1980, 1985), Selznick (1957), Taylor (1911) and Weick (1995).

of the corporation and its organisation. How does the corporation coordinate different activities and what is the very nature of those entities that it coordinates? It is probably intuitively clear that a computer, a wolf in a pack, as well as a human being can coordinate their actions and that, in each case, this coordinating function is accomplished in fundamentally different ways, as will be demonstrated in more detail later. Furthermore, the question of the coordinating function raises questions about the very nature of the entity that is coordinated. To coordinate the movements of certain parts of an airplane during flight presumably happens in fundamentally different ways from the coordination of a group of employees in a corporation like Du Pont. To get closer to an answer to these questions, the very nature of mechanical parts, animals, humans and corporations will need to be explored and clarified.

While the major publications on corporate issues are not explicitly dedicated to the ontological project regarding the very nature of the corporation, they nevertheless, in each case, build on a certain ontological understanding of the very nature of the corporation. This understanding of the very nature of the corporation, however, remains largely unarticulated and in the background of the explanations and arguments made in these publications. Given that the purpose of this book is to establish an understanding of the very nature of the corporation and the very nature of corporate management, it will be helpful to regularly draw on the explicit or implicit understanding of the phenomena 'the corporation' and 'corporate management', as it is assumed in some of the most prominent publications in the body of literature in the field. This will then allow for a critique of the appropriateness of this understanding. Morgan's (1997) work deserves special prominence in the undertaking at hand, since it presumably represents the most wide-ranging attempt to categorise the numerous contributions of organisational and management thought into discreet types of understanding of the nature of organisations or corporations. His work also draws strongly on the wide body of literature on organisational and corporate thought.

The following argument will draw on the extensive body of literature on corporate strategy, as Mintzberg et al. (1998) have explained, segmented and categorised it. The literature on strategic management is vast and strategic management is a relatively young academic field. Its formal development as a part of the academic field of business administration dates back to the 1960s (Mintzberg et al., 1998). There are probably almost as many definitions of the term 'corporate strategy' as there are publications on the subject and thus there is a need to define the term 'strategic management' in a way that is congruent with the project at hand. Usually, 'strategic' is contrasted with 'operational'. For the purpose of the following discourse the 'operational' is understood as the domain of working *within* a corporation and the 'strategic' is the domain of working *on* or *with* the corporation itself. Accordingly, strategic thinking and leadership would be about changes to or transformation of the corporation itself, while operational thinking and leadership would be directed at getting something done within a given corporation. The two can obviously overlap. For example, if someone gets a difficult task done in an unusually short time or with unusually few resources, this might lead to changes in the corporation itself, in the way that things get structured in the future and in the whole understanding of

how things get done. Given this distinction, the following focuses on the very nature of the actions that form the corporation and are thus strategic by nature. ‘Corporate strategy’ is therefore, in this context the field that is concerned with dealing with the entity called the ‘corporation’ itself.

The purpose of this introductory chapter is to suggest the need for a more primordial understanding of managerial ethics and to explain the relevance of asking the ontological question particularly concerning the very nature or Being of the entity called ‘the corporation’. It is obvious that the corporation plays a prominent, if not overwhelming, role as a logic for organising productive behaviour in the current era or epoch. As pointed out earlier, there are numerous shortcomings in this logic, which cannot be remedied within the current implicit but largely unarticulated pre-understanding of the very nature of corporations and their management. The task at hand is therefore to obtain a deeper understanding of the very nature of the corporation and its management. This project to obtain a deeper understanding of the very nature of any phenomenon and, here in particular, the phenomena ‘corporation’ and ‘corporate management’ is, as pointed out earlier, the task of a branch of philosophy called ‘ontology’.

In addition, the remainder of this chapter will deal with the choice of Heidegger not just with regard to the ethical question as explained earlier, but also as a leading thinker in the endeavour to ascertain both the very nature of the corporation and the very nature of corporate management. This is particularly critical since Heidegger had very little direct experience of corporate life. As will be argued, the reason why Heidegger’s thinking qualifies for this task is because he is the thinker who is regarded as the most prominent philosopher who has asked the question regarding ‘Being’ itself and, in this context, the question about the very nature of entities. Furthermore, he was dedicated to the project of both understanding and going beyond the Cartesian tradition, a way of thinking that dominates modern philosophy and, as will be pointed out below, is at the foundation of the kind of phenomenon known as ‘the corporation’. Thus the location and role of Heidegger in the philosophical tradition and the notion of a hermeneutic phenomenology are outlined in this chapter.

## **The Case for Asking the Ontological Question Regarding the Corporation**

### *Definitions*

The word ‘corporation’ is defined as ‘a group of people authorized to act as an individual and recognized in law as a single entity, esp. in business’ (OxDic: 258). It is easy to recognise that, first and foremost, this is a legal definition of the word ‘corporation’ (Mintzberg, 1983: 68; Bell, 1971: 29) as an entity that would outlive its members and that makes possible, assures and sustains the ongoing accomplishment of tasks that are beyond the capacity of an individual (Zald, 1969). In this sense, the word ‘corporation’ is understood as a synonym for what Chandler calls the



‘modern business enterprise’ (Chandler, 1977). The word ‘corporation’ also carries with it an understanding of a certain logic within which humans predominantly structure productive activity in the current epoch. There are certain connotations to the notion of the ‘corporate world’ (while the word ‘organisational world’ is not a commonly used word and does not carry the same connotations). Similar connotations are expressed when reference is made, for example, to ‘the corporatisation of the university’, which means applying a certain logic to organising academic life.

Many publications on the issue of the corporation use the word ‘organisation’ in the same sense as the word ‘corporation’ is used here (for example Morgan, 1997; Pugh and Hickson, 1996). ‘Organisation’ is defined as any sort of ‘systematic arrangement’ and ‘orderly structure’ (OxDic: 837). As the definition indicates, the word ‘organisation’ refers to a structure and arrangement and can be applied to a much wider number of entities besides the human organisation – for example, in talking about the ‘organisation of an anthill’. Mintzberg gives the following definition of organisational structure, which is similar to Lawrence and Lorsch’s (1969) definition of an organisation that was quoted earlier: ‘The structure of an organisation can be defined simply as the sum total of the ways in which it divides labour into distinct tasks and then achieves coordination among them’ (Mintzberg, 1979: 2). What is here meant by ‘corporation’ is an entity that has a structure and an arrangement, but this is not what a corporation is. This will be pointed out in greater detail in the following chapters. Many of the references that were used in the process of thinking about corporations actually talk about ‘organisations’, although it is clear that they either talk about corporations or about a specific kind of organisation, which is the organisation of the corporation. In each case, the corporation has an organisation that is structured along a particular logic. To work out this logic will be critical for coming to grips with the very nature of the modern corporation. Although the assumption is that every corporation has an organisational structure, the two are not to be taken as the same.

### ***Metaphorical Statements About the Corporation***

Morgan (1997) has written an influential book called ‘Images of Organization’, which claims that, in order to be able to deal with the phenomenon ‘organisation’ (and what he seemingly means by that for the most part is more precisely the ‘organisation of the corporation’ and ‘the corporation’), it is helpful to apply a whole number of metaphors to the corporation in order to capture the complexity of this entity (Morgan, 1997). Morgan’s book. . .

is based on a very simple premise: that all theories of organisation and management are based on implicit images or metaphors that lead us to see, understand, and manage organisations in distinctive yet partial ways.

Metaphor is often regarded just as a device for embellishing discourse, but its significance is much greater than this. The use of metaphor implies *a way of thinking* and *a way of seeing* that pervade how we understand our world generally. For example, research in a wide variety of fields has demonstrated that metaphors exert a formative influence on science, on



our language, and on how we think, as well as on how we express ourselves on a day-to-day basis. (Morgan, 1997: 4)

A metaphor is ‘the application of a name or descriptive term or phrase to an object or action to which it is imaginatively but not literally applicable (e.g. *a glaring error*)’ (OxDic: 745). In other words, speaking about an entity in a metaphorical sense means comparing it to something that it is *not*, rather than describing it in a way that it is by its very nature. One might, for example, describe an old car as a ‘sick dog’. While the description of a car as a ‘sick dog’ clearly communicates some key characteristics of this old car, it is also clear that the car is not literally a sick dog, but that ‘sick dog’ is used in a metaphorical sense to describe certain characteristics of a car that tends to break down regularly or give technical problems. In this sense it can be appropriate to use a metaphor to describe certain characteristics of an entity. The skilful use of metaphors always assumes, however, that it is widely clear that the metaphor actually is a metaphor and not part of a literal statement. Let us consider an extreme and – in the western culture at least – an unlikely example: Should someone who is entirely unfamiliar with the nature of cars be confronted with a statement about a car being a sick dog, he or she might well conclude that the car should be taken to a veterinarian rather than to a car mechanic to remedy the situation. Thus, for a metaphorical statement to work, it is critical that it is understood as metaphorical by both the speaker and the listener and is not mistaken as a literal statement. Tsoukas (1991) points out that many metaphors are dormant or even dead, and people are therefore unaware that they are using them. The word ‘corporation’ is one such example. A corporation is not literally a body (Latin: *corpus*), as the word would suggest. However, as will become clearer in the following section when the influence of the metaphor of the corporation as an organism is discussed, even dead or dormant metaphors can still have a persuasive influence on the way in which a particular entity is handled.

The idea that metaphors might be misleading is by no means original. Pinder and Bourgeois (1982), for example, suggest that the use of tropes<sup>11</sup> (including metaphors) may ‘impede the development of . . . a body of knowledge useful to practitioners’ (Morgan, 1983: 601). This, they suggest, is because the use of metaphor prevents the development of ‘sufficient precise literal language for stating hypotheses and formal theories as carefully as we would like’ (Pinder and Bourgeois, 1982: 612). What they seek, in contrast, are operational definitions and an analytic taxonomy to accurately describe the features of and attendant appropriate actions for particular kinds of corporations. Pinder and Bourgeois’ view suggests that we can escape metaphor completely, at least in analysis, whereas Morgan argues that structuralist linguistics has shown that tropes (metaphors among them) are ‘the axes on which human experience builds’ (Morgan, 1983: 602).

As Morgan points out, metaphors can become powerful foundations for day-to-day actions. It is therefore not argued that metaphors should be abandoned

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<sup>11</sup> ‘tropes’ are any type of figurative use of a word, of which metaphors are just one example (see also OxDic: 1309).

altogether, but rather that it is important to be clear when a metaphorical statement is being used and that there is consequently also a need to speak about and be clear about issues and entities in a literal sense. For example, the statement ‘my car is a piece of machinery that needs a full service and repair’ is not a metaphorical statement. Cars are indeed cases of pieces of machinery. This is therefore a literal statement. It is highly unlikely that the description of a car as a piece of faulty machinery will lead anyone to take it to the veterinarian, as it will most likely be obvious that a mechanic is the appropriate professional to deal with the issue at hand. Metaphorical statements can highlight certain aspects of an entity but, since they are not literal, they do not capture the true nature of the entity. They also cannot completely describe the entity as what it is in its very nature. While some aspects of an entity are highlighted when one speaks metaphorically, something always remains hidden and distorted. For practical reasons, it is therefore critical to be clear whether a statement is being made in a metaphorical sense or as a literal statement. This is especially so when the nature of the entity one is talking about is not obvious.

Both Morgan (1997) and Gadamer (1965) point out that metaphors help us to read situations. There seems to be a level of understanding that metaphors achieve that cannot be reached by the objectifying scientific approach.

To find oneself in a situation always contains a factor that is unreachable for the objectifying recognition. Not without reason are metaphorical expressions used in such a context like the one, that one has to put oneself into the situation to be able to go beyond general knowledge and recognise the really doable and possible. (Gadamer, 1965: 164)

According to Gadamer, there is a dimension of understanding that is required for appropriate action that cannot be fully provided for through scientific knowledge. Metaphors, according to Gadamer, can help to get us a step closer to reaching the understanding that is required to master a situation.

As will be shown in the following chapter, different types of entities have served as metaphors in the attempt to make sense of the corporation and its organisation. They have allowed fresh perspectives on how to deal with corporations. In the light of this, Morgan suggests the consideration of a series of metaphors in order to understand a situation in a holistic way and then be empowered to handle it successfully. The metaphors Morgan offers are: organisations as machines, organisations as organisms, organisations as brains, organisations as cultures, organisations as political systems, organisations as psychic prisons, organisation as flux and transformation, and organisations as instruments of domination. All these metaphors have produced contributions to organisational thought. This remains undisputed and the contributions of these metaphors will be set out in more detail in the second chapter.

As mentioned above, metaphors describe entities as what they are not, rather than as what they are. In the case of Morgan’s book, ‘Images of Organisation’ (Morgan, 1997), this gives us a noteworthy problem, since Morgan suggests only metaphors and no literal description. This could mean a couple of different things. Firstly, it could mean that corporations are not an entity in their own right at all, but just a figment of the imagination. Secondly, corporations could be entities that Morgan does not cover at all. This would mean that we need to find out what they actually

are, and Morgan's metaphors themselves cannot give us much guidance in this endeavour. Thirdly, there could be an inaccuracy in Morgan's statements in the sense that one or some of the statements that Morgan presents as metaphors actually are not metaphors but literal descriptions of the corporation. Morgan does not choose any one of these options, but presents a fourth option by stating 'Organizations are many things at once!' (Morgan, 1997: 347). This is a strange comment. If organisations were many things at once, they presumably would literally be some of the kinds of entities that Morgan describes in his book as 'metaphors'. But then they would not be metaphors but literal descriptions of what corporations actually are. This would mean that corporations are a perplexing type of entity that has many natures.

One might easily dismiss these considerations as pure cavilling, quibbling or a meaningless play with words. But Morgan himself stated that '[t]he use of metaphor implies *a way of thinking and a way of seeing* that pervade how we understand our world generally' (Morgan, 1997: 4).

As shown above, the descriptions of the corporation that we implicitly or explicitly consider to be literal are presumably even more important than the metaphors that we use might. Furthermore, is what we consider literal actually a literal description, or is it just a metaphor that is still concealed and looks like a literal description? The critical question, therefore, is how literal statements can be distinguished from metaphorical statements. Or, how can the very nature of an entity be established in general, and of the corporation and its management in particular?

Science and scientific research do not seem to be able to fulfil this task. As mentioned earlier and in harmony with Morgan's statement, scientific research is already prejudiced and guided by certain 'metaphors' or presumed literal understandings. Every science is knowingly or unknowingly based on a whole number of assumptions and metaphors. For example, although Einstein's well known formula  $e=mc^2$  does show a relationship, physics as a discipline and Einstein himself leave the questions of what energy is, what matter is etc. unquestioned (Polt, 1999: 1). To ask these fundamental questions is the task of philosophy and, more precisely, of ontology. Applying inappropriate ontological foundations when asking questions about a certain entity does not necessarily mean that the researcher does not succeed in producing a 'correct' outcome in his or her endeavour in the context of the applied methodology. However, this inappropriate ontological foundation will lead the enquiry even further away from coming to grips with the very nature of the entity that is to be understood. The outcome produced by applying an inappropriate ontology would thus be of very limited value.

Every scientific standpoint rests on some ontological assumptions (§3).<sup>12</sup> Any science of human beings must work with a prior understanding of human *Being* – and the data provided by the sciences will not, by themselves, clarify this prior understanding. We can pile up volumes of statistical and experimental results about ourselves without coming any closer to grasping what it is to be human. (Polt, 1999: 43)

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<sup>12</sup>This refers to the paragraph of Heidegger's *Being and Time* where he deals with this issue.

The critical question in resolving the issue of a literal understanding of corporations and the establishment of the very nature of the corporation falls into the domain of ontology. For this reason the clarification of the nature of scientific thought and the need for the step or ‘leap’ from scientific questioning to ontological questioning deserves further attention.

### *The Role of Ontological Questioning in Theory and Practice*

Ontology in its broad definition is understood as ‘the branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being’ (OxDic: 829) and is also understood to be ‘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 (GA 22: 8)’ (HDic: 147). In contrast to that, ‘ontical’ questioning does not pertain to Being or the very nature of entities but to particular facts about entities such as what is the distance between Paris and Rome (Polt, 1999).

As a manager or academic in the field of management one might quite justifiably ask why the academic field and actual practice of corporate management need to expose themselves to philosophical and, particularly, ontological questioning. It may even be questionable whether business administration actually is an established field or academic discipline. However, there are many degrees, such as a Masters in Business Administration, that are offered by academic institutions, which explains why it is important to be clear about what qualifies for being taught within these studies and what should not be taught as part of these degrees. In the field of business administration there seems to be an attitude that there is no need to ask philosophical questions. It seems as if anything that seems ‘useful’ in some way with regard to fulfilling the task of the manager can justifiably be taught or researched in the field of corporate management. Is it, therefore, not good enough to simply hold the opinion that whatever helps to achieve a diverse sets of business objectives justifiably has a place in the field of corporate management and what does not help to achieve these objectives should be left out? However, if one were to look at this issue of ‘usefulness’ more closely, one might begin to wonder what determines whether something is useful or useless. Furthermore, what is ‘useful’ with regard to dealing with an entity depends to a significant extent on the understanding of the very nature of this entity. The decisions of what belongs in an academic discipline and what is to be considered useful or useless in this discipline is not something that can be decided within the field. It is decided when the field is constituted. The constitution of a field is a philosophical undertaking. No academic field can exist without this philosophical foundation, whether it was articulated from the outset, whether it is an ongoing inquiry alongside the academic field, or whether it remains largely unarticulated and ‘waits’ to be revealed (GA 25: 17–40). As long as the philosophical foundation remains unarticulated, it cannot open itself to critique as a discipline or field and consequently a fundamental avenue for developing the field remains closed.

In most sciences and humanities, there is an explicit and articulated philosophical discourse that guides the academic field concerned. This philosophical discourse

is more vibrant for some disciplines than for others. For example, law is guided by a philosophical discourse about what is just, moral, ethical and reasonable; science is guided by the philosophy of science; and politics as an academic discipline is guided by political philosophy. It is intriguing that the field of corporate management or 'business administration' does not seem to have developed an established branch of this kind of discourse (Flores, 1982: I (preface)). There even seems to be a widespread attitude that management does not need this kind of discourse. This does not mean that there are no examples of efforts in this regard<sup>13</sup>; these efforts, however, do not demonstrate that there is a widespread acceptance and establishment of this kind of discourse in the academic units that are concerned with issues of corporate management. It will be an important aspect of this book to provide some understanding into why, by its very nature, the contemporary corporate world is seemingly not open to this discourse or even inherently rejects philosophical, and particularly ontological, inquiries. Furthermore, it needs to be explained why, in the light of this, it is legitimate and important to ask philosophical questions in the area of corporate management.

The philosopher Alan Watts makes this poignant remark:

You may often encounter the sort of character who is typical for a (...) businessman, and he says, 'Well, I am a practical businessman. I believe in producing results and getting things done, and all this high-falutin' logic and nonsense is of no concern to me.' Now I know that the basic practical assumptions, the metaphysics of that man, can be described as a school of philosophy known as pragmatism. However, it is a bad example of pragmatism because he has never thought it through. (Watts, 1995: 82)

In other words, we always act according to a certain philosophy, whether we know and acknowledge it or not. It is therefore suggested here that, for a number of reasons, it is critical to ask philosophical and, in particular, ontological questions in the field of corporate management. The first reason why it is important to ask philosophical and ontological questions in the field of corporate management is that, for the very notion of something being useful, there must already be some preliminary understanding of what makes something useful and what makes something useless. Consequently, when inquiring into corporate management one should have a well-articulated understanding of the sources of usefulness in the corporate world.

From the question of the determination of what is useful and what is useless in a corporation we can derive the critical question, 'what is the very nature of the corporation?' Only once it has been established what a corporation actually *is* can one establish what is appropriate and useful with regard to handling or managing the entity called 'the corporation'. Being clear about the ontological nature of an entity is critical when dealing with it appropriately, regardless of the kind of entity one is dealing with. It would be impossible, for example, to consider the task of a gardener in any meaningful way if it is unclear what a garden is; to think of the

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<sup>13</sup>Bauerschmidt (1996), Introna (1997), Nonaka (1998), Schendel (1994), Spender (1996) and Mir and Watson (2000) are examples of writers who have explicitly introduced philosophical concepts into the field of corporate management.

task of a mother or father if it is not clear what a child is; to think of the task of an accountant if it is not clear what accounts and finances are or to think of the task of a statesman or stateswoman if it is not clear what a state is. Also, to assess whether someone does a good job as a gardener will largely depend on him or her serving the garden in accordance to its very nature as a garden. In the same sense, it is critical to come to grips with the very nature of the corporation if we want to come to grips with the nature of the task of those designated to look after and to influence the corporation in some way such as CEOs, politicians and lawmaker. This will allow a clearer ascertainment of the very nature of those actions that deal with this kind of entity.

Furthermore, only once it is clear what the very nature of a corporation is, can one clearly determine what types of actions actually manage or otherwise deal with the corporation in its very nature and therefore should be a part of the field of corporate management as an academic discipline. To give an example: when educating medical doctors one would probably not consider teaching them financial accounting, even though doctors at some stage probably will have to deal with issues of accounting as part of running a financially sustainable practice. Since accounting is not considered to be a task that deals directly with the kind of entity that medical doctors are dealing with, namely the human body, one would therefore not consider it to be a part of the academic field called 'health sciences'. In other words, there are areas of knowledge that would be 'useful' in some way to medical doctors, even though they do not form part of the health sciences.

Thirdly, only once the very nature of the corporation is clearly ascertained is it possible to develop an appropriate understanding of the nature of the action of shaping and running a corporation. To take the example of the medical doctor further: given that medical doctors are concerned with the task of healing human bodies, it is important to understand both the very nature of the human body as well as the nature of the action 'healing' with reference to a the human body. In understanding the human body, one might see that there are many means that, in different circumstances, are appropriate for healing human bodies, such as chemical substances, touch, healing conversations etc. Once it is clear what a human body is, one can determine what kinds of actions are appropriate when dealing with human bodies and it is then possible to develop appropriate educational approaches to develop the necessary skills. It is not difficult to see that this has a significant ethical import as well. Establishing a foundational understanding of an entity allows for developing criteria on what in dealing with an entity can and should be seen as right or wrong, appropriate or inappropriate.

A fourth reason for asking ontological questions in the field of corporate management stems from the fact that there seem to be numerous challenges that concern contemporary management that seem to be difficult, if not impossible, to be met with currently prevailing management approaches. There seem to be major gaps in our understanding of the world of corporations and their organisation. An example of this would be the need for creativity and genuine initiative – two distinctly entrepreneurial traits that are considered to be critical to the success of business and are often regarded to be the cause of great shifts in our economies

(Schumpeter, 1947). Aspects of corporate success, such as the entrepreneurial dimension of management, continually seem to slip away from our understanding and, as Mintzberg points out in his critique of the so-called ‘entrepreneurial school’ (Mintzberg et al., 1998), tend therefore to acquire the aura of something mystifying. This ‘entrepreneurial school’ represents the effort to understand this entrepreneurial spirit, but only comes to the conclusion that the entrepreneurial school. . .

. . . presents strategy formation as all wrapped up in the behaviour of a single individual, yet can never really say much about what the process is. This has remained largely a black box, buried in human cognition. (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 144)

Consequently, there seems to be a widespread, but so far unsubstantiated, belief that such skills are innate or genetically determined rather than something that can be acquired. There may be a poor understanding of both the nature of the corporation and of its management, but it appears ‘mystical’ precisely because it is still poorly understood, not because it cannot be understood. In other words, a sound understanding of the very nature of both the corporation and its management could shed light on understanding issues such as entrepreneurial and ethical leadership in such a way that they can also be explained and even taught in an effective manner.

What is taught in current management education quite obviously does not lead the majority of students to be extraordinarily successful and ethical in the same way that the people that are cited as examples of success in the courses were successful by their own standards. This begs the question whether current management thinking can actually account for the source of extraordinary business success and ethical effects as a function of their actions by any applied standard in a meaningful way (Spinosa et al., 1997: 65–66).

While, for many, a philosophical approach to management may seem to be an esoteric or mystical approach, it actually intends the exact opposite. Current management thought permits itself to leave many issues unexplained, such as the genesis of extraordinary leadership, the birth of a new idea, passion, entrepreneurial initiative, ground-breaking contributions to society and many others. A philosophical and ontological approach would seek to get to the source of these phenomena and, while its task is not to resolve them, the ontological task lies in gaining a thorough understanding of their nature. This is fundamentally different from defining these phenomena along the lines of a finite number of characteristics (or ‘categories’, as Heidegger would call them).

As mentioned above, no academic field can exist without this philosophical foundation, whether this foundation is articulated from the outset, whether it is an ongoing inquiry alongside the academic field, or whether it remains implicit and unarticulated and waits to be unconcealed. As Flores points out, it seems that there is not much of a widely established philosophical discourse in the field of corporate management (Flores, 1982: I (Preface)), which means that the philosophical foundation for this field of knowledge seems to be inherited in a largely unarticulated way. It will be critical for the endeavour at hand to articulate this unarticulated philosophical heritage in order to be able to examine it for its appropriateness in dealing with the challenges of corporate management.



The problem (...) is not that we have a philosophical heritage, but that we normally take our inherited interpretations as self-evident. We assume that our own way of acting and thinking is the only way, and we suppress the fact that it has historical origins. In this way the past gets petrified into a 'tradition' in the narrow sense: a rigid, unquestioned conceptual structure (BT: 42–43<sup>14</sup>). (Polt, 1999: 37–38)

In this sense, it is critical to justify the need for exposing this rigid, and often unquestioned conceptual structure by showing some of its shortcomings, and then to open up a way of asking the kind of questions that allow us to overcome the limitations of the traditional approaches in corporate and management thought in general and with regards to their ethical implications in particular.

### ***Scientific Questioning as the Dominant Form of Questioning Regarding the Corporation***

As can be seen below, a number of prominent thinkers have made steps towards exposing and highlighting what is considered to be the dominant way of questioning and thinking that underlies the manner in which people deal with issues of corporate management in practice, as well as in research and management education. As Mintzberg et al. have pointed out that. . .

(...) [f]or the most part, the teaching of strategy has highlighted the rational perspective and prescriptive side of the process, namely our first three schools (design, planning, and positioning). Strategic management has commonly revolved around the discrete phases of formulation, implementation, and control, carried out in almost cascading steps. This bias is heavily reflected in practice, particularly in the work of corporate and governmental planning departments as well as of many consulting firms. (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 19)

Mintzberg suggests that 'strategic planning' and Frederic Taylor's 'scientific management' are the most popular management techniques (Mintzberg, 2002). It should probably not be seen as a coincidence that Taylor called his management technique 'scientific' and that strategic planning fundamentally promotes a way of management that assumes that corporations can be run in a predetermined, detached and formalised fashion (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 66). It is hard to think of a way of approaching corporate management and corporate strategy in a more scientific fashion than is represented by these two approaches.

The formal scientific approach seems to inform much of what is being published and thought in the current literature on management (Introna, 1997), as well as what is being recognised as valid in management practice (Langley, 1989). As Burrell and Morgan argue, the functionalist 'paradigm has provided the dominant framework for the conduct of academic sociology and the study of organisations. It represents a perspective which is firmly rooted in the *sociology of regulation* and approaches its subject matter from an objectivist point of view' (Burrell and Morgan, 1979: 25). These writers go on to say:

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<sup>14</sup>SZ: 21.



[T]he approach to social science characteristic of the functionalist paradigm is rooted in the tradition of sociological positivism. This reflects the attempt, *par excellence*, to apply models and methods of the natural sciences to the study of human affairs. (...) The functionalist approach to social science tends to assume that the social world is composed of relatively concrete empirical artefacts and relationships which can be identified, studied and measured through approaches derived from natural sciences. (Burrell and Morgan, 1979: 26)

Burrell and Morgan suggest that all organisational analysis can be categorised into four ‘paradigms for the analysis of social theory’, with the functionalist paradigm being the most prominent. They use the word ‘paradigm’ in reference to Kuhn (1970) and suggest that the other three paradigms are the interpretive, the radical humanist and the radical structuralist paradigms. Two things seem noteworthy about the way in which Burrell and Morgan understand and explain these paradigms of organisational analysis. They explicitly consider them to be unimportant side-shows that have not produced much theory, except for the functionalist paradigm, which ‘has provided the dominant framework for the conduct of academic sociology and the study of organisations’ (Burrell and Morgan, 1979: 25). While the other paradigms may not fall into the mainstream of traditional scientific thought according to Burrell and Morgan, they do distinguish them along an axis of subjective versus objective orientation. In this way they remain oriented along the Cartesian dichotomy of *res cognitans* (being the domain of subjective perception) and *res extensa* (being the domain of the objective reality), which is the foundation of modern scientific thought. This will be discussed in greater detail later in this book. If the scientific approach is the fundamental logic for the contemporary understanding of the entity called ‘corporation’ and the contemporary practice of corporate management, then it is critical to elucidate the very nature of science and thus to question the scientific approach.

As Heidegger pointed out, Kant was the first to explicitly articulate the character of the world as perceived by science (ZS: 31/ZSem: 26). At the same time, he was the first to articulate what constitutes a law or causal relationship in the scientific sense. The fact that it was a philosopher who first articulated the nature of science suggests that obtaining an understanding of science is a philosophical task, not a scientific one. In other words, the nature of science does not become explicit in scientific thought itself. The nature of science is never the subject of science itself. It becomes explicit through philosophical thought (ZS: 30ff./ZSem: 24ff.). As Brugger (1976) points out, the goal of science is not to trace events back to the most fundamental principles of ontology or metaphysics; neither does it lie in the mere registration of facts. Science rather uses observation and experiments as a way to deduce laws (e.g. laws of physics) that allow for the making of more or less precise predictions, as well as to explain these types of laws (Brugger, 1976: 262). According to Kant, science is concerned with the laws governing phenomena in space and time. According to the scientific worldview, nature is the existence of things as far as general laws determine them. In other words, only what can be measured in space and time and what can be understood as being governed by laws is perceived in the first place and is thus legitimate in a scientific discourse

(ZS: 32ff./27ff.). Empirical research is a perfect correlate to the scientific worldview, since it is concerned only with what is in some way measurable.

### ***The Insufficiency of Scientific Questioning Regarding the Corporation***

All these arguments do not yet necessarily suggest that scientific thought has no place in dealing with the challenges of corporate management. What has been stated so far certainly does not constitute an argument that science should be abandoned altogether. It can, however, be argued that science is insufficient as the only approach to understanding corporations, and that the 'scientific toolkit' is insufficient to manage corporations and is possibly only appropriate to a few aspects or sections of the overall challenge of dealing with corporations appropriately and effectively, particularly when it comes to understanding the ethical implications of corporate activity and management.

There are a number of arguments why the scientific method is insufficient as a complete toolkit for dealing with corporations. The first argument is that the scientific method is simply impractical as a predominant method of dealing with management decisions. As Alan Watts points out:

Most of the situations in life are such that they do not wait for us to make up our minds, and so an enormous amount of the carefully worked-out scientific knowledge becomes trivial. It is all very well and very finely worked out, but it arrives much too late because life comes at you from all sides, from all over everywhere at once. (Watts, 1995: 93)

This seems to be a good description particularly of the situation managers find themselves in and echoes Gadamer, who suggests that the model of knowledge that is given by science is insufficient to recognise the doable and possible in an actual situation (Gadamer, 1965: 164).

The second argument against the scientific method as a way of successfully dealing with corporate issues is the enormous failure rate in certain areas of corporate management. Kiechel (1984: 8) suggests that only about 10% of strategies are ever successfully implemented (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 177). Strategies are an integral part of corporate management because they are the game plans that managers draw up for dealing with corporations to ensure their survival and success. A failure rate of 90% in the implementation of such game plans seems to suggest that the thinking on how to handle corporations not only lacks certain elements of 'fine-tuning', but that there is a fundamental lack of understanding of both the very nature of the corporation as well as the very nature of corporate management. In one of his earlier books, Mintzberg noted that '[a]lthough an enormous amount of material has been published on the manager's job, we continue to know very little about it' (Mintzberg, 1980: 7). Since then, Mintzberg seems to have become increasingly pessimistic about the prevailing understanding of the manager's job by MBA graduates and the suitability of current mainstream education:

Pervasive strategic failure in many large corporations may well be attributed to the army of business school graduates who have been sent out with an incomplete toolkit. (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 20)

This is presumably equally the case with ethical failures. In a more recent interview, Mintzberg made the even more radical suggestion that MBA programmes are fundamentally unsuitable to create managers and that MBA graduates have a misguided idea of management as being predominantly decision making and analysis (Mintzberg, 2002), which are the result of regarding corporate management as a science.

Morgan seems to come up against the same issue when he states that . . .

One of the most basic problems of modern management is that the mechanical way of thinking is so ingrained in our everyday conceptions of organization that it is often very difficult to organize in any other way. (Morgan, 1997: 6)

Gadamer, in discussing governmental and corporate organisations, concludes that there seem to be no appropriate models to understand the knowledge that characterises the leaders of these political systems (Gadamer, 1965: 165). As he points out in the quotation given below, the corporation should not be seen as an isolated phenomenon in contemporary society in being dominated by scientific thought. These are societal driving forces that find special expression in the corporation.

It is probably not an exaggeration when one says that is not so much the progress of the sciences as such, but much more the rationalisation of technologic-economical application, which brought up the new phase of the industrial revolution in which we find ourselves. Not the undreamt-of growth of the domination of nature, but the unfolding of scientific control methods for the life of society seem to shape the face of our epoch. Only with this becomes the triumph of modern science, as it started in the 19th century, an all-encompassing social factor. Only now has the scientific thought, which is foundational for our civilisation, seized all areas of societal practice. Scientific market research, scientific warfare, scientific foreign politics etc. are giving this kind of specialisation a central place in economy and society. (Gadamer, 1965: 154)

As mentioned earlier, the logic of the corporation has been applied to organise a host of other aspects that were traditionally not part of the economy, and it is now common to talk about the corporatisation of many aspects of social life. Having exposed the logic of contemporary corporate thought as scientific, what kind of thinking or questioning may provide a starting point for developing a more appropriate logic?

### *Ontological Questioning*

Given that scientific thinking and questioning are so dominant in the area of corporate management, produce limited outcomes and have undesirable consequences, how can a way be found to go beyond science and find a more appropriate way to ask questions about the corporation? As alluded to previously, the way to understand science lies with philosophy.

Philosophy is not science. It deals with 'the whole', while science deals with a specific field, which is demarcated and grounded not by science as such but by metaphysics (GA 27:

13ff., 22; NI: 477, 520ff./niii: 6, 42ff.). A science cannot comprehend itself, its own limits and concepts, unless it becomes philosophy (GA 27: 38; NI: 372/nii: 112). It is thus absurd to suggest that science should replace philosophy or, as Husserl did, that philosophy should become 'scientific'. But philosophy and science are not like two separate buildings. Philosophy, metaphysical reflection on the field of a science, is implicit in science itself (NI: 373/nii: 112f.), though the transition from science to philosophy involves a 'leap', not the steady development by which everydayness passes into science (NI: 522f. /niii: 43). (HDic: 192)

This book is taking such a leap, and is doing so in a specific way. The leap is between scientific questioning and philosophical questioning about the corporation or, in other words, to ask the question: What actually *is* a corporation in its very nature? The task of working out the nature or essence of entities lies with philosophy and, in particular, with an area of philosophy called 'ontology'. As mentioned earlier, 'ontology' is defined as 'the branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being' (OxDic: 829). It is also understood to be '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 (GA 22, 8)' (HDic: 147) and 'usually indicates a general study of beings' (HDic: 147).

The question of Being aims therefore at ascertaining the a priori conditions not only for the possibility of the sciences which examine entities as entities of such and such a type, and in doing so, already operate with an understanding of Being, but also for the possibility of those ontologies themselves which are prior to the ontological sciences and which provide their foundations. (SZ: 11/BT: 31)

While there are numerous theories regarding corporations (i.e. Pugh and Hickson, 1996; Putterman and Kroszner, 1996), it is noteworthy that there seems to be no unified understanding emerging in the literature of what a corporation actually *is* from an ontological perspective. Given the overwhelming societal significance of corporations, this seems a surprising gap, since . . .

. . . it should be obvious that one cannot understand something unless one has an accurate account of what it is one is trying to understand. Thus, for example, if one thinks of man as a rational animal, solving problems and acting on the basis of beliefs and desires, as the tradition has done since Aristotle, one will develop a theory of mind, decision making, rule following, etc., to account for this way of being. If this description of human reality turns out to be superficial, all that hard work will have been in vain. (Dreyfus, 1991: 1)

The same is true for corporations. If one does a lot of research based on the notion of a corporation being a machine, then all this work would at best be useless and at worst grossly misleading, if the corporation turns out not to be a machine at all. The research might correctly show certain features or aspects of corporations that are physical objects, such as operations and IT systems, but it will hide or misrepresent other types of entities in the corporation, and possibly the corporation itself. Furthermore, it seems obvious that, without a clear understanding of the very nature of the corporation, one can never get to a clear understanding of what the nature of dealing appropriately and ethically with such an entity is.

As a consequence of this 'ontological void' in ascertaining what a corporation is, the questions that are asked concerning corporations, or human organisations in

general, are categorical, and statements about the corporation, as already pointed out, tend to be metaphorical. Categorical questions ask about the properties of an entity, not about the existential features of its way of being. This, however, assumes that there is no further need to clarify the very nature of this type of entity called ‘the corporation’, and that the challenge is merely to describe its characteristics rather than obtaining an understanding of what it means to be a corporation. Metaphorical statements about the corporation circumvent the void of determining what a corporation is in its very nature in a different way. They describe it in terms of a type of entity that it is not, but to which it is merely similar in some way. Therefore, metaphorical speaking never needs to ultimately say what an entity actually is. To use an analogy: a botanist can ask lots of questions about trees – about different types of trees, the development of different species of trees in certain environments, about the different types of wood they consist of etc. This is very different from asking the question relating to what a tree is in the first instance. What makes a tree a tree? These questions usually seem self-evident and, in the case of trees, one might justifiably argue that the intuitive knowledge that the average person and, in particular, the average botanist has about trees is sufficient for the fulfilment of the botanist’s tasks. Nevertheless, most people might find it difficult to articulate what actually makes a tree a tree and thus the ontological ascertainment may be far from clear. Similarly, effective managers might have a good intuitive understanding of the corporation, but may find it difficult to articulate what a corporation actually is.

The undertaking to ascertain the very nature of corporations and their management is very different from the usual research undertaken in the field of business, which relates to a question that comes up and needs to be researched. Here, in some sense, we are going backwards. The first question to be answered relates to how corporations are already understood in a taken-for-granted way and what they actually are in their very nature. Then it is necessary to ask what are merely different expressions or cases of the same type of phenomenon, and which qualify as an entity that can literally be called a ‘corporation’. The process to be followed is to first ask for the always already and implicit ways of understanding the very nature of a corporation, so that we can then question whether this understanding is metaphorical or literal.

It could be misinterpreted that what has been argued so far is antiscientific. However, the project here is rather to point out the areas of inquiry where scientific thought is appropriate, and those where it is inappropriate. To read this book as antiscientific would be like saying that someone is against the use of sledgehammers because he or she has said ‘do not fix your wristwatch by hitting it with a sledgehammer!’ Sledgehammers are good for all kinds of things but are hardly the tool to use for fixing wristwatches. Heidegger clearly points out what kind of progress can be expected from using scientific methods.

Since the positive sciences neither ‘can’ nor should wait for the ontological work of philosophy, the progression of science will not happen in the sense of progress but as *repetition* and ontologically more transparent purification of what already has been ontically discovered. (SZ: 51/BT: 76)

What Heidegger calls ‘repetition’ should not be belittled. Cartesian and scientific thought have led to all kinds of desirable machines and gadgets, such as useful means of transportation and medical equipment that have saved many lives. Beyond that, as pointed out earlier, the entire industrial revolution is an expression of Cartesian thought and modern science with undeniable achievements in creating unparalleled wealth and well being for large numbers of people. What Heidegger means, though, is that these machines and industries do no longer lead to a fundamentally different understanding of the world and are therefore merely an expression of a refined version of what was already understood.

### ***Concerns About Ontological Statements About the Corporation***

Before charting a path on how to explore the ontological question regarding the corporation it is useful to contemplate the arguments against such questioning regarding the corporation and in the related fields of strategy, management and organisational studies. Powell<sup>15</sup> (2001, 2002, and 2003) made a foundational contribution to the academic field of strategic management – and, by implication, organisational studies and the question about the very nature of the corporation – by explicitly confronting these fields of investigation with philosophical questioning and inquiry. His arguments against an ontological discourse are not novel from a philosophical perspective. They deserve their prominence in the following argument, however, as they are a rare occurrence in the field of management, in two ways. First, they articulate the implicit, but until then largely unarticulated, empiricist and pragmatist philosophical foundation of the vast majority of the prominent scholarly work in these academic disciplines, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world. Second, by doing so, Powell’s papers provide the opportunity to engage with this philosophical bias and expose it to further scrutiny and development where this is clearly relevant, even according to Powell (2002: 879) himself.

Unlike many other academic fields – for example, the political sciences or law – which were generated by philosophical insight and are guided by an ongoing, more or less vibrant philosophical discourse, the academic fields of strategic and organisational management and organisational studies have, for the most part, started out as a result of the pragmatic need to give guidance to the management of a relatively young phenomenon – namely the modern organisation in general, and the corporation in particular. Mintzberg (2004) points this out in one of his most vocal books that suggests a crisis in current management education and research. Mintzberg is not only one of the most vocal critics of current management education and research, but also one of the foremost contributors to the existing body of organisational research and strategic management research.

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<sup>15</sup>The following argument is based on Powell’s arguments made in three articles published in the *Strategic Management Journal*, the most prominent journal in business strategy. His papers are somewhat of an anomaly, as the journal does not publish much outside of empirical, mostly quantitative research, which is representative of the state of the whole field of corporate strategy.

Powell argues for excluding ontology from strategic and organisational thought, stating that any ontological understanding will inevitably lead to dogmatism, illusion, despair (Powell, 2003: 286) and escalating chains of ideology (Powell, 2003: 287). Clearly such concerns are to be taken seriously, especially in the context of a commitment to ethical management. Powell's rejection of ontology presumably stems from equating the entire field of ontology with only a certain type of ontology, namely what Heidegger calls 'medieval ontology' (SZ: 3/BT: 22), which is indeed problematic and justifiably raises the concerns that Powell has put forward. Medieval ontology assumes that there is a transcendental truth about the nature of entities that is in some way accessible to certain humans, be they priests, saints or scientists who claim priestly or saintly status. An ontology that works from the assumption that there is an indubitably knowable transcendental nature of entities inevitably leads to dogmatism and ideology. As Powell consequently notes, 'It is self-serving for scientists to insist, over and above solving human problems, that science transports us into the transcendental realm of reality and objective truth' (Powell, 2003: 287). It might well be that it is a similar sentiment that leads Morgan (1997) to refuse to make any sort of ontological commitments with regard to the corporation, but to remain in the domain of metaphorical statements.

Powell suggests empiricism and pragmatism as appropriate approaches to overcome the limitations of this kind of ontology. In the history of philosophy, both empiricism and pragmatism are responses in an attempt to overcome the limitations of medieval ontological thought. Empiricism was prominently developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by Locke, who is regarded as the founder of enlightenment. It propagates a view that experience is the only possible source of insight. Pragmatism, as developed by Peirce (1955), James (1897, 1907) and Dewey (1988), among others, is a version of relativism that looks for truth as that which serves to achieve a certain aim, predominantly the betterment of life. It remains undisputed here that experience and goal-oriented solutions should play a prominent role in a discipline such as organisational studies, which is grounded in practice and, therefore, should also assist in the attainment of certain objectives. In this sense Morgan is distinctly pragmatist as it is his goal to improve management without getting into the domain of making ontological propositions.

What both empiricists and pragmatists tend to overlook, however, is the way that empiricism and every pragmatic solution implicitly make transcendental claims that can and do lead to the escalating chains of ideology, dogmatism and, consequently, illusion and despair that Powell seeks to avoid. Powell makes the statement that 'empiricism is ontologically silent' (Powell, 2003: 286), and that 'empiricism remains silent on what it does not know – the origins of experience' (Powell, 2003: 288). While it is by definition not part of the empiricist project to make ontological claims, it is an illusion that empiricists operate in an ontologically unprejudiced domain and that these prejudices do not have ethical consequences. Scientists, as long as they remain purely scientific, have, by definition, nothing to say in the domain of ontology. Being scientific, and every scientific research approach, already implicitly assumes a certain nature of the entities about which it attempts to say something (ZS/ZSem). Empiricism, while being ontologically silent in the sense



that it is not part of the empirical project to formulate or suggest an ontological ascertainment for certain category of entities, implicitly makes a distinct ontological statement in assuming that the entities that are researched are of a nature that lend themselves to being appropriately ascertained by empirical methods. As Heidegger explains, within science – and empiricism suggests scientific methods – any entity is implicitly understood in some fundamental way in mathematical and physical terms (FD: 39) and implicitly propagates an ontology of substance. If empiricism should lead to any sort of truthful statement, then the entities that are to be researched – in this case, corporations – would, as mentioned earlier, necessarily have to be of a nature that makes them accessible in a relevant way via empirical methods, which is to be further investigated below, in particular with regard to corporations.

On the other hand, if entities are not of the very nature that the scientific method implicitly assumes, science can never show such a shortcoming via its own methods (GA: 141–166/CtP: 98–115). If an entity has aspects that do not show themselves in physical and measurable ways, science will not show them to us via its methods and, worse than that, it will promote the assumption that these aspects are ultimately not real in the first instance. Science can, according to Heidegger, only show us how things already show themselves in our empirical experience, and cannot lead an inquiry into that which is hidden about them (Polt, 1999: 139). Science can, therefore, only lead to a refinement of knowledge that we already have (SZ: 51/BT: 76). It is precisely the insight into what was previously hidden that leads to fundamental breakthroughs in our understanding. As explained above, the capacity of science to lead to fundamental breakthroughs is quite limited, unless it becomes ontological.

Just like empiricism, pragmatism as a philosophical school of thought is itself not concerned with making ontological statements. Pragmatism overlooks, however, that it has to take for granted certain notions about the nature of human life and the betterment thereof – two types of assumptions that are inherently ontological and ethically relevant.

The argument for an ontological discourse into the organisation is not meant to abandon empirical research or any pragmatic approach, but to complement them and to open up a critical, more primordial domain of investigation. An ontological investigation into what human life or an organisation *is* and what, therefore, would constitute the genuine improvement of human life or an organisation, would only enhance the pragmatic inquiry. Similarly, empirical research can only benefit from being confronted with the question of whether the assumptions that are implicitly made in any empirical research are really tenable and will therefore lead to tenable insight.

The question that arises then is what kind of ontological inquiry would appropriately address the types of concerns raised above, such as being dogmatic and leading to escalating chains of ideology. At the same time, this type of ontological inquiry would continuously need to serve in order to examine the implicit or explicit understanding of the very nature of the phenomena under investigation, thus providing critical developmental potential for the field of organisational studies at its most fundamental level.



## Heidegger as a Guiding Thinker in Asking the Ontological Question About the Corporation

As stated at the outset, the argument in this book will rigorously follow and build on the thinking of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger and his hermeneutic phenomenology. To give one thinker such prominence in the context of an ethical question has already been addressed. To give him such prominence in an endeavour to ask the ontological question regarding the corporation and corporate management calls for an additional explanation.

Given the significance and influence of Heidegger's thought, it seems surprising that his thinking has rarely been applied to issues of management. When it has been applied, this has happened predominantly in an anecdotal manner (i.e. Flores, 1982; Winograd and Flores, 1986; Goss et al., 1993), rather than through trying to get to an account of the very nature of corporations and their management from within Heidegger's thinking, which is the objective of this book. In other words, the objective here is to understand the notion of the corporation and the actions of dealing with this type of entity from a Heideggerian perspective and to resolve the challenges from within his thinking, rather than to begin with an already defined problem and then looking around in Heidegger's writing for something that can be applied to solve the issue at hand. Skjödberg (1998) suggests that the consideration of Heidegger's thought to organisational issues is overdue. This author explains the limited application of Heidegger's thought to organisations as stemming from the political controversies around his person, the difficulty to get access to his style of writing and the originality and profundity of his thought, which make reading Heidegger an undertaking that might best be compared to learning a new language.

### *Heidegger and the Corporate World*

Heidegger's personal background could hardly have been further away from corporate life and, in this sense, he is an unlikely candidate for exploring corporate issues. Heidegger was born in 1889 in the rural German town of Meßkirch, which is also where he died in 1976. He spent almost his entire life in Baden, an area in south-western Germany bordering both Switzerland and France. After matriculating in Constance, he nearly joined the Jesuit order and studied first theology and then philosophy in Freiburg. His professional life was as a lecturer and professor in philosophy, mostly in Freiburg, a town not far from his place of birth. It is fair to say that Heidegger's early life experience was predominantly in the environment of the Catholic Church, being primed for the priesthood, while his later life was mostly in academia and was influenced by the natural environment of the Black Forest area and the communities who lived there. Throughout his life he remained true to these surroundings, preferring to live in a mountain cottage in the Black Forest and staying in close touch with the rural people in this area of Germany (GA 13: 9–13; Safranski, 1994). He hardly travelled and was never outside of Europe. Given this religious, academic and provincial background, it would be difficult to imagine a

person less familiar with the corporate world. These circumstances make it even more critical to explain Heidegger as the choice for a guiding thinker on the issue of the corporation and corporate management.

It is the role of Heidegger's thought in the philosophical tradition that makes his thinking a promising starting point for exploring issues of and around the corporation. Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology can be seen as a fundamental turning point in the philosophical thinking from Plato via Descartes to Husserl, which is also referred to as the 'Cartesian tradition' and which forms the basis of modern science and informs much of current thought in academia and modern life in general. As has been pointed out, it is this thinking that informs the mainstream of theory and practice relating to modern and current corporate management. Heidegger was dedicated to the project of both understanding and going beyond the Cartesian tradition, which dominates modern philosophy and, as will be demonstrated, is at the foundation of the kind of phenomenon known as 'the corporation'. Heidegger was able to go beyond both the philosophical traditions that underlie what is commonly referred to as 'management science' or broader positivist science and the whole tradition of pragmatism (Rorty, 1992: 209), which informs much of what is taught in business and government schools. Heidegger was able to ask questions at a more primordial level and it is this that makes him promising as a guide for the attempt to lead a philosophical inquiry about corporations and their management. The location of Heidegger in the philosophical tradition is thus outlined in this chapter.

It seems fair to assume that Heidegger himself would have approved of applying his thought to an inquiry into corporate life, since this undertaking is broadly in line with his stated commitment for his work to 'break through the narrowness of academic philosophy and reach much broader circles for the benefit of a large number of people' (ZS: x/ ZSem: xvii; also: Dreyfus and Hall, 1992: 2). The fact that Heidegger's philosophy is western and, at the same time, close to Asian thought (Parkes, 1987; Zimmerman, 1993; May, 1996) makes the endeavour to apply his thought to business even more promising, since it might provide a platform that is applicable to a multitude of cultures.

To give as good a sense of Heidegger's style and thinking, generous use will be made of direct quotes throughout this book. It must be borne in mind, however, that this book can only sketch some of the fundamental movements in Heidegger's thought, rather than give a holistic account of his philosophy. This book will therefore not serve as a substitute for reading the writings of Heidegger if one wants a thorough understanding of his thinking. The intention is rather to extract some of the most important thinking that permits the illumination of the fundamental issues of corporate management.

As has been pointed out, Heidegger had very little firsthand experience of the corporate world and he barely touched on issues of the corporate world in his writings. In line with his very limited exposure to the corporate world, Heidegger rarely refers to entities such as organisations, industries and business. Much of the thinking that will be attempted here will have to be derived from statements that Heidegger made about related fields, such as art, technology and language. The following deliberations are therefore an attempt to take his thinking beyond the areas that were of

immediate concern to him. The reader should remain keenly aware that, in many instances, the application of Heidegger's thought to the corporate world will produce a partially skewed reflection of Heidegger's overall thinking. This happens particularly when translations that appear in this book use business language to illustrate a point, even though this does not take place on the basis of poetic licence, but rather on the understanding that, in some instances, words from corporate jargon better express a point that Heidegger is making in the original German text compared to existing English translations. An example of this is the word 'Bestand', which is frequently translated as 'standing reserve' (VA: 9–40/QCT). This is unnecessarily cumbersome, particularly since the word simply means 'asset'. The word 'asset' carries with it the connotation that it is something that is available for maximising economic value, a connotation that translators seemingly wanted to capture with the word 'standing reserve'. Besides these efforts that hope to make a contribution to the appropriate translation of the texts used here, Heidegger's writing has its own poetic dimension, which will never be fully captured in this book or in any other.

### *Heidegger's Thinking and the Cartesian Tradition*

To fully understand the legitimacy and possible contribution of applying Heidegger's thinking to the corporate world, it is critical to understand his status and role in the history of philosophical thought. This will be achieved by locating hermeneutic phenomenology within the history of philosophy and to demonstrate the significance of its project of overcoming a way of thinking which, according to Heidegger, dominates modern western thought and whose origins can be traced to its origins in Heidegger's mentor Husserl<sup>16</sup> all the way back to Plato. This way of thinking is referred to as the 'Cartesian tradition' after the French philosopher René Descartes. The subsequent task is to explain how Heidegger's thought attempts to overcome the Cartesian tradition through his 'hermeneutic phenomenology', which is the term used in this book to describe Heidegger's thinking.

Descartes, after whom the Cartesian tradition is named, lived from 1596 to 1650 and is considered to be the father of modern philosophy (Weischedel, 1984: 137). The early roots of the so-called Cartesian tradition can be traced back to Plato, his famous 'simile of the cave' and the notion that everything could be understood via theory. Descartes starts out by saying that the only thing that is certain is that there is an 'I', which is engaged in activities like thinking, doubting and questioning. This leads him to the foundational statement for his philosophy, '*Cogito ergo sum*' – 'I think therefore I am'. For Descartes, this is the only statement that can be made with certainty and all other knowledge is doubtful. This domain of thinking, doubting and questioning is the '*res cognitans*', in which human perception finds itself and which is busy understanding an external world, a 'world out there' or '*res extensa*' that is independent of human interpretation (Descartes, 1968). Thus, fundamental to

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<sup>16</sup>Figal goes as far as to suggest that Heidegger was actually not primarily critiquing Descartes himself, but rather his own mentor Husserl when he challenged Descartes (Figal, 2000: 18).

the Cartesian tradition is the notion that humans are subjects in an objective world. For humans to get better at anything they need to obtain a better understanding of this ‘world out there’. The challenge for humans is to obtain knowledge and certainty about the so-called objective world. Therefore, in Cartesian thinking the key problem is how to get indubitable evidence about that which actually happens in the external world. The question of how human perception is linked to the actual objective world ‘out there’ is called the ‘epistemological problem’. The fundamental task of the Cartesian human subject is therefore to figure out this objective external reality in which he or she lives. In this sense, Descartes creates the foundation for theoretical thinking by assuming that there is an external world that can be understood independently of human prejudice by developing theory and testing it with empirical methods. The goal of this path would be to create and test theory until one hopefully arrived at a theory of everything.

In the Cartesian tradition, a statement is considered to be true when it corresponds with the objective external world. The approach that responded to this challenge of verifying or falsifying the correspondence of a statement with the objective external world is the empirical method. The empirical method is the Cartesian response to solving the epistemological problem. Empirical methodologies and the entire quest for theory in science are an expression of this tradition. They still seem to dominate most thinking in academia and science and, consequently, also current thinking in organisational and management theory.

How could anyone disagree with Descartes’ notions, which seem self-evident? Descartes makes a revealing remark in stating:

And when I said that the proposition *I think therefore I am* is the first and most certain of all to occur to anyone who philosophises in an orderly way, I did not in saying that deny that one must first know what thought, existence and certainty are . . . But because these are very simple notions, and ones which on their own provide us with no knowledge of anything that exists, I did not think they needed to be listed. (Descartes (1988: 163), re-quoted from Polt (1999: 26))

Heidegger would not agree that these notions of what thought, existence and certainty are turn out to be that simple and straightforward. Heidegger’s thinking breaks with the most fundamental notion of the Cartesian tradition, which is that humans live as subjects in an objective world (which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter), and dismisses the notion that human activity can be sufficiently understood in terms of theory and the central place of the conscious subject (Dreyfus, 1991: 3). Heidegger suggests that humans do not primarily live as subjects in an objective world whose task is to understand this objective world as well as possible. Rather, he maintains that any understanding and learning already assume some sort of preliminary understanding. This preliminary understanding is transparent to us in that it does not explicitly appear to us and we take it completely for granted in our dealing with the world. Furthermore, we cannot deal with or understand the world without it. As Caputo puts it:

We can learn something new only on the condition that we have already been appropriately oriented to begin with. We can understand only if we already pre-understand. There are no

pure, uninterpreted facts of the matter but only beings already set forth in a certain frame, projected in their proper Being. (Caputo, 1987: 61)

The notion that we only understand that which we already possess some sort of preliminary understanding of is called the ‘hermeneutic circle’. In Heidegger’s thinking, the hermeneutic circle defines not only an epistemological characteristic of humans, but is a fundamental feature of the very nature of human beings (SZ: 148ff./BT: 188ff.).

We try, by means of philosophy, science or technology, to achieve complete insight into things and thereby gain complete control over them. According to Heidegger this ideal is incompatible with the nature of understanding; understanding is always finite, historically situated interpretation. Heidegger does affirm that there is truth, and he does hold that some interpretations (including his own) are better than others – but no interpretation is *final*. Heidegger is a relentless enemy of ahistorical, absolutist concepts of truth. (Polt, 1999: 5)

Thus, rather than seeing humans as subjects living in an objective world, Heidegger starts off by positing that humans live in an *always already*, inherited or historical understanding, both of themselves and their environment. According to Heidegger, the first question one should ask is not the epistemological question of how the human perception and the so-called external world correlate, but the ontological question of what kind of entity humans are in the first place. The ontological question of what kind of entity humans are allows an ascertainment of the nature of human understanding and how the kind of entity humans are is bound up with the intelligibility of the world (Dreyfus, 1991: 3). Rather than criticising the Cartesian tradition in its entirety, Heidegger says that it comes in one step too late. It is asking the epistemological question of how human beings perceive without first asking the ontological question relating to what kind of an entity humans actually are. Understanding the very nature of the entity that humans are would then illuminate the very nature of human perception. To give an example, what we call ‘perception’ in humans is presumably fundamentally different from the way that a photo camera registers the impact of light on a film. In this sense it is only possible to ask the epistemological question in a meaningful way once it is clear what kind of an entity humans are. The question for what kind of an entity humans are is not an epistemological but an ontological question. ‘The question of Being is deeper than the question of knowing. Ontology precedes epistemology’ (Polt, 1999: 47). Only once it is clear what makes things intelligible for humans can the epistemological question be appropriately asked. According to Heidegger, Descartes takes the second step in his philosophy without having taken the necessary first step of asking what kind of an entity is actually asking these questions.

In line with this, Heidegger does not ask scientific questions about humans, such as relating to the evolutionary path of humans, the brain functions that distinguish humans from animals or computers etc., since all these questions only make sense when it is clear what kind of an entity the questioner, who is a human being, actually is and whether this kind of questioning makes sense for humans given the kind of entity they are. In their questioning, most humans, just like

Descartes, tend to assume that it is obvious what kind of an entity a human being is, but this is something that is far from obvious and worthy of further inquiry for Heidegger.

The question that now arises relates to how Heidegger approaches the question about what a human being is and about the very nature of other entities, such as physical objects and organisms. Heidegger developed his own approach for this undertaking and, in the context of this book and in reference to some remarks in his main opus, *Being and Time*, this approach is referred to as ‘hermeneutic phenomenology’ (SZ: 37–38/61–62/BT: 62/89).

### *The Term ‘Hermeneutic Phenomenology’*

Heidegger never gave his philosophy a definitive name and he rejected the often-used term ‘Existentialism’ (Hum: 19–20/ LoH: 232). In his main work, *Being and Time*, he claimed to be engaged in ‘ontology’ and ‘fundamental ontology’ (SZ: 436ff./BT: 486ff.). The Dictionary defines ontology as ‘the branch of metaphysics dealing with the nature of being’ (OxDic: 829) Although the term ‘ontology’ would merely determine the area of inquiry that Heidegger was engaged in, it would not be able to serve as a term that could distinguish his thinking from the thinking of other philosophers.

Heidegger would not have agreed with the notion that he proposes ‘a’ philosophy, but suggested that he was engaged in ‘thinking’ (EPAD; EPTT). This leaves a problem for anyone wanting to label Heidegger’s thinking in order to distinguish it from other philosophers and thinkers. The term that seems to be best suited for this branch of thinking seems to be ‘hermeneutic phenomenology’ (Dreyfus, 1991: 2–3). This seems to be the only term that Heidegger ever suggested for his particular way of thinking (SZ: 37–38/BT: 61–62). It is also the name for his philosophy that was picked up by, among others, three prominent contemporary interpreters of Heidegger, namely Dreyfus (1991), Caputo (1987) and von Herrmann (1990), to label his way of thinking. The term acknowledges the roots of Heidegger’s philosophy in Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology and Dilthey’s hermeneutics (Dreyfus, 1991: 2).

The choice to characterise Heidegger’s way of thinking as ‘hermeneutic phenomenology’ is adopted in this book, even though Heidegger pointed out in his later writings that hermeneutic phenomenology ‘was merely a way-station along the way’ (UzS: 98–99/OWL: 12). In this sense it is in harmony with the undertaking at hand, which is similarly to build a way-station rather than arrive at a destination. This emphasises that the important aspect here is to show that thinking is on the way, or being undertaken. In line with Heidegger’s understanding of his own work, what is presented in this book is not to be seen as a point at which thinking has arrived, but rather as the opening up of a way of thinking which, in the case of the task at hand, is applied to the issue of the corporation and its management.

To get closer to the term ‘hermeneutic phenomenology’ it is useful to first understand the definition and meaning of the two words ‘phenomenology’ and

'hermeneutics'. 'Phenomenology' is defined as 'the science of phenomena' and 'the description and classification of phenomena' (OxDic: 893) and is about letting. . .

. . . that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself. (SZ: 34/BT: 58)

Broadly speaking, phenomenology is the science of phenomena or appearances and is associated with the philosopher Husserl, who is considered to be the founder of phenomenology (Brugger, 1976) and who happened to be Heidegger's mentor. According to Husserl, phenomena reveal themselves to us in our consciousness and, consequently, phenomenology in Husserl's sense is the 'science of the phenomena that are revealed in our consciousness' (Brugger, 1976: 292). According to Husserl, phenomenology should study only what can be made fully evident (Dreyfus, 1991: 32). The way Husserl understands phenomenology remains a response to deal with the Cartesian dualism between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* by seeking to bracket all the aspects of a phenomenon that could be up for discussion and, by doing that, bringing it as completely as possible into consciousness (Dreyfus, 1991: 31). To develop an account of what it is to be a human being, Heidegger starts out by following the so-called transcendental phenomenology of Husserl (Dreyfus, 1991: 32), but apparently finds it inadequate to deal with the question of Being.

Husserl's method, which aims at *adequate evidence* and complete freedom from prejudice, cannot be used when we wish to understand the background upon which all our understanding takes place. Our understanding of Being is so pervasive in everything we think about and do that we can never arrive at a clear presentation of it. (Dreyfus, 1991: 32)

Heidegger reverses Husserl's transcendental phenomenology into a *hermeneutic* phenomenology to get closer to the phenomenon of 'Being'. Heidegger argues in *Being and Time* that the phenomenology that deals with the way of being of humans is hermeneutic because humans always already interpret everything, including themselves, which is the business of hermeneutics (SZ: 37, BT: 61–62). Hermeneutic phenomenology rests on the notion that phenomena are not a matter of a consciousness beyond time, but that phenomena exist as a matter of interpretation, which is given by our historical situation in time.

'Hermeneutics' is the science of interpretation. Hermeneutics was originally applied in theological disciplines to study the meaning of statements in the Scriptures and, in law, to study the meaning of legal texts. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger goes beyond this narrow understanding of hermeneutics and follows 'Dilthey in generalising hermeneutics from a method for the study of sacred texts to a way of studying all human activities' (Dreyfus, 1991: 2). In other words, Heidegger holds that all human activity and thinking happen within a certain interpretation of the given situation.

Hermeneutic phenomenology dismisses the notions that human activity can be sufficiently understood in terms of theory – which was still held by Husserl – and the central place of the conscious subject, which is characteristic of the Cartesian tradition (Dreyfus, 1991: 3). Human understanding is circular as humans can only understand things about which we have some sort of preliminary understanding



already. Since it is a hermeneutic circle, within which humans always already understand things and that makes things intelligible for them, it is the always already understanding that is the legitimate starting point for any inquiry dealing with the very nature of an entity. Hermeneutic phenomenology builds on the notion that we find ourselves always already in a 'world'<sup>17</sup> (which includes our selves) that is always already interpreted in a certain way and that the current interpretation of whatever we are dealing with is therefore the legitimate starting point for any inquiry. Hermeneutic phenomenology turns out to be an understanding of human beings as being, by their very nature, self-interpreting. This consequently shows that interpretation is the proper method for studying human beings (Dreyfus, 1991: 34). Heidegger states that '[o]ur investigation itself will show that the meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in *interpretation*' (SZ: 37/BT: 61).

The hermeneutic phenomenological approach becomes critically important when the objective is to understand human beings, who have the feature of interpreting themselves. Humans, because of their hermeneutic nature, cannot be sufficiently understood via Cartesian methodologies like the empirical method, since they can and do alter who and how they understand themselves from historical situation to historical situation. How we understand other humans in each case once again depends on the historical situation. Humans can only be legitimately understood by understanding the always already understanding that they have or, to be more precise, 'that they understand themselves to be'. This task of bringing to light the always already understanding cannot be achieved by sticking to the methodology that we inherit from the mostly unreflected, unarticulated and 'pre-ontological' understanding of the nature of reality in general and the nature of corporations, their organisations and corporate management in particular. The methodology that we inherit in academia, as pointed out earlier, is usually referred to as the empirical or scientific method. In philosophical terms, this methodology is an expression of and remains within the Cartesian tradition. In his hermeneutic phenomenology in *Being and Time*, Heidegger offers an alternative approach to the Cartesian tradition that takes into account meaning and context.

Unlike empirical and scientific methods, hermeneutic phenomenology is not explanatory: it does not try to prove anything by applying the logic of consistency (SZ: 315/BT: 363), but is fundamentally descriptive. Heidegger is not building deductive arguments in *Being and Time* in the sense of demonstrating identifiable premises and logical conclusions, but works on 'laying bare' or 'exhibiting' (SZ: 8/BT: 29) phenomena. This might be fundamentally disconcerting to those who are used to proceed intellectually by generating, analysing and criticising arguments and runs the risk of being purely dogmatic (Polt, 1999: 39–40). Heidegger himself did not want to impose dogma and thus the question arises how Heidegger's

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<sup>17</sup>The word 'world' in the Heideggerian context does not mean the accumulation of all entities, but is meant in the sense of a significant whole like 'the world of business'. A more detailed discourse on the Heideggerian notion of 'world' and its central place in his thought will be undertaken in the following chapter.



contribution, as well as the success of the project at hand, should be judged. If not empirical methods, what is the method that is appropriate for this kind of undertaking?

### *Hermeneutics as a Method*

Asking the question about the very nature of an entity can by definition not be achieved by scientific and empirical methods. As already pointed out, scientific and empirical methods take a certain ontological understanding for granted which it will never be able to disprove with its own methodologies.

Science presupposes a pre-scientific, pre-ontological understanding of Being. A science is not primarily a set of propositions, nor the discovery of new facts. Facts and propositions presuppose a prior unhiddenness of beings [or entities]. (HDic: 191)

In other words, the engagement in the scientific pursuit already presupposes a certain understanding of the entities that are the object of the scientific research. Science, in its scientific way of understanding entities and issues, therefore is already prejudiced. Since one of the tasks of this book is not to ask the scientific questions about corporations and their management, but to articulate the pre-scientific and pre-ontological or scientifically prejudiced understanding of corporations and their management – a task that is outside science – any scientific or empirical method would be inappropriate for the undertaking of this book. In line with the guiding thinker and the endeavour of this book, the chosen approach is a literature-based hermeneutic one. It was Heidegger himself who made hermeneutics a widely accepted approach to philosophy in general. It is now common ‘to view knowledge not as a static set of correct propositions, but as a continuing search for better interpretation’ (Polt, 1999: 41).

An interpretative approach is always in danger of making any interpretation as good as any other. It is clearly unacceptable to present a line of thinking that has the objective of merely advocating an interpretation, without establishing the criteria against which the contribution of this argument should be judged as more or less original and valid upfront. The question that then arises is how it can be established that the interpretation of the very nature of the corporation and its management is not just another opinion in the market place of countless other opinions, but is a genuine contribution instead? What could be the methodological criteria that should be applied to determine the success of the undertaking to come up with a ‘better interpretation’?

Madison (1990) gives a set of criteria that help in this quest and that are adopted in this thesis as the criteria for success. This should not lead to the assumption that the arguments presented in this book could ever be perfect, although they can and must be rigorous. Madison developed his principle for the purpose of the validation of a specific text. Whittaker (2001) adapted these principles for the purpose of working with a multitude of texts from a multitude of authors. Because this thesis focuses

on one thinker, Heidegger, this is more appropriate, since, besides the primary literature of Heidegger, a multitude of secondary literature by other authors is used. The guiding principles that Madison suggests are: coherence, comprehensiveness, penetration, thoroughness, appropriateness, contextuality, agreement, suggestiveness and potential (Madison, 1990). The following explanation of these principles is a summary of Madison's explanations by Whittaker (2001: 15–16) adapted to the purpose at hand:

- a) *Coherence*: The interpretation must be coherent in itself; it must present a unified picture and not contradict itself at points. (The argument must be consistent in its philosophical base and central themes.)
- b) *Comprehensiveness*: In interpreting the author's thought, one must take into account this thought as a whole and not ignore other works by the author that have bearing on the issue. (The following must be comprehensive in the breadth of its sources and use primary as well as secondary literature, which, in this case, primarily refers to primary literature by Heidegger and secondary literature on Heidegger.)
- c) *Penetration*: A good interpretation should bring out a guiding and underlying intention in the work. (One should not reach obvious or superficial conclusions.)
- d) *Thoroughness*: A good interpretation must attempt to answer or deal with all the questions it poses to the interpreted text. (The following argument must deal with the question posed in this opening section in a thorough way in its exploration of the issues.)
- e) *Appropriateness*: The questions that the interpretation deals with must be the ones that the texts themselves raise. (The question at hand must be a 'real' question, of importance in practice, since corporations and corporate management are issues relevant to daily practice.)
- f) *Contextuality*: The author's work must not be read out of context. (The philosophical basis of the argument must provide an understanding appropriate to the problem at hand: the explication of the issue must be recognisable.)
- g) *Agreement (1)*: One must not normally say that the 'real' meaning of what an author says is something quite other than what he actually does say.
- h) *Agreement (2)*: A given interpretation should normally be in agreement with the traditional and accredited interpretations of an author. This principle must not be blindly adhered to.
- i) *Suggestiveness*: A good understanding will raise questions that stimulate further research and interpretation.
- j) *Potential*: A given interpretation should be capable of being extended. (Madison, 1990: 29–30)

These principles are meant to prevent a situation that either falls into the trap of thinking that any interpretation could ever be fully 'equated with "what the author meant"' (Madison, 1990: 34) or that leaves the door open for interpreting texts in arbitrary ways.

As Madison notes that 'there is a difference – a most important one – between *demonstrative* or theoretical reasoning and *persuasive* or practical reasoning, and

that it is the rules of the latter, not of the former, which can and ought to serve as the method of interpretation' (Madison, 1990: 31). In this sense, just like demonstrative and theoretical reasoning, this book, which is working along the lines of persuasive or practical reasoning, is meant to arrive at making a genuine contribution.

What is written here can never legitimately serve as a weapon to bring about agreement by force or coercion or to determine an outcome. It acknowledges the readers as being fully aware of their freedom to agree or to disagree, and to adopt or to reject the propositions made in here. It is designed to provide a benefit to those who are prepared to take its arguments into consideration, are willing to be influenced, or even choose to surrender to its logic.

In the spirit of the central thinker that this book draws on, Heidegger, the work undertaken here should ultimately be judged on its ability to open up new avenues of thinking about corporations and their management. This can only be achieved if it demonstrates sound logic in its argumentation. As Heidegger states, 'this thinking can never show credentials such as mathematical knowledge can. But it is just as little a matter of arbitrariness' (DD: 183/TT: 184).

Doing the kind of work that this book intends to accomplish is of a peculiar and risky nature:

Once philosophising is expressed, then it is exposed to misinterpretation, and not merely that misinterpretation which lies in the relative ambiguity and unreliability of all terminology; rather it is exposed to the essential *substantive misinterpretation* for which *ordinary reasoning* inevitably falls, by examining everything it finds expressed philosophically *as though it were something occurrent* and, especially since it seems to be essential, takes it from the outset on the same level as the things of everyday pursuit and does not reflect upon the fact and also cannot understand that *what philosophy deals with only discloses itself at all within and from out of a transformation of human existence*. (GA 29/30: 422–423/FCM: 291–292)

If successful, the following will leave the authentic inquirer with a fundamentally different understanding of everything: him- or herself, others, the world, desirable or undesirable futures, worthy or unworthy causes and ethical or unethical behaviours and outcomes. Finally, if successful, it will leave the inquirer in this new place which such obviousness that it will soon be difficult to fathom the way that everything was understood prior to the inquiry. It would thus be the biggest success possible if, at some time in the future, people would see the thoughts set out in this book as obvious and act accordingly. The fundamental assumption here, as pointed out at the very beginning, is that such action would stand on a much more solid and sustainable ethical foundation than is currently the case.

## The Structure of the Argument

The purpose of the above outline was to explain the relevance of asking the ontological question concerning the very nature of the entity called 'the corporation'. It is obvious that the corporation plays a prominent, if not overwhelming, role as the logic for organising productive behaviour in the current epoch. There are numerous shortcomings in this logic with, among others, significant ethical implications,

which, as will be argued, cannot be remedied within the current pre-understanding of the very nature of corporations and their management. Therefore, the task at hand is to get a deeper understanding of the very nature of the corporation and its management. The project that is aimed at getting a deeper understanding of the very nature of any phenomenon and in, this case in particular, of the phenomena ‘corporation’ and ‘corporate management’ is the task of a branch of philosophy called ‘ontology’. Lastly, this chapter motivates the choice of Heidegger as a leading thinker in the endeavour to ascertain both the very nature of the corporation and the very nature of corporate management. This is particularly critical, since Heidegger had very little direct experience of corporate life. As was argued, the reason why Heidegger’s thinking qualifies for this task is because he is the thinker who is regarded as the most prominent philosopher to ask both the question regarding ‘Being’ itself and regarding the very nature of entities. Furthermore, he was dedicated to the project of both understanding and going beyond the Cartesian tradition, a way of thinking that dominates modern philosophy and, as will be pointed out in Chapter Three, is at the foundation of the kind of phenomenon known as ‘the corporation’. Thus, this chapter has outlined the location and role of Heidegger in the philosophical tradition and the notion of a hermeneutic phenomenology.

The second chapter is dedicated to ascertaining the kind of entity that the corporation is. Heidegger distinguished four fundamentally different types of entities: physical objects, non-human organisms, humans and works. All these types have been either implicitly or explicitly been used as metaphors to describe certain characteristics of corporations. Locating the corporation as a specific case of a work allows for certain views about the corporation to be exposed as metaphorical in the sense that they use an entity that the corporation is not in order to describe it. It furthermore also exposes views that were hitherto disguised as metaphors, but which actually describe existential features of the corporation and are thus not metaphorical statements, but literal statements.

After having located the corporation as a work, the third chapter will serve to clearly establish what kind of work the corporation is. This will be accomplished along the lines of Heidegger’s thinking on technology. To do this it is critical to clearly work out Heidegger’s understanding of technology, not in the superficial sense of devices and processes, but in terms of his understanding of the very nature of technology. This will expose the corporation as a work that is both unoriginal and ‘blocking off’ the understanding of its own very nature. Building on these insights about the very nature of the corporation, it will be possible to get to an understanding of the very nature of dealing with the entity ‘corporation’, and the activity of ‘corporate management’. The task of corporate management is usually understood as the task of shaping, developing, changing and governing the corporation. This gives little insight into the nature of this task. Given the unoriginality of the corporation and the total denial by the corporation of its nature as a work, this chapter will show corporate management as fundamentally inappropriate for dealing with the corporation as a work and with many other entities in an appropriate way with devastating ethical consequences.

The fourth chapter is concerned with opening up a way of thinking and being that allows for the development of a way of relating to the corporation authentically and, by so doing, coming to terms with the corporation in a manner that makes it possible to deal authentically with entities in the corporation as well as enabling the creation of companies in such a way that they promote the authentic and appropriate encounter of entities.

The fifth chapter is about the creation of the kind of company that promotes the authentic encounter of entities, which will be called the 'enterprise'. This chapter will develop an understanding of the creation of enterprises and will deal with developing an appropriate understanding of the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship. It will look at the notion of leadership that is required to maintain enterprises as enterprises, and the activity involved will be called 'entrepreneurial governance'. Furthermore, it will elaborate on the ability of the enterprise to meet the requirement of profitability and financial sustainability, a condition that every company has to fulfil in an open market economic dispensation.

The sixth and final chapter will provide an overview of the hermeneutic journey of this book and work out how the fundamental question and understanding that were assumed at its beginning have been transformed and the repercussions of this – particularly for corporate strategy as the field occupied with dealing with the corporation itself. Finally, it will look at the tasks for further thought that arise from the outcome of the hermeneutic journey of this book. These will be presented in the form of the continuation of this journey; implications for existing areas of research that deal with enterprises; and the task of developing appropriate educational approaches to develop capability in entrepreneurial creation and governance, as well as in ethical management.

## Chapter 2

# Heidegger's Typology of Entities and the Very Nature of the Corporation

The task of this chapter is to ascertain the ontological or very nature of the corporation as an entity. The project at hand is to investigate this ontological nature with regard to its relevance to what Heidegger calls an original ethics in the sense of ethos, which really means an inquiry into our human way of dwelling, that within which we humans already find ourselves. As that within which we find ourselves in at the most fundamental level is, according to Heidegger, the truth of Being, it is critical that the investigation focuses on the corporation's relation to Being or the truth of Being. In this sense this investigation really falls into what Heidegger calls 'fundamental ontology' as it investigates the aspect of an entity as it relates to Being. It needs to be noted here that Heidegger himself does not use the term 'fundamental ontology' after the publication of *Being and Time* any longer. It is assumed here though that this is still an appropriate term for the endeavour to investigate the very nature of the corporation, since, as will be argued throughout the remainder of this book, the corporation has a most fundamental relation to Being.

The path chosen here is to use Heidegger's basic types of beings – physical objects, non-human organisms, humans and works – in order to ask the question: 'Which of these types is the corporation a case of?' Heidegger characterises mere physical objects such as stones as 'worldless', non-human organisms like tulips and dogs as 'world-poor', human beings as 'world-acquiring' (GA 29/30; FCM), and 'works' such as works of art as 'setting up a world' (UdK: 30/OWA: 171).<sup>1</sup> Since the Heideggerian term 'world' serves as the key dimension along which he distinguishes different types of entities and their way of being, it will be critical to start out with explicating the term 'world' and, related to that, the Heideggerian notion of the term 'truth', his notion of 'Being' or 'truth of Being' and their role in his overall thinking. This chapter will subsequently give a detailed account of Heidegger's understanding of the very nature of the four types of entities mentioned. Heidegger gives an elaborate account of the first three types of entities in his lecture course of 1929–1930 (GA 29/30; FCM), and he gives a thorough account of the work of art in his three lectures, 'The Origin of the Work of Art' (UdK: 1–74; OWA: 139–212),

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<sup>1</sup>Heidegger mentions a fifth type of entity, namely purely spiritual beings such as angels and god(s) (Hum 22/LoH: 234), but these do not seem relevant to the proposed undertaking of this book.

with reference to other kinds of entities that are also regarded as a case of a work. These lectures will be used as the foundation for the argument in this chapter. The explanation of the ontological characteristics or existentials, as Heidegger calls them, of each type of entity allows for and will be followed by comparing them to the corporation and discussing whether a description of the corporation in terms of these ontological characteristics would be a metaphorical or a literal description. This will be done by comparing the fundamental types of entities with corresponding metaphors of organisation as categorised by Morgan (Morgan, 1997) and with the schools of strategic thought distinguished by Mintzberg et al. (1998). From there it will also be possible to locate some of the most prominent scholars that are sometimes associated with the metaphors and the schools of thought within a certain understanding of the very nature of the corporation. It needs to be mentioned that, in some instances, scholars draw on a variety of metaphors and implicit ontological understandings of the very nature of the corporation and that they consequently do not always fit neatly into the four types of entities set out by Heidegger. This should not come as a surprise, since any metaphorical understanding tends to be incomplete and therefore requires further metaphors or ways of understanding of the characteristics of an entity to complement this metaphorical understanding. The ascertainment of the specific underlying understanding of the very nature of the corporation will then permit the discussion about whether these 'metaphors' and strategic schools refer to corporations in a metaphorical way or whether they talk about corporations or aspects of the corporation in a literal sense. This will lead to the next chapter, which will clarify and distinguish the specific type of entity that is the corporation from other entities that are of the same type but are nevertheless not a corporation. The chapter will therefore describe the particular kind of entity within this type that the corporation is. An analogy to this process would be to ask the question about the very nature of a corporation's IT manager. What kind of an entity is he or she? Choosing among the different types of entities 'physical objects, plants and animals, human beings and works', one might then presumably choose to argue that the IT manager is a case of a human being. The next question would be, 'what kind of a human being is an IT manager?' and one might then, for example, describe an IT manager as a human being whose role it is to install and maintain information technology such as the personal computers, servers, and the telecommunications infrastructure of the corporation. As the presumed inconsistencies in Morgan's argument in terms of metaphors seem to suggest, this might be more difficult in the case of a corporation. To resolve these difficulties it will be necessary to explore the fundamental ontological differences between these distinct types of entities so that the very nature of the corporation can be located and ascertained within these broad types of entities.

The endeavour to describe non-human entities poses a fundamental difficulty for humans. It is not possible to describe them in any other way than in reference to humans, since human beings are never able to be something other than human. How can humans think legitimately about other types of entities? Can humans empathise with or put themselves into the place of other types of entities? Is it possible for humans to imagine what it is like to be a stone or a dog? It seems highly questionable

that the human understanding of what it is like to be a dog is actually the same or similar to ‘what it is for a dog to be a dog’ and it seems, as will be explained later, improbable that to ask such a question is even a possibility in the first instance. And it seems wholly impossible to empathise with a stone. Heidegger acknowledges these difficulties and suggests that, as humans, it is only possible to wonder about other types of entities in a human way (GA 29/30: 265–267/FCM: 178–180). In other words, humans can only think about other entities with the human experience of being as a reference point. They are therefore incapable of describing, for example, an animal the way an animal would ‘describe’<sup>2</sup> its experience of being an animal. To deal with this difficulty, Heidegger starts out with the ontological characteristic (or ‘existential’, as he calls it), which he holds to be at the centre of what it means to be a human being. Heidegger calls the kind of entity that humans are ‘openness-for-Being’ and the way of being of the entities that are a case of openness-for-Being is ‘being-in-the-world’. Consequently, this chapter starts out by clarifying the kind of entities that openness-for-Being are and their way of being as being-in-the-world. Of particular importance in this context will be a clarification of Heidegger’s notions of ‘being-in’, as used in the term ‘being-in-the-world’, and the terms ‘world’, ‘truth’ and ‘Being’.

## Being-in-the-World

The most prominent, and presumably the cardinal contribution, of Heidegger’s philosophy is his location of humans as ‘Dasein’, which, according to Heidegger, is best translated as ‘openness-for-Being’,<sup>3</sup> and its way of being is ‘in-der-Welt-sein’ or ‘being-in-the-world,’ which is the way in which openness-for-Being ‘exists’ (Schwan, 1989b: 105). The word ‘exists’ in Heidegger’s terminology does not simply mean to be real in contrast to its essence, as its Latin origins and the tradition suggest (HDic: 60). Stones and animals are real but, in Heidegger’s sense, they do not exist (Dreyfus, 1991: 13). To exist means that an entity has, or to be more precise, *is* a way of being that can understand the type of entity it itself is, the possibilities that lie in this way of being and also the very nature of other types of entities and the possibilities that lie in those ways of being (SZ: 231ff./BT: 275ff.). Entities that exist are the kinds of entities that are self-interpreting and that can articulate their own understanding of themselves and other entities. As Heidegger

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<sup>2</sup>There is already a terminological problem here, since it is presumably inappropriate to think of animals as ‘describing’ anything. This is once again an example of transcribing the human experience and understanding to other entities, in this case animals.

<sup>3</sup>Heidegger calls the kind of entity that humans are ‘Dasein’, which, crudely translated, would mean ‘existence’ in the sense of ‘everyday human existence’ or, for example, in saying someone has a ‘meagre existence’. The word ‘Dasein’ consists of the two German words *da*=there and *sein*=being. Heidegger expressly preferred the word ‘openness’ as a translation for ‘*da*’ in the word ‘Dasein’, and the translation for the word *Dasein* used here will therefore be ‘openness-for-Being’ (Lovitt, 1977: xxxv).



demonstrates in *Being and Time*, this always happens towards future possibilities with regard to these entities (SZ: 323ff./BT: 370ff.). While humans are the only case of openness-for-Being, there are also other entities beside humans that exist. Anything that carries with it an interpretation of Being exists. An example of another entity, besides humans, that exists would be what is usually referred to as 'culture' (Dreyfus, 1991: 15). Behavioural practices specific to a cultural context express an interpretation of the way of being of entities and Being as such. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger also suggests that language exists (SZ: 160–170/BT: 203–214). Language articulates the way of being of entities:

Languages are not themselves something occurrent like things. Language is not identical with the sum total of all the words printed in a dictionary; instead, because language, so far as it is, is as the openness-for-Being is, meaning that language exists, it is historical. In speaking about something, the openness-for-Being *articulates itself, as existent being-in-the-world, dwelling with and occupying itself with entities*. Only an entity that exists, meaning that *is* in the way of *being-in-the-world*, understands entities. (GA 24: 296–297/BP: 208)

Openness-for-Being is not a conscious subject and is not to be understood as a thing that can be measured and ascertained in a spatial sense. Rather, openness-for-Being is to be understood as the keeping open of a domain of perception in which significances can be granted to it (ZS: 3–4/ZSem: 3–4). This openness-for-Being maintains an interpretation of Being, of itself and of anything else that it deals with. It enacts a certain understanding of Being and of the way of being of entities, which it can, in principle, also articulate due its own way of being, and is therefore itself ontological (SZ: 20/BT: 32).

Openness-for-Being is the kind of entity that finds itself already within a certain interpretation of everything. It is, so to speak, socialised into an understanding of Being. Practices carry with them an interpretation of what it is to be a physical object, a plant or animal, a person or a culture. This understanding is mostly unarticulated and historical. In other words, humans, as openness-for-Being, do not come to this world in a detached way, as the Cartesian tradition would suggest, but human beings are *always already* in the world in a certain way. There is always already a certain interpretation at work in the way that we deal with whatever we are dealing with and, furthermore, humans find themselves always already in a certain interpretation of their own identity. Since openness-for-Being is an entity that is self-interpreting and, in its way of being is this self-interpretation, which is mostly unarticulated and enacted, Heidegger . . .

(. . .) proposes to start again with the understanding in the shared everyday activities in which we dwell, an understanding that he says is closest to us yet farthest away. *Being and Time* is supposed to make manifest what we are already familiar with (although not to make it so explicit that a Martian or computer could come to know it) and in doing so to modify our understanding of ourselves and so to transform our very way of being. (Dreyfus, 1991: 8)<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>See also Dreyfus and Hall (1992: 2): '... Heidegger does not ground his thinking in average, everyday *concepts*, but in average, everyday *practice*; in what people do, not in what they say they

According to Heidegger, humans as being ‘openness-for-Being’ are the kind of entity that is ‘being-in-the-world’. What does Heidegger mean by ‘being-in-the-world?’ Before looking at the notion *world*, the term which he also chooses as a reference to locate other types of entities, it will be helpful to clarify what Heidegger means by *being-in* as a relation of being and the world. As noted earlier, openness-for-Being is not to be thought of a spatial object or location. In the same sense, the word ‘in’ in ‘being-in’ is not to be understood in a spatial sense as would be used, for example, in saying ‘The milk is in the refrigerator’, but rather in the sense of being involved, as in saying ‘I am in love’, ‘I am in a bad state’ or ‘I am in the army’ (Dreyfus, 1991: 43). It is this involvement or ‘being-in’ that gives people a reference to make anything intelligible. In the same sense as being *in* love, being *in* a bad state or being *in* the army give humans a certain understanding of and outlook on entities and issues, who humans are in being involved in the world provides them with the starting point for making anything intelligible. But what is this ‘world’ in which people find themselves involved in and which is so fundamentally different from the Cartesian notion of the *res extensa*?

### ***Heidegger’s Term ‘World’***

Fundamental to Heidegger’s philosophy is the notion that human beings are not separate from their environment, as the Cartesian or scientific tradition suggests by distinguishing between the *res cognitans* and the *res extensa*, but that they ‘are-in-the-world’.

Self and the world belong together in the single entity, the openness-for-Being. Self and world are not two entities, like subject and object, or like I and thou, but self and world are the basic determination of openness-for-Being itself in the unity of the structure of being-in-the-world. (GA 24: 422/BP: 297)

Contrary to the Heideggerian understanding, the world in the Cartesian sense, the *res extensa* or the environment, is to be understood as the entirety of all objects, animals, humans and other entities on planet Earth or in the Universe. The Cartesian project is to try to understand ourselves and the external environment in terms of knowing. According to Heidegger, this project of gaining knowledge comes in at the second step, without making the first step. In order to know something, as the hermeneutic circle explains, requires that some sort of familiarity is already there. It presupposes a familiarity that Heidegger calls ‘dwelling’ (Polt, 1999: 48). Dwelling

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do. This leads him to abandon our pervasive Cartesian way of thinking of humans as subjects who represent objects to themselves. Rather than thinking of action as based on beliefs and desires, Heidegger describes what actually goes on in our everyday skilful coping with things and people and how we are socialised into a shared world. He describes simple skills – hammering, walking in a room, using turn signals, etc. – and shows how these everyday coping skills contain a familiarity with the world that enables us to make sense of things and “to find [our] way about in [our] public environment”.’ (SZ: 354/BT: 405).

in this sense means being familiar within<sup>5</sup> a significant whole to such an extent that it is taken for granted. An example would be our relationship with our home. After a period of settling into a new home, we become so familiar with the way things are arranged that we soon take everything for granted to such an extent that we do not notice things any more. We know the steps we need to take down the stairs to the ground floor without knowing the number. In our home environment we only seem to notice things that suddenly have changed. We live in a 'significant whole' without explicitly knowing all the details of it. This significant whole is what Heidegger calls '*world*'. *World* here does not refer to all objects in the external environment or universe and it 'is not a mere collection of the countable or uncountable, familiar and unfamiliar things that are at hand. But neither is it a merely imagined framework added by our representation to the sum of things' (UdK: 30/OWA: 170), as it would be in the Cartesian tradition.

'World' means in this sense neither an entity nor any realm of entities but the openness of Being. The human being is, and is human, insofar as it is the one who ek-sists. It stands out into the openness of Being. (...) 'World' is the clearing of Being into which the human being stands out on the basis of its thrown nature. 'Being-in-the-world' designates the essence of ek-sistence with regards to the cleared dimension from which the 'ek-' of ek-sistence essentially unfolds. Thought in the term ek-sistence, 'world' is in a certain sense precisely 'the beyond' within existence and for it. The human being is never first and foremost human on the hither side of the world, as a 'subject,' whether this is taken as 'I' or 'We.' Nor is it ever simply a mere subject which always simultaneously is related to objects, so that its nature lies in the subject-object relation. Rather, before all this, the human being in its very nature is ek-sistent into the openness of Being, into the open region that clears the 'between' within which a 'relation' of subject to object can 'be' (Hum: 40–41/LoH: 252)

The term 'world' is used here in a similar way as that which allows, for example, for 'the world of a mathematician' (SZ: 65/BT: 93) and then means 'the realm of possible mathematical objects' (SZ: 65/BT: 93), or the 'corporate world', which refers to the realm of possible entities and issues concerning or relating to the corporation. The central point being made here is that anything in a world shows up 'as' something, thereby becoming intelligible in the first instance. *World* is what provides a reference for anything to show up as what it shows up as (SZ: 68/BT: 96–7). For example, in the world of the real estate developer, a piece of land shows up *as* a business opportunity to build a number of houses and sell them, while in the world of a child the same piece of land might show up *as* a field in which to fly a kite. The real estate developer and the child live in different worlds and thus the same entity will be significant or meaningful in different ways. However, it shows up as something for both the real estate developer and the child and is thus intelligible for both of them. For the most part, humans take this context or horizon of familiarity entirely for granted and it is thus transparent. We take for granted or overlook that things are a certain way without even considering that it is *world* that gives us the things the way they are.

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<sup>5</sup>Once again this 'within' is not to be understood in a spatial sense, but rather in the sense of involvement.

*World* means the *always already*, familiar horizon upon which everyday human existence moves with absolute confidence and within which humans make sense of both their environment and themselves. *World* is the significant whole or referential totality within which things, plants, animals and humans, including ourselves, make sense to us and fit into our lives (Polt, 1999: 52), but which cannot be explained by any other reference and can thus not be determined via explanation. It is what allows for the possibility of explanation itself in the first instance. Explanations always need a reference to something familiar, otherwise they are never able to explain anything. Humans will never be able to actually experience or fully articulate this understanding that is critical to encountering anything in the way it is encountered. Since *world* cannot be explained, yet is fundamental to being human, it remains the essential mystery of human existence that distinguishes humans from all other entities. It is *world* which permits for the possibility of 'a world' to be there in the first instance. The notion of an external environment (the world in the Cartesian sense) presupposes that there already is *world* in the sense of a certain familiarity, which, according to Heidegger, was overlooked by Descartes.

The world *worlds*, and is more fully in being than the tangible and perceptible realm in which we believe ourselves to be at home. World is never an object that stands before us and can be seen. World is the ever-non-objective to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse keep us transported into Being. Wherever those utterly essential decisions of our history are made, are taken up and abandoned by us, go unrecognised and are rediscovered by new inquiry, there the world worlds. (UdK: 30–31/OWA: 170)

How does Heidegger then account for that which is there before it is encountered and 'cultivated' in a world? How does he account for that 'natural environment', which in Descartes' thinking would be nature the *res extensa* as we humans find it before we interpret, manipulate and cultivate it? Heidegger calls this 'the *earth*'. Heidegger's notion of *earth* is not to be understood in the sense of 'planet Earth' or the globe and has been crudely translated as 'nature', whereas *world* would be something similar to a 'culture' that helps humans to interpret their natural environment (Polt, 1999: 137). In terms of 'nature' and 'culture,' the natural environment is interpreted by culture and it also has an influence on the development of those interpretations that constitute the culture. On the other hand, any interpretation needs certain environmental circumstances to which it applies and any set of circumstances can only show up within an interpretation. In Heideggerian terminology, *world* and *earth* need each other. The interpretation of *earth* when honestly confronted, though, always makes it abundantly clear that we will never fully understand what is naturally given, and the interpretations of a world always fall short of fully describing *earth*. As Heidegger points out in *Being and Time*, any interpretation is intrinsically finite, but not any interpretation is as appropriate as any other. Any interpretation of the *earth* will in some way be incomplete and therefore call for a more appropriate interpretation. This interpretative whole or *world* needs *earth*, otherwise there would be nothing to interpret, and *earth* needs *world*, otherwise it would not be intelligible. Thus, while *earth* and *world* need each other, there also is

a constant and forever ongoing reply, retort, conflict and struggle between *earth* and *world* in the confrontation of interpretation and environmental circumstances with each other.

### ***Heidegger's Term 'Truth'***

With the term *world* Heidegger also introduces an altered understanding of the term 'truth'. In the Cartesian or scientific tradition, truth is gained via testing the correspondence of a statement or assertion (which is in the *res cognitans*) with facts in the objective external world (which is in the *res extensa*), which exists independent of human understanding. Heidegger's word for that which corresponds positively is 'correct'. However, the words 'truth' and 'true' also have another meaning in the sense of "'trustworthy, real and genuine", in contrast to "apparent, sham, fake, flawed, etc.": true love, gold, friends, etc.' (HDic: 228). In this sense, the words 'true' and 'truth' are closer to 'agreement,' 'integrity', 'honesty', 'genuineness' or 'being in harmony with', rather than 'correspondence'. Heidegger asserts that the latter understanding of truth is primordial. 'Truth is not primarily a property of assertions or judgements; it is what enables us, unlike stones, plants and animals, to make judgements at all. Before a proposition can be uttered or understood, the world around us and entities within it must be disclosed in a way that cannot be equated with a set of discrete beliefs or expressed in a set of discrete propositions' (HDic: 229). For Heidegger, any assertion about so-called facts already assumes a background of familiarity or *world*. *Truth* is thus given by background or *world*.

Truth is not a feature of correct propositions that are asserted of an 'object' by a human 'subject' and then 'are valid' somewhere, in what sphere we know not; rather, truth is disclosure of beings through which an openness essentially unfolds. All human comportment and bearing are exposed in its open region. (VWdW: 191/OET: 127)

*Truth* is the unconcealment and articulation of entities as what they are within a world and, in this sense, allows for the possibility of a true statement in the first instance. Heidegger calls statements that articulate entities according to how they disclose themselves 'true' and he calls statements that correspond with circumstances 'correct'.

Let us use the following example to clarify the notion of 'truth'. A manager walks into the boardroom and says: 'The profitability in the spares business is suffering.' For this statement to make sense and be true there needs to be an 'involvement totality' or *world* within which this statement is made. The other managers in the room share this world in which things such as profitability are desirable, the spares business has a certain significant role in the overall business, and there would be many other details, correlations and interrelations of which the managers are only hazily aware of and would sometimes have difficulty to articulate. It is against this whole background in which this statement makes sense – not purely on the fact that the figure in the managerial accounts that shows the profitability of the spares business is of a lower value this month than last month and that this figure is a legitimate reflection of the profitability.

Since human behaviour happens within *world* and *truth*, these notions are fundamental to thinking about managerial behaviour. Managerial behaviour does not happen in an objective environment, but in a world that reveals entities and issues in a historical and finite manner. *World* discloses and reveals but, since this disclosure and revealing is always finite and historical, it also hides and conceals. *Truth* as unconcealment is also *un-truth* and hides other aspects. Thus a decision maker can never be certain of the correctness of a decision, because he or she never has, and cannot possibly have, the kind of ultimate understanding that is required to ensure a perfect outcome. As Heidegger states, ‘the world is the clearing of the paths of the essential guiding directions with which all decision complies. Every decision, however, bases itself on something not mastered, something concealed, confusing; else it would never be a decision’ (UdK: 42/OWA: 180).

*World* discloses entities ‘as’ something. *Truth* is the *unconcealment* of the way ‘as’ things are disclosed and discovered in the world. Because everything that occurs is revealed or disclosed in a particular and never in an ultimate way, this also means that entities, while disclosed in a particular way, remain concealed or undisclosed in a range of other aspects and thus never show themselves as a whole. This concealment never shows up as such and is concealed itself. Whatever is true within a world, but which also hides certain aspects, is thus not true. *Truth* and *un-truth* belong to each other. As Guignon points out. . .

. . .human beings are oblivious to the fact that every disclosedness involves concealment, they fall into the illusion of thinking that nothing is hidden and that everything is totally out front. Thus, to take a familiar example, the emergence of modern individualism concealed the role of shared practices in making possible such a mode of self-understanding as individualism. This initial concealment in turn leads to the complacent assurance that individualism is the final, incontrovertible truth about human reality, and that collectives and social practices of any sort must be explainable in terms of artificial aggregates of initially isolated individuals. This second order forgetfulness then reinforces and sustains the initial concealment that opened up the individualist understanding of life in the first place. (Guignon, 1993: 19)

For example, what is true in the world of business is not equally true in all other worlds, such as the world of literature, and is therefore ‘un-true’. ‘Un-true’ does not mean ‘false’, which would be the opposite of ‘correct’; it merely means that it is not true within another world. This poses a fundamental challenge for humans, such as politicians or managers of multinational corporations, who work across different communities and consequently different worlds. When a statement is truthfully made in one community, the very same statement if heard in another community may be untrue and be considered either inappropriate or an outright lie. Also, both *world* and *truth* are historical, meaning that what was true in the world of business 20 years ago may not be true today. Humans, for the most part, do not acknowledge this (VWdW: 195–196/OET: 132).

*Truth* is unconcealment. That is not to say that it is something immediately accessible. *Unconcealment is simultaneously concealment*. Unconcealment, truth, is never nakedly present to be immediately known. The truth of modern man’s situation is a revealing that comes upon him, but it comes upon him veiled. (Lovitt, 1977: XXXIV)

Within this understanding, both *world* and *truth* remain inherited and historical and do not allow for certainty. This, however, does not mean that truth becomes arbitrary and that anything can be true. For something to be true it still must be in agreement with a state of affairs. Consequently, the insights that have been gained via scientific and other methods do not become obsolete but remain the criteria for an assertion to be true or false in the scientific world. Heidegger points out that Newton's laws became true since they are now a dominant way in whose terms entities disclose themselves to humans in their everyday lives (SZ: 227/BT: 269). This is so despite the fact that it is well known that, in the light of Einstein's and Heisenberg's physics, Newton's understanding of physics is no longer correct.

### *Heidegger's Terms 'Being' and 'the Truth of Being'*

In the spirit of understanding original ethics as the thinking of the truth of Being, which is the primordial abode of humans (Hum: 47/LoH: 258), it is necessary on the one hand to get an idea of how 'Being' and 'truth of Being' is to be understood and on the other hand how the entities involved in management relate to or participate in Being. As mentioned earlier, Heidegger calls the engagement with Being 'thinking' and the inquiry into the relation of entities to Being 'fundamental ontology'. Thus the following inquiry into the very nature of the corporation with regard to its relation to Being is a fundamental ontological inquiry. To be able to conduct such an inquiry it is necessary to have some sort of idea of Heidegger's notion of Being from the outset.

How should we think (about) Being? It has often been said that important philosophers or thinkers basically pondered one core idea or question. In the case of Heidegger it is safe to say that the question that was with him all his life as a thinker was the question of Being. It is unlikely that it is even possible to summarise Heidegger's thought regarding the question of Being in a few paragraphs without trivialising it and thus making it meaningless. Also, Heidegger's project was never to give a final answer that solves the question of Being once and for all. Rather, his project was on the one hand to point out that we have forgotten to ask the question of Being and the consequences of this omission. Indeed Heidegger regarded this omission the most serious shortcoming in the history of Western philosophy (Frede, 1993: 43). On the other hand his project was to engage people in inquiring into the question of Being and demonstrating what such an inquiry looks like. In this sense really the entirety of this book is about demonstrating exactly how we have forgotten to engage into the question of Being in the corporate world, the consequences of this, and to demonstrate an example of what the inquiry into the question of Being in the corporate world with regard to corporation and the managerial situation can look like. Just like in Heidegger's overall project, this is not meant to give a final answer to this inquiry, as every final answer constitutes an end to the inquiry rather than keeping it vibrant. Indeed, if we follow Heidegger's suggestion that an original ethics is the engagement in thinking the truth of Being (Hum: 47/LoH: 258), then 'being ethical' fundamentally means first and foremost keeping this inquiry into the truth of Being alive.



While it is not the idea of this book to give a final answer to the question of Being in general and to the question of Being in the corporate world in particular, it is however necessary to give some guiding ideas on the notion of Being in Heidegger's thinking and an outline of how Heidegger's thinking of the question of Being has altered in the course of his life. As Polt (1999) repeatedly points out, Being is the difference it makes to us that there are entities rather than nothing. The question 'why is there something or all the things there are and not just nothing?' seems to be strange compared to the questions we humans ask ourselves in normal everyday life. In everyday life for the most part we take the existence of everything there is utterly for granted and are mostly just wondering how to cope with whatever is there. Rarely do we wonder about the way an entity is, the way of being of a certain type of entity and how all entities are, how they are in each case revealed to us or how they show up for us. Though, without Being nothing 'is' and therefore nothing is possible. To think Being means to think possibility at its most fundamental level:

Being as the enabling-favouring is the 'possible'. As the element, Being is the quiet power of the favouring enabling, that is, of the possible. (...) To enable something here means to preserve it in its very nature, to maintain it in its element. (Hum: 8/LoH: 220)

Our usual way of thinking finds it difficult to think Being itself since it is so well trained to think about entities in general and physical objects in particular. Being itself is neither an entity and even less a physical object:

That which is, is in no way this or that particular entity. What genuinely is, i.e., what expressly dwells and endures as present in the 'is,' is uniquely Being. Only Being 'is,' only in Being and as Being does that which the 'is' names bring itself to pass; that which is, is Being from out of its very nature. (GA: 74/QCT: 44)

Heidegger suggests that the starting point in interrogating the question of Being is to investigate our always already understanding of what it means to be. As modern humans, most of us, if asked about what it means to be, would probably give some version of the Cartesian understanding of Being, which is also dominant in modern philosophy. Some of the roots of this thinking can be traced all the way to Aristotle whose idea of the fundamental structure of reality was based on the primacy of substances as the only types of entities that can exist in their own right (Frede, 1993: 45). In the Cartesian tradition what it means to be is either to be an object in the *res extensa* and, therefore, present in space and time and measurable in every relevant aspect with the quantitative methods of science or to be a subject in the *res cogitans* that is self-conscious and capable of rational thought. This response is significant in two ways. Firstly it gives a metaphysical account of how entities are or can be and, secondly, it suggests implicitly that there is no further question with regard to Being to be asked. As such the question of Being in the way Heidegger poses it does not even arise in modern philosophy. In this sense modern philosophy has nothing to say about the question why there are entities, rather than nothing. Cartesian thought is taking the presence of subjects and objects already for granted and scholars of Heidegger have therefore come to use the term 'metaphysics of presence' to depict this philosophical tradition (Polt, 1999: 5). But within a metaphysics of presence



there is no place for the question of Being, as within the metaphysics of presence only entities are considered and not Being itself.

Yet – what is Being? It is itself. The thinking that is to come must learn to experience that and to say it. 'Being' – that is not God and not a cosmic ground. Being is farther than all entities and is yet nearer to human beings than every entity, be it a rock, a beast, a work of art, a machine, be it an angel or God. Being is the nearest. Yet the near remains farthest from humans. Humans at first cling always and only to entities. But when thinking represents entities as entities it no doubt relates itself to Being. In truth, however, it always thinks only of entities as such: precisely not, and never, Being as such. The 'question of Being' always remains a question about beings. It is still not at all what its elusive name indicates: the question in the direction of Being. Philosophy, even when it becomes 'critical' through Descartes and Kant, always follows the course of metaphysical representation. It thinks from entities with a glance in passing toward Being. For every departure from entities and every return to them stands already in the light of Being. (Hum: 22/LoH: 234)

The fundamental ontological project of *Being and Time* was to show how humans relate to Being. As mentioned earlier, Heidegger calls humans 'openness-for-Being' and their way of being 'being-in-the-world'. This suggests that human beings are open for Being because they are in a world. Heidegger points out in the *Letter on Humanism* how world and Being belong to each other:

For us 'world' does not signify entities or any realm of entities but the openness of Being. The human being is, and is a human being, insofar as it is the ek-sisting one. It stands out into the openness of Being. (Hum: 40/LoH: 252)

In other words, without *world* there is no openness or any sort of access to Being. Being in each case becomes accessible in a world. That we forget to ask the question of Being then has lot to do with forgetting that we humans are always in a world in the first instance. In contemplating *world* as *world* we humans are already contemplating both that which is the precondition for anything to be in the first instance and at the same time we become keenly aware that in this world everything shows up and 'is' in a particular way.

That world comes to pass as world, that the thing things, this is the distant advent of the coming to presence of Being itself. (GA: 73/QCT: 43)

Thinking Being and thinking the very nature of humans is a circular movement. In thinking Being we come to acknowledge the very nature of humans as openness-for-Being and in thinking openness-for-Being we cannot help but think Being. Unlike in the Cartesian tradition where we cannot help but implicitly or explicitly understand the very nature of entities in terms of subjects and objects, here we think of all entities, humans and Being as in each case given by *world*. As mentioned earlier, *world* is the totality of interpretations within which humans are open to Being. Indeed it is worthwhile to re-read the passage in the *Letter on Humanism* quoted earlier again, but now not with the emphasis on explaining the notion of *world* but with an emphasis on the notion 'Being':

'World' means in this sense neither an entity nor any realm of entities but the openness of Being. The human being is, and is human, insofar as it is the one who ek-sists. It stands out into the openness of Being. (...) 'World' is the clearing of Being into which the human being stands out on the basis of its thrown nature. 'Being-in-the-world' designates the

essence of ek-sistence with regards to the cleared dimension from which the 'ek-' of ek-sistence essentially unfolds. Thought in the term ek-sistence, 'world' is in a certain sense precisely 'the beyond' within existence and for it. The human being is never first and foremost human on the hither side of the world, as a 'subject,' whether this is taken as 'I' or 'We.' Nor is it ever simply a mere subject which always simultaneously is related to objects, so that its nature lies in the subject-object relation. Rather, before all this, the human being in its very nature is ek-sistent into the openness of Being, into the open region that clears the 'between' within which a 'relation' of subject to object can 'be.' (Hum: 40–41/LoH: 252)

*World*, the very nature of humans, and Being belong inherently together. Being depicts how everything, rather than only a particular entity, is in a world. In our everyday coping with entities, though, we have not only forgotten to ask the question about the very nature of entities but also about Being. Both are taken as utterly for granted. As being utterly taken for granted, Being and the very nature of entities also are the most difficult to identify and articulate. Anything that is utterly taken for granted for humans does no longer show up for us. To give an everyday example, if I put up a painting in my living room, for a while I notice it and then after a while I just take it so for granted that in my everyday coping with things in the living room I hardly ever notice it any more specifically. Even if someone takes the painting away I might wonder for a while what has changed without immediately thinking of the painting. It is easy for me, though, to bring my attention back to the painting and have a fresh look at it. This is much more difficult with Being as Being is not an entity itself. To give an analogy borrowed partly from Goss et al. (1993), it is like being born into a room that is illuminated with a yellow light bulb. For someone coming in from the outside it would be easy to notice at first that the room is illuminated in yellow. Though even for the person who came into the room at some stage after a while everything would start to look 'just normal' and the fact that everything appears yellowish is forgotten. For the one born into this room the fact that everything shows up yellowish never shows up at all, as there is no reference point that would allow for such an insight. Similarly, we can understand the forgotten question of Being. Being itself never shows up in terms of being a problem or an issue to be dealt with, because in a world itself there is no and cannot be a reference outside of Being to suggest the question of Being. And, as pointed out above, philosophy has been less than helpful in this undertaking of thinking Being, as it taught us to look at entities and their metaphysical characteristics rather than how they are present in the first instance.

After publishing *Being and Time* Heidegger's thinking shifts from the focus on the fundamental ontological project of exploring the relation of humans to Being to the project of thinking Being and an inquiry into what Heidegger calls 'Geschichte des Seins' or 'history of Being' (EM: 70/IM: 92). Already in *Being and Time* Heidegger holds that humans as being openness-for-Being are profoundly historical. In the context of exploring epochs in the history of Being he now also takes a historical view on Being or the truth of Being. The notion of Being as 'truth' becomes critical here. Understanding Being as in each case being the truth of Being means, as pointed out earlier, that Being is always finite, historical and is also at the same time un-truth (VWdW/OET). Because Being is therefore not eternal and

constant, Heidegger now explores how in different epochs the truth of Being has been understood in different ways with a particular emphasis on understanding our current epoch. What is particularly important in the context of exploring originally ethical management is to explore what role corporations play in our current epoch in the history of Being. Heidegger suggests that in each epoch 'we employ traditional concepts and categories without adequate inspection and without exploring the original 'sources' from which they are drawn (SZ: 20f/BT: 41f.)' (HDic: 95). What the inquiry into the history of Being and the comparison of different truths of Being in the respective epochs allows for is a reference point from which to ask the question of Being for our epoch. To this end Heidegger explores, for example, the difference and implications in the truth of Being in Aristotle's writing compared to what is predominantly implicitly held as the truth of Being presently (FnT: 9–40 and GA: 79: 68–77/QCT: 3–49). Heidegger does this via a 'Destruktion' of the tradition, but the German word 'Destruktion' in general and in the way Heidegger uses it 'is not to be understood as a destruction of the tradition, but rather as a "loosening it up" so as to discern the "original experiences" that gave rise to it' (HDic: 95).

Leading an ethically responsible life in our common sense understanding typically means on the one hand to develop one's own character and to act in a way that ensures 'good' or ethically superior outcomes and prevents 'bad' or ethically inferior outcomes. Being ethical in the original sense, however, first and foremost means living in an ongoing inquiry into the truth of Being (Hum: 47/LoH: 258), as this determines from the outset how we understand such notions as good or bad, usefulness or uselessness, happiness and unhappiness and pleasure or pain. Coming back to the notion of original ethics as thinking Being, we need to look at what constitutes an appropriate understanding of 'thinking' in this regard and how we as humans relate to and 'participate' in Being.

Thinking accomplishes the relation of Being to the very nature of humans. It does not make or cause the relation. Thinking brings this relation to Being solely as something handed over to it from Being. Such offering consists in the fact that in thinking Being comes to language. Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home. Their guardianship accomplishes the manifestation of Being insofar as they bring the manifestation to language and maintain it in language through their speech. (Hum: 5/LoH: 217)

As can be seen from this quote, the project to loosen up the fixed metaphysical assumptions and understanding of Being leads Heidegger to an emphasis on engaging in language in a particular way (VA: 176/PLT: 183–184). The task then becomes to articulate that which in our understanding of Being and our understanding of the very nature of entities is always already taken for granted. Thinking Being in the context of a history of Being now becomes possible by having the truth of Being of other epochs as a reference point for thinking about our current understanding of Being. Exploring the truth of Being happens by inquiring into how Being is implicitly or possibly even explicitly articulated in the language of the epoch (GA79: 73/QCT: 44). In doing so, thinking Being, as explained earlier, always brings us back to thinking our own very nature, dignity and humanity as humans and, in doing so, heals us at the most primordial level:

And yet thinking never creates the house of Being. Thinking conducts historical ek-sistence, that is, the *humanitas* of *humanitas*, into the upsurge of healing. (Hum: 49/LoH: 260)

Thus, the project to think Being in relation to the corporation is fundamentally about restoring and healing human dignity in relation to an entity that is of overwhelming prominence in our current epoch.

Asking the fundamental ontological question about the very nature of the corporation and its relation to Being, it will in the following first be explored what kinds or types of entities there actually are. From there a Heideggerian understanding of the very nature of these types of entities needs to be developed in order for us to see whether the corporation can be literally understood as one of these entities and the consequences of such an understanding.<sup>6</sup>

Using the notion *world* as a starting point for the inquiry into distinct types of entities, Heidegger suggests the following foundational statement: '(1) the stone (the material things) is *worldless*; (2) the animal is *world-poor*; (3) the human being is *world-acquiring*' (GA 29/30: 263). A further statement that Heidegger makes at another point is added: fourth 'The work as work sets up a world' (UdK: 31/OWA: 170). The following paragraphs will illuminate these four points further in order to build a base in each case on which to inquire into the nature of the corporation and its relation to Being.

## The Corporation as Physical Object

Before sense can be made out of debating the notions of corporations as physical objects, it is critical to first ascertain what kind of an entity a physical object is. The application of metaphors to the corporation will then be discussed in order to determine what the contributions and limitations of these metaphors are and to see whether the corporation is actually a physical object, or whether the way in which the corporation is described must remain metaphorical.

### *Physical Objects as 'Worldless'*

Heidegger characterises physical objects as 'worldless', meaning they have no access to their environment or themselves. A stone touches the sand that it lies on, but it does not relate to it or experience it in the way that a holidaymaker who rests on the beach experiences the sand, nor is it the same as the lizard that lies on a warm stone and in some way experiences this stone (GA 29/30: 290/FCM: 196–197). The stone is without *world* and thus has no access to the environment. Consequently, things in the external environment and the stone itself can neither

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<sup>6</sup>It is of course also possible that the corporation is none of the types of entities that existing philosophical thought has ascertained, which would raise the question whether corporations are entities in the first instance or whether they are a so-far-not ontologically or metaphysically ascertained entity.

show up nor be missing, because these are not possibilities for the stone in the first instance. A person who is in a dark place can miss light and the resulting visual access to the environment, because visual access is a possibility for a person. Having access to the environment is not a possibility for the stone, because of its ontological nature, in the same sense that 'A stone cannot be dead, because it is not alive' (GA 29/30: 265/FCM: 179). The absence of *world* for the stone cannot be a shortcoming, because it is not a possibility in the first instance (GA 29/30: 290/FCM: 195). This lack of access to the environment allows for a specific way of being that can be understood along the lines of the laws of physics. External impacts cause quite predetermined changes in physical objects, the laws of which are the subject matter of physics.

Because of the worldlessness of material things, it is impossible for humans to put themselves in their place or empathise with them. For humans, it is unfathomable not to have *world*, since *world* is an existential feature of what it is to be human.

From a fundamental ontological perspective physical objects themselves – as being worldless – do not and cannot have a relation to Being at all. Physical objects can however occur differently in different worlds. A stone can occur as part of the natural environment and not really mean much as such. For a hiker who is attacked by an animal the very same stone can suddenly occur as a weapon that is used in order for him or her to defend him- or her-self. In this case the stone would be a case of what Heidegger calls 'equipment' (SZ: 67–79/BT: 95–110). The notion of 'equipment' will become clearer below as what it means to understand the corporation as a case of equipment is explored. In each case, whether the physical object shows up as merely just that or as equipment, the physical object itself remains worldless.

### ***The Physical Object as a Metaphor for the Corporation***

To think of the corporation as a material, physical object means to look at it from the point of view that it is what is physical. This view also tends to see the corporation as something physical and therefore limited to that which is tangible. This view also typically regards everything else that is involved in the corporation as being a physical object. One might then think of a corporation that consists of an administrative building and a production facility, including the piece of land and the gardens around these facilities, as well as the people who work in the administrative building and production facility, as physical objects. This is of course possible, because buildings, the natural environment and the people do have a physical manifestation.

In looking at corporations as physical objects, what seems dominant is the view of the corporation not of a mere physical object that does not have any purpose, but as a particular kind of physical object, namely as equipment or a tool. What characterises a piece of equipment or tool in Heidegger's thought is that it has a particular purpose in a certain world. For example in the workshop of a carpenter a hammer fits into the overall world of the carpenter as a tool that is characterised by its usefulness in hammering nails into the wood. The critical characteristic of equipment is that it is there 'in-order-to' fulfil a particular purpose:

Strictly speaking, there ‘is’ no such thing as equipment. There always belongs to the Being of a useful thing a totality of equipment in which this equipment can be what it is. Equipment is essentially ‘something in-order-to...’ The different kinds of ‘in-order-to’ such as serviceability, helpfulness, usability handiness, constitute a totality of equipment. The structure of ‘in-order-to’ contains a *reference* of something to something. (SZ: 68/BT: 97)

To regard the corporation as a case of equipment means that corporations are a physical object that is used for a particular purpose – namely to produce goods as services for customers, to give employment to employees and, seemingly above all else, to produce returns for the shareholders. In investigating Morgan’s (1997) metaphors, it seems that there is one type of equipment that serves as a way of understanding the corporation most prominently – the machine.

Scientific thinking tends to suggest the notion that the corporation is a physical object, since these are the kinds of entities to which the methodologies of scientific research are most applicable.

Scientists have produced mechanistic interpretations of the natural world, and philosophers and psychologists have articulated mechanistic theories of human mind and behaviour. Increasingly, we have learned to use the machine as a metaphor for ourselves and our society and to mould our world in accordance with mechanical principles.

This is nowhere more evident than in the modern organisation. (. . .)

[Modern organisations] are designed like machines, and their employees are in essence expected to behave as if they were parts of machines. (. . .)

For example, when we talk about organisations we usually have in mind a state of orderly relations between clearly defined parts that have some determinate order. Although the image may not be explicit, we are talking about a set of mechanical relations. We talk about organisations as if they were machines, and as a consequence we tend to expect them to operate as machines: in a routinised, efficient, reliable, and predictable way. (Morgan, 1997: 12–13)

Such thinking was dominant for most of the twentieth century and is still prevalent in the twenty-first century, both in the so-called ‘capitalist’ as well as ‘communist’ countries (Morgan, 1997: 25). The sociologist, Max Weber, observed parallels between the mechanisation of industry and the proliferation of bureaucratic structures in organisations (Morgan, 1997: 17; Weber, 1946, 1947). This way of thinking reflects the way that physical objects ‘relate’ to one another: in predictable ways along the same lines of logic as the laws of physics, which were then translated into rules and regulations to which humans in organisations have to stick to produce predictable outcomes. ‘Classical management theory’ (Fayol, 1949) and ‘scientific management’ (Taylor, 1911) have been the foremost contributors to this line of thinking (Morgan, 1997: 17), which is also referred to as ‘Fordism’ after Henry Ford, who built the assembly lines for the Model-T Ford and his organisation probably the most prominent early example of economically successful implementation of this thinking. Pugh and Hickson provide this telling summary of Fayol’s understanding of management:

Fayol’s answer was unique at the time. The core of his contribution is his definition of management as comprising of five elements:

1. To forecast and plan (. . .): 'examining the future and drawing up the plan of action'.
2. To organise: 'building up the structure, material and human, of the undertaking'.
3. To command: 'maintaining activity among personnel'.
4. To coordinate: 'binding together, unifying and harmonising all activity and effort'.
5. To control: 'seeing that everything occurs in conformity with established rule and expressed command'. (Pugh and Hickson, 1996: 98)

Taylor went to even greater lengths in his approach, by separating management, whose task it is to think, from the workforce, whose task it is to implement along precise procedures that go as far as following certain motion patterns derived from scientific studies of work activities and their standardisation (Taylor, 1911).

Confronting Mintzberg's 10 schools of strategic thought (Mintzberg et al., 1998) with how the very nature of the corporation is implicitly understood in each school, the three prescriptive schools – the design, planning and positioning schools – seem largely in harmony with understanding the corporation as a material physical object. The design school seems to try to create a fit between external threats and opportunities and internal strengths and weaknesses in a rather mechanical way. It then asserts that the strategy that is derived from creating this fit should be implemented by creating a structure that strictly follows strategy (Chandler, 1962). The planning school assumes that strategy can be seen as a big planning exercise, which assumes that all the elements in this process relate to each other in a predictable way. The underlying objectification in this way of thinking can hardly be overlooked. With its focus on analysis, the positioning school also presumes predictability. Once the industry dynamics are properly analysed, strategy will succeed if it follows the laws of economics. Quite clearly, this is only possible if the dynamics between the relevant entities develop in a mechanical way in terms of predetermined relations. This way of proceeding is only legitimate if these entities are viewed as physical objects.

The machine metaphor has served for gaining advantages under reasonably straightforward, stable and simple conditions and thinking of the corporation as a machine was instrumental in bringing about the industrial revolution, but it has also caused serious damage. 'In understanding organisation as a rational, technical process, mechanical imagery tends to underplay the human aspects of organisation and to overlook the fact that the tasks facing organisations are often much more complex, uncertain, and difficult than those that can be performed by most machines' (Morgan, 1997: 27). Even worse, given the typology laid out above, the machine metaphor treats people as parts that have to fit into the machine. Consequently, humans are regarded as physical objects and are thus denied their very nature.

In the first half of [the 20th] century managers have tried to take the human element out of business by turning people into interchangeable machines. (The Economist, 2001: 78)

It can be deduced from these statements that the view of both humans and corporations as physical objects is pervasive. In this chapter, much of the subsection on humans will clarify the difference between humans and physical objects along the lines of Heidegger's thinking on why humans are fundamentally different from physical objects. However, the question remains whether corporations can be viewed as physical objects. It should be clear from the comments above that



the ‘objectification’ of corporations also leads to the ‘objectification’ of humans. There seems to be no example to the contrary. In this context, Gadamer speaks of ‘the utopian thought of a physics of society’ (Gadamer, 1965: 162). Consequently, thinking about the corporation as being literally a physical object clearly seems to be inappropriate.

Furthermore, the information and knowledge age sees the increasing prominence of organisations that display minimal physical manifestation in its traditional form. To show how inappropriate the notion of the corporation as a physical object is, it is useful to look at the many so-called virtual organisations, such as . . .

. . . Monorail Corporation, which sells computers. Monorail owns no factories, warehouses or any other tangible assets. It operates from a single floor that it leases in an office building in Atlanta. Its computers are designed by freelance workers. To place orders, customers call a free phone number connected to Federal Express’s logistics service, which passes the orders on to a contract manufacturer that assembles them from various parts. FedEx then ships the computer to the customer and sends the invoice to the SunTrust Bank, Monorail’s agent. The company is not much of anything except a good idea, a handful of people in Atlanta, and a bunch of contracts. (The Economist, 2001: 77)

While most corporations still have a significant physical expression, such as manufacturing facilities or buildings, it is not appropriate to consider corporations as being physical objects themselves. It is thus legitimate to say that a corporation *is not* a physical object and that even using the notion of the corporation as a physical object in a metaphorical sense remains problematic.

## The Corporation as an Organism

### *Non-Human Organisms as ‘World-poor’*

It can easily be observed that animals and plants show active reactions to circumstances to which material, physical objects like stones, due to their nature, cannot react. For example, a dog is able to react to an intruder into his family’s house or the pack’s territory and ants react to a disturbance in their environment. Quite clearly, animals relate and react to their environment in each case in their own way. A lot of methodological care is needed to determine what is meant by the word ‘relate’ in this context. The question that arises is whether the fact that animals react to happenings in their environment means that they do have *world* in the Heideggerian sense and thus relate to their environment in the way that humans do.

According to Heidegger, animals do not have *world*, ‘but they belong to the covert throng of a surrounding into which they are linked’ (UdK: 31/OWA: 170). Animals live in a surrounding (which in biology is called ‘habitat’) because it surrounds them in quite a fixed, particular and rather predetermined way. Heidegger calls this relation ‘dazed’ (GA 29/30: 344/FCM: 236), because it lacks the interpretative richness of the human relationship to the world. ‘Dazed’ is not to be



understood in a sensory fashion, but in an ability to create rich totalities of interpretations. While some animals are vastly superior to humans in their sensory ability – and are in some cases capable of many types of behaviours that are typically ascribed only to humans, such as the use of tools and the experience of suffering and pleasure and mourning (Kluger, 2010) – their relation to their surroundings would still be dazed in the Heideggerian sense. Every species has its own surroundings, meaning every type of animal or plant relates to its environment in a specific and rather fixed way. The elephant is surrounded by the elephant's surroundings and relates to it in the elephant-specific 'predetermined' (GA29/30: 275/FCM: 186–187) way.

Animals and plants are linked, rather than open, to the content and multiple references of the environment and are therefore characterised as 'world-poor.' This is fundamentally different from the openness to entities and situations in the way these are encountered by humans (GA 29/30: 401/FCM: 276–277). There is a certain richness of interpretation and learning that is not available to animals because of their very nature. For example, wolves in a pack may have the option to exclude certain members, but they – as far as we can tell – cannot decide to develop a democratic or consultative approach to their decision making or to introduce the notion of freedom of speech. The expression 'world-poor' thus characterises this fixed way of relating to the environment in comparison to the human relationship to *world*. According to Heidegger, the source of this lack of *world* in the animal is linked to the fact that it lacks language.

Because plants and animals are lodged in their respective environments but are never placed freely in the clearing of Being which alone is 'world,' they lack language. But in being denied language they are not thereby suspended worldlessly in their environment. Still, in this word 'environment' converges all that is puzzling about living creatures. In its very nature language is not the utterance of an organism; nor is it the expression of a living thing. Nor can it ever be thought as an essentially correct way in terms of its symbolic character, perhaps not even in terms of the character of signification. Language is the clearing-concealing advent of Being itself. (Hum: 17–18/LoH: 230)

Humans can empathise with animals and, to a certain degree, even with plants, because animals and plants relate to their environment, and humans, animals and plants share features that come integrally with having an organism. In many cases, this dazed relationship to the environment is 'humanised' in children's book and fables when animals take on human characters, such as in Beatrix Potter's 'The Tale of Peter Rabbit' (Potter, 1902). The humanisation of animals tends to lead to the denial of the fundamental difference between humans and animals – that animals are fundamentally incapable of 'acquiring' *world* the way that humans are and that animals are not open for Being.

Living creatures are, in any case, as they are, due to their way of Being as such without the possibility to stand in the truth of Being and in such standing preserving the very nature of their own Being. Presumably, of all entities that are, the most difficult to think about are living creatures, because on the one hand they are in a certain way most closely akin to us, and on the other are at the same time separated from our ek-sistent nature by an abyss. (Hum: 17–18/LoH: 230)

In summary, from a fundamental ontological perspective the difference between humans and animals and plants, according to Heidegger, is that humans are open to Being, while this is not a possibility for animals and plants despite the wide-ranging similarities that particularly the more highly evolved mammals share with humans.

### *The Organism as a Metaphor for the Corporation*

Applying the metaphor of the organism to corporations and their organisation is already visible in the etymology of these words. ‘Corporation’ is derived from the Latin word ‘corpus,’ which means ‘body’, and the word ‘organisation’ suggests the interplay of its organs to form an entity. Both fundamentally derive their logic from a view of this type of community as an organism. A number of scholars have contemplated metaphors of organisms, organs or collectives of organisms. Biological analogies and metaphors have become a preferred way of thinking in certain areas of social science, especially in those applying functionalist theories (Burrell and Morgan, 1979: 26).

Morgan elaborates widely on the notion of the metaphor of organisations as organisms (Morgan, 1997: 33–72).<sup>7</sup> According to Morgan, this way of thinking was foremost a response to the shortcomings of the machine metaphor. Parsons had a formative impact on organisational thought by bringing the sociological paradigm of structural functionalism into the field of organisational theory, which draws strongly on biological metaphors (Parsons, 1951; Morgan, 1997: 387; Burrell and Morgan, 1979). The view of organisations as organisms found expression in organisational ecology (i.e. Astley, 1984), various applications of cybernetics (i.e. Senge, 1990), the notion of autopoiesis (i.e. Luhmann, 1995; Ulrich and Probst, 1984; von Grogh and Roos, 1995), and much of what has been contributed to organisational thought by complexity theory (i.e. Stacey, 1992; Wheatley, 1992). Mintzberg’s environmental school, which also builds on the metaphor of the organism, has applied theories from population ecology (i.e. Hannan and Freeman, 1977) to the corporation. It considers strategy as a reactive process (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 285) and compares it to reactive processes in ecosystems.

In the same way that Heidegger’s thinking about the organism assigns to it a specific way of relating to its surroundings, the view of corporations as organisms brings into focus the relations of the corporation with its environment, which find expression in the notion of corporations as open systems.<sup>8</sup> It should come as no a surprise that this relationship is totally neglected when the corporation is viewed as a machine, since physical objects do not at all relate to their environment. As economic environments became more dynamic, the mechanistic view

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<sup>7</sup>One should here also mention aspects of Morgan’s metaphor of the organisation as a brain. In accordance with the thinking in this book, Morgan mixes two metaphors, since he uses analogies that give the brain both animalistic and human characteristics.

<sup>8</sup>Miller (1978), Katz and Kahn (1978), Kast and Rosenzweig (1973), Beer (1980), Emery (1969).

became untenable and this way of thinking was unable to cope with these changes. Biological metaphors allow for considering changes in a number of dimensions and in the organisational requirements for workable, active responses to those changes. Lawrence and Lorsch (1967b) take this as a starting point in developing a contingency approach that revolves around 'two principal ideas: (a) that different kinds of organisations are needed to deal with different market and technological conditions and (b) that organisations operating in uncertain and turbulent environments need to achieve a higher degree of internal differentiation (e.g. between departments) than those in environments that are less complex and more stable' (Morgan, 1997: 49). In other words, Lawrence and Lorsch (1967b) were developing an approach that started out with the question: What kind of an organisation does one need to build so that it can both perceive the necessary complexity in the environment and then respond to it appropriately? Elements of the thinking that assumes that corporations 'live' in an environment in a similar fashion to an animal or a plant can also be found in Pfeffer and Salancik's resource dependence perspective (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978) and in some of Chandler's and Drucker's notions about the corporation in its playing field (Chandler, 1962; Drucker, 1980).

The organic view of the corporation also gives a different perspective on the internal relations in a corporation.

If we define the whole organisation as a system, then the other levels can be understood as subsystems, just as molecules, cells, and organs can be seen as subsystems of a living organism, even though they are complex open systems in their own account.

Systems theorists are fond of thinking about intra- and interorganisational relations in these terms, using configurations of subsystems to depict key patterns and interconnections. (Morgan, 1997: 42)

These subsystems, some of which comprise humans and groups of humans, are interconnected, although not in the way humans relate to each other, but similar to the way in which different organs or organisms relate to each other. The relationship is determined by the fulfilment of needs, which is a much more narrowly defined mode of exchange than an exploratory dialogue between people, for example, although it is richer than the link between two cogwheels. It is telling that much of the literature that has been produced in this line of thought has become the bedrock of current human resources management (Morgan, 1997: 36),<sup>9</sup> which suggests that, in current management thinking, humans are seen as the *animal rationale* (Hum: 17/LoH: 230) rather than as openness-for-Being in the Heideggerian sense, as will be pointed out below. The term *animal rationale* depicts the understanding of humans who, in Heideggerian terminology, live in a dazed relation to their surroundings, but that humans have the additional ability to entertain rational thought. This understanding carries with it the risk that people are seen as mere factors of production and resources ('human resources') that need

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<sup>9</sup>Some of the most popular sources in current management thinking fall into this category: Roethlisberger and Dickson's (1939) and Mayo's (1933) account of the Hawthorne studies, Maslow (1943), Argyris (1957, 1964), Alderfer (1969, 1972), McGregor (1960), Herzberg et al. (1959).

to be manipulated and conditioned to fit into the overall organisation rather than acknowledging that they can create their own future and are, as will be pointed out, ‘world-acquiring.’

It seems obvious that these organic metaphors are richer, and more appropriate, than the machine metaphor, since a corporation typically shows an active reaction to a stimulus in its environment. This reaction to a stimulus is presumably more accurately described by comparing it to the reaction of an organism than to that of a physical object. Given Heidegger’s typology of entities, organisms live in a dazed relationship to their environment. While one might argue that most corporations relate to their surroundings in a rather ‘dazed way’, seeing them mostly in terms of established categories such as market opportunities and competition, there are corporations that have fundamentally altered their identity and, consequently, their interpretation of a situation in a way that would be impossible for a non-human organism like a plant or animal. It seems that this ability to change their own understanding and identity is a key feature of corporations that survive and thrive for long periods of time (De Geus, 1997). Because this fundamental change of identity in corporations seems to be the exception, the majority of corporate responses to external stimuli may be described fairly accurately in biological terms, particularly in Darwinian terms such as natural selection and adaptations.<sup>10</sup> Since fundamental shifts in corporate identity cannot be fully accounted for via biological metaphors, the view of corporations as organisms is only partially applicable. It should therefore not be surprising that a general critique of the organic view of organisations is that it is too deterministic to fully account for all the characteristics of corporations (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 285–300; Morgan, 1997: 65).

A much more straightforward argument shall suffice when finally ascertaining whether the corporation actually is an organism. Since corporations do not have a body in the biological sense, they cannot possibly be literal organisms. Thus it is clear that, while the metaphor of corporations as organisms has been an advance on viewing corporations as physical objects, it is also clear that corporations are not organisms. This way of viewing corporations must therefore remain metaphorical, rather than serving as a literal or ontological statement.

## The Corporation as a Human Being

Much has already been said about Heidegger’s understanding of humans as openness-for-Being whose way of being is being-in-the-world. Therefore the emphasis in the following section is not merely to give a summary account of Heidegger’s understanding of what it means to be human but also to put the

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<sup>10</sup>Heidegger suggested an alternative view to the Darwinian idea of evolution that holds that evolution may be more accurately understood by adding another evolutionary force besides adaptation and natural selection (survival of the fittest). Major evolutionary steps might stem from changes in the dazed relations of organisms to their surroundings that prompt them to develop organs to perceive the aspects of their surroundings that this new dazed relationship looks for (GA 29/30/FCM).

emphasis on explaining how humans are a fundamentally different entity from animals. In *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (DA29/30/FCM) Heidegger's specifically dedicates himself to working out the difference between physical objects, animals and humans. Throughout his life it was one of his key projects is to show that humans are not just a more evolved animal as the characterisation of the human being as the *animal rationale* suggests (GA 65: 3/CtP: 3). To open up this question, we let Heidegger speak directly:

With regards to the ascertainment of the very nature of the human being, however, one may determine the *ratio* of the *animal* and the reason of the living entity; whether as a 'faculty of principles' or a 'faculty of categories' or in some other way, the essence of reason is always and in each case grounded in this: for every apprehending of entities in their Being, Being is already illuminated and appropriated in its truth. So too with *animal*, *zōon*, an interpretation of 'life' is already posited that necessarily lies in an interpretation of entities as *zōē* and *physis*, within which what is living appears. Above and beyond everything else, however, it finally remains to be asked whether the very nature of the human being primordially and most decisively lies in the dimension of *animalitas* at all. Are we really on the right track toward the very nature of the human being as long as we set it off as one living creature among others in contrast to plants, beasts and God? We can proceed in that way; we can in such fashion locate the human being within Being as one entity among others. We will thereby always be able to state something correct about man. But we must be clear at this point, that when we do this we abandon the human being to the essential realm of *animalitas*, even if we do not equate it with beasts but attribute a specific difference to it. In principle we are still thinking of *homo animalis* – even when *anima* [soul] is posited as *animus sive mens* [spirit or mind], and this in turn is later posited as subject, person, or spirit. Such positioning is the manner of metaphysics. But then the essence of man is too little heeded and not thought in its origin, the provenance of its very nature that is always the future of its very nature for historical humanity. Metaphysics thinks of the human being on the basis of *animalitas* and does not think in the direction of its *humanitas*. (Hum: 14–15/LoH: 227)

But what makes humans as an entity different from other organisms? After all, humans are also integrally linked to being an organism since they have in each case a body. According to Heidegger, they are not just a further evolved animal in the Darwinian sense. Heidegger considers humans to be a fundamentally different entity from animals. He even holds that the body of a human is something fundamentally different from the organism that is an animal. Heidegger seemingly even suggests that having a body does not belong to the structure of the very nature of openness-for-Being (Dreyfus, 1991: 41), even though it 'is, among other things, in each case dispersed in a body' (MFL: 137).<sup>11</sup> While Heidegger never gives a fully worked-out account of human beings' embodiment, he goes far enough to clearly separate the issue of the embodiment of openness-for-Being from the issue of orientation (Dreyfus, 1991: 137; Hum: 15–16/LoH: 228):

If openness-for-Being in its concern brings something near, this does not signify that it fixes something at a spatial position with a minimal distance from some point of the body. . . . Bringing-near is not oriented towards the I-thing encumbered in the body, but towards concerned being-in-the-world. (SZ: 107/BT: 142)

<sup>11</sup> Re-quoted from Dreyfus (1991: 41).

A new starting point has to be found, because thinking the existential characteristics of the human being cannot be derived by understanding them in contrast to animals.

### *Human Beings as ‘World-Acquiring’*

According to Heidegger, human beings are among all types of entities the only case of openness-for-Being, and their way of being is being-in-the-world. Human beings thus have *world*. Humans acquire<sup>12</sup> *world*. And when Heidegger talks about humans as world-acquiring, he does not mean that this is an activity that they are busy with occasionally, like taking a walk, but that this is what humans are as an existential feature of their very nature and what they are all the time.

The openness-for-Being in the human being *acquires* the world: 1. it produces it; 2. it gives an image, a view of it, it portrays it; 3. it makes it what it is, is the setting, the grasp. (GA29/30: 414/FCM: 285)

This means that humans within the world they are in have access to entities ‘as’ something. This ‘as’ is to be understood in a peculiar way. It is not to be understood in the sense of saying, ‘I am using this rock *as* a hammer’, in which case the words would show a relationship between two already occurrent objects (the apophantical ‘as’). The ‘as’ that is talked about here is the ‘as’ that is given by *world* and that gives *world* (the hermeneutical ‘as’) (SZ: 148–149/BT: 189). For example, if one points at a hammer in a carpenter’s workshop as what it is, then the carpenter, being in the world of carpentry, will in all likelihood say something like ‘this thing is used *as* a hammer for hammering’. As Heidegger points out in *Being and Time*, when something is said, this is not labelling something that is already there. What is named declares an understanding of something *as* what it is named *as*. Something is understood ‘as’ something in a world, in a totality of relevance. It is both the world that gives it the ‘as’ that it is understood ‘as’ and, in turn, this ‘as’ interprets the world. This understanding does not have to be articulated; it provides the possibility for articulation of ‘something as something’ in the first instance and is always already accessible. As Heidegger puts it, ‘The “as” constitutes the structure of the explicitness of what is understood: it constitutes the interpretation’ (SZ: 149/BT: 140). Each human seeing and understanding is in itself always already understanding and interpretive. In other words, this ‘as’ is the possibility for any human perception.

At this point, Heidegger’s notion of human understanding and being differs fundamentally from the understanding of both Descartes and Husserl, who have overlooked this ‘as’ as the starting point for all thinking and perceiving.

The simple seeing of things nearest to us in our having to do with . . . contains the structure of interpretation so primordially that a grasping of something which is, so to speak, *free of*

<sup>12</sup>The German word ‘weltbildend’ is here translated as *world-acquiring*. ‘Bildend’ in this context has also been translated as ‘forming’ (FCM: 375), but could be translated as ‘creating,’ ‘educating’ or ‘shaping’.

*the as* requires a kind of reorientation. When we just stare at something, our just-having-it-before-us lies before us *as a failure to understand it anymore*. This grasping which is free of the *as* is a privation of *simple* seeing, which understands; it is not more primordial than the latter, but derived from it. The ontic inexplicitness of the 'as' must not mislead us into overlooking it as the a priori existential constitution of understanding. (SZ: 149/BT: 190)

Thus, when someone says: 'I am using the fork as a screwdriver', this 'as' is not a hermeneutic 'as', since it does not articulate an always already interpretation. This apophantical 'as' refers to something else. This something else only makes sense because it is always already understood 'as' something.

Statement and its structure, the apophantical 'as,' are based on interpretation and its structure, the hermeneutical 'as,' and furthermore on understanding, on the disclosedness of openness-for-Being. But here truth is regarded as a distinctive character of statements as so derived. Thus the roots of the truth of statements reach back to the disclosedness of understanding. (SZ: 223/BT: 266)

Animals also have access to entities, but not 'as' this entity within a significant whole or totality that is open to interpretation and re-interpretation (GA 29/30: 412/FCM: 284–285). 'As' means a relationship. 'As' cannot be on its own and can only start functioning when there already is a referential totality (GA 29/30: 417/FCM: 287–288). When something is revealed as something, it always refers to something that is already familiar (GA 29/30: 417/FCM: 287). This is also what is meant by the 'hermeneutic circle', which describes both the fact that humans can only understand that for which they already have some sort of background or preliminary knowledge in the first instance, and that this provides them a platform from which they are open to interpreting and reinterpreting their environment. This takes us back to a clearer understanding of hermeneutic phenomenology as an approach. Since humans are always familiar with entities in an interpretative way, the phenomenology that Heidegger appropriately suggests is hermeneutic. Hermeneutic phenomenology does not lay bare the things by themselves, but lays bare the a priori interpretation that makes anything intelligible.

What allows humans to interpret and re-interpret the world? This capability of interpretation is integrally linked to human language. Language is not just an additional faculty or sense like the Jacobson's organ of cats, lions, tigers and horses, which allows the animal to 'taste' smells. Language allows for what Heidegger calls 'openness-for-Being' and 'being-in-the-world'.

Language is the clearing-concealing advent of Being itself. (Hum: 18/LoH: 230)

Language is the articulation of the 'as'. Language allows for both the possibility of something to be articulated as well as for something to be unarticulated. For an animal, nothing is unarticulated because the possibility of articulation does not exist.

Where there is no language, as in the Being of a stone, plant, and animal, there is also no openness of entities, and consequently no openness of non-Being and of the empty.

Language, by naming entities for the first time, first brings entities to word and to appearance. (UdK: 61/OWA: 198)



Thus, the notion of humans as world-acquiring is founded in human language. Fundamental to this, however, is an understanding of language that is far broader than the everyday understanding of language. Usually we use the word language in a very unclear way. This becomes visible when people talk about ‘computer language’. But computers do not have *world*. Therefore there is no hermeneutic ‘as’ that can be articulated. Computers just exchange data. In contrast, the understanding of human language as enabling the acquiring and re-acquiring of *world* is found in poetry, where language brings forth a whole new world. Since language is foundational for *world* and *world* allows for human beings to be who they are, human beings do not only possess language as a faculty but are themselves, in their very nature, a gift of language. Language is then both a tool and, at the same time, able to act in its own right (UzS: 9–33/PLT: 189–210). Since language gives humans *world* and allows for the acquisition of a world,

The human being is 1. a part of the world. 2. as this part the human being is at the same time master and servant of the world. (GA29/30: 262/FCM: 177)

The human being as openness-for-Being is world-acquiring and is a way of being that is linked to its relationship to language in an integrated way. Humans therefore differ fundamentally from physical objects, as well as from plants and animals – none of whom are open for Being. This, though, raises the question how humans relate to Being. If we, as mentioned above, are ‘at the same time master and servant of the world’, is the same true for our relationship with Being? Are we masters and servants of Being at the same time? To depict our relationship with Being Heidegger uses the metaphors of us being the ‘shepherd’ and ‘neighbour’ of Being:

The human being is not the master of entities. The human being is the shepherd of Being. The human being loses nothing in the ‘less’; rather, it gains in that it attains the truth of Being. It gains the essential poverty of the shepherd, whose dignity consists in being called by Being itself into the preservation of Being’s truth. The call comes as the throw from which the thrownness of openness-for-Being derives. In his essential unfolding within the history of Being, the human being is the entity whose being as existence consists in his dwelling in the nearness of Being. The human being is the neighbour of Being. (Hum: 32–33/LoH: 245)

To understand our role in Being requires humility but, as mentioned, this humility does not diminish humans but constitutes a gain. The source of attaining this kind of humility is by understanding ourselves appropriately in our relation to Being. As Polt (1999: 147/8) points out, for us humans it is not possible to avoid inheriting an understanding or meaning of Being. Our role and responsibility as humans who are neighbours and shepherds of Being is to appreciate this inheritance, inquire into this inheritance, and keep this inquiry into this inheritance of our understanding and meaning of Being vibrant to open up the possibility of a further unfolding of the truth of Being. Unlike Cartesian thought, which assumes we can ask questions from a ‘clean slate’ and inquire into the pure facts in the *res extensa*, Heidegger keeps reminding us that our role is that of someone who is always already within an inherited understanding of both Being and the very nature of entities and any real progress comes from acknowledging this and then exploring for how this always



already understanding can be developed further. In this case humans in their very nature are 'the thrown thrower' (GA 65: 304/CtP: 214):

That essential space of the very nature of humans receives the dimension that unites it to something beyond itself solely from out of the conjoining relation that is the way in which the safekeeping of Being itself is given to belong to the very nature of the human being as the one who is needed and used by Being. Unless the human being establishes itself in the space proper to its very nature and there takes up this dwelling, it will not be capable of anything essential within the destining now holding sway. (GA: 70/QCT: 39)

To establish ourselves as humans in the space proper to our very nature is also the project for the remainder of this book. In this case it is to establish ourselves as humans in the space we might call the 'corporate world' in a way that is proper to our very nature as humans so that we can, on the one hand, recognise our own dignity in this space and, on the other hand, are enabled to accomplish something essential in this space.

### *The Human Being as a Metaphor for the Corporation*

There seem to be four different types of 'human' understandings of the corporation in the literature. The first one equates and reduces the corporation to one literal human being. As Mintzberg et al. point out in their entrepreneurial school of strategic thought, it seems to be the case that, in the public discourse, as in many articles in the popular press, an individual human being is seen as what defines a corporation (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 131ff.). For example, Virgin Atlantic would predominantly be seen as Richard Branson himself or as an extension of him, even though it is obvious that a corporation is much more than the top manager or founder. Much of what Drucker writes echoes this view that puts the CEO or top manager at the centre of understanding the corporation (i.e. Drucker, 1963, 1974, 1980, 1986), which reflects the Cartesian foundation of his thinking (Spinosa et al., 1997: 35ff.)

Secondly, many theorists have equated the corporation with a significant number of individuals. This is expressed in Mintzberg's cognitive school and in most aspects of Morgan's metaphor of organisations as psychic prisons (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 123–148; Morgan, 1997: 215–250). They both attempt to understand the corporation from the vantage point of the psychology of individuals and how individuals' cognition is influenced and shaped by groups. The cognitive school attempts to understand corporations and their decision-making processes and actions on the level of human individuals by trying 'to get at what this process means in the sphere of human cognition, drawing especially on the field of cognitive psychology' (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 150). Or, as Morgan puts it: 'People construct realities wherein threats and concerns within the unconscious mind become embodied in structures for coping with anxiety in the outside world' (Morgan, 1997: 233). The contribution of these ways of looking at corporations is that they tend to include the human element in management, but the question would be whether they get any closer to understanding the very nature of corporations. Morgan critiques this way of thinking for not

recognising the role of ideology, material conditions and power and says that something seems to be happening at the level of 'the collective' that cannot be grasped on an individual level and that cannot be dealt with by working with the conscious and unconscious of individuals alone (Morgan, 1997: 248–249). The most prominent scholars in this line of thought are probably March and Simon (March and Simon, 1958), whose work draws strongly on a psychological understanding of humans.

Thirdly, numerous organisational theorists have given human characteristics to the corporation and its organisation. This is expressed in words such as organisational memory, organisational knowledge, organisational learning, organisational or collective mind (Jones, 1995), knowledge-creating company (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995) and the notion of the corporation as a 'legal person'. Morgan covers some of the aspects of the metaphor of corporations as humans in the metaphor of the organisation as a brain, which he links to the notion of a learning organisation (Morgan, 1997: 89–99), and Mintzberg covers this notion in the learning school (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 175–232). Both Morgan's metaphor of the organisation as a brain and Mintzberg's learning school are not limited to implicitly only applying human metaphors, if metaphors are distinguished along the lines of physical objects, organisms, humans and works. Never-the-less, Morgan's metaphor of the organisation as a brain and Mintzberg's learning school contain a large number of human metaphors for corporations. This understanding of corporations as humans becomes visible in sentences such as:

For example, organisations may learn by recognising patterns in their own behaviours, thereby converting emerging strategies out of the past into deliberate ones in their future. (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 199)

The question is whether corporations can actually 'recognise patterns in their own behaviour' or 'learn' anything, or whether that is something that can only be done by humans and perhaps to a certain degree by animals. One could then argue that it is not only humans who 'learn' and 'recognise patterns in their own behaviours', but also animals like sniffer dogs, when they learn how to find explosives in a suitcase by smell and then indicate the find. However, this type of learning is conditioning rather than the learning that scholars talk about when they refer to 'learning organisations'. Learning here is characterised as something similar to exploring the always already understanding, which is then called double-loop learning (Argyris and Schön, 1978; Senge, 1990) or retrospective sense making (Weick, 1995). From what has been said so far, it should be clear that double-loop learning is something that is not available to animals, because they cannot articulate an interpretation. But can corporations learn, or is it the humans in corporations who learn? It is suggested here that corporations actually do not learn and that the notion of 'the learning organisation' is actually concerned with enabling people within the corporation to learn. This does not mean that corporations do not change in the sense of development or progress over time, in whatever way this development or progress is understood in each case. The assumption is rather that such development and progress is inappropriately described as 'learning', because this would require some sort of thinking and conscious realisation by the corporation itself. Ultimately, the reader will have

to judge for him- or her-self whether a corporation can learn or whether this way of thinking is to be seen as metaphorical, especially in the light of the notion of the corporation being a work.

To think of the corporation in terms of human metaphors might stem from the familiarity of humans with themselves and the difficulty of Cartesian thought to fathom the corporation as an entity in its own right, beyond the notion of it as an accumulation of physical entities, organisms and humans. It should be clear that the corporation is not a human being in the sense of having a human body and being able to think itself. Therefore to consider a corporation as being an individual human being must remain metaphorical.

Lastly, the corporation, while not literally being a human being, has been considered to have the same ontological nature as a human being. A prominent scholar of Heidegger's philosophy, Haugeland, suggests that corporations are actually a case of *Dasein* or *openness-for-Being*<sup>13</sup> (Haugeland, 1982). Haugeland argues that 'openness-for-Being' is not just a term for the kind of entity that humans are, but a term for the way of being of institutions such as Cincinnati, General Motors, chemistry (probably in the sense of a science), philately and Christmas, and that 'people are primordial institutions' (Haugeland, 1982: 20). He therefore goes further than Heidegger, who still assigns the term 'openness-for-Being' exclusively to what is colloquially referred to as 'individual people'. It is unlikely that Heidegger would have agreed with this, as he stated in *Being and Time* that . . .

[b]ecause openness-for-Being has in *each case mineness* [Jemeinigkeit], one must always use a *personal* pronoun when one addresses it: 'I am', 'you are'. (SZ: 42/BT: 68)

Where then is Haugeland's thinking incongruent with that of Heidegger? Haugeland assumes a similarity between communities of organisms, such as bees, and human communities in the forms of institutions (Haugeland, 1982: 20). While both communities of organisms and communities of humans display behaviour that makes members conform in some way, human communities are fundamentally different from communities of organisms, because humans relate differently from organisms. Communities of organisms can easily be viewed as being a similar entity to an individual organism, because the dazed relations among organisms are presumably similar to the dazed relations between organs in a body. This point was elaborated on by Marais (1971) in the earlier part of the twentieth century in his view of an ant colony as a single unified organism working towards a single aim. While animals always live within dazed relations, which is similar to Heidegger's notion of the being of humans as being inauthentic, humans can transform their inauthenticity and be authentic.

Inauthenticity has possible authenticity at its basis. Inauthenticity characterises the kind of entity in which openness-for-Being diverts itself and for the most part has always diverted

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<sup>13</sup>Haugeland chooses, as many other scholars of Heidegger's thought, to leave the term 'Dasein' (which is translated as 'openness-for-Being' in this book) untranslated and thus uses the original German word.

itself, too, but it does not have to do this necessarily and constantly. Because openness-for-Being exists, it determines itself as the kind of entity it is, and it does so always in terms of a possibility which it itself *is* and understands. (SZ: 259/BT: 303–304)

While, according to Heidegger, humans are mostly inauthentic, meaning that they take an always already understanding totally for granted and are oblivious to it, they can also be authentic. Being authentic means unconcealing an inauthentic relation or world, embracing this inauthentic relation, and then going beyond it and creating a new interpretation or understanding and thus acquiring a whole new world. Because of this world-acquiring nature, humans can create communities that give themselves a whole new understanding of what it means to be a human being, a possibility that is denied to animals. Being authentic is not a possibility for animals and it is what fundamentally distinguishes humans from other organisms. The possibility for authenticity is based in language, since . . .

. . . just as linguistic utterance is based on discourse, acoustic perception is based on hearing. Listening to . . . is the existential being-open of openness-for-Being as being-with for the other. Hearing even constitutes the primary and authentic openness of openness-for-Being for its own-most possibility of being, as in the hearing of the voice of a friend whom everyday openness-for-Being carries with it. (SZ: 163/BT: 206)

Having sketched out Heidegger's understanding of humans, we now need to ask what is the nature of a human community like a state or a corporation? Since humans can be authentic or inauthentic, how does a community that is created in an inauthentic manner differ from one that is created authentically? Heidegger is clear that a state, like Haugeland's example of Cincinnati, is not a case of openness-for-Being but, in being a state, would be a case of another type of entity which he calls a 'work' (UdK: 49/OWA: 186). What works, such as states, have in common with humans is that they *exist* in the sense, as mentioned earlier, that they carry with them an interpretation of what it means for an entity to be. In this sense Haugeland does not seem to be too far off the mark in comparing the very nature of human communities with the very nature of humans themselves. Nevertheless, to fully appreciate the notion that human communities are a different type of entity from a human being itself, the notion of the entity called 'a work' and the understanding of the corporation as being a work will be explored in due course.

To think of the corporation in terms of human metaphors might stem from the familiarity of humans with themselves and the difficulty of Cartesian thought to fathom the corporation as an entity in its own right, beyond the notion of an accumulation of physical entities, organisms and humans. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, we humans seem to have a tendency to understand everything in human terms and corporations seem to be no exception to this. It should, though, be clear that the corporation is not a human being in the sense of having a human body, being capable of human reflection and learning or assuming the role of being the shepherd and neighbour Being. Therefore, to consider a corporation as being human is metaphorical. The question of whether the corporation can be sufficiently understood as a mere accumulation of individuals cannot be satisfactorily be dealt with at this point and will have to be clarified from the perspective of the corporation as a work in the remainder of this chapter.

## The Corporation as a Work

From the Cartesian, or usual, perspective, one would say that physical objects, non-human organisms and humans are the entirety of what is real. The reason for this lies in the separation of the *res cognitans* from the *res extensa*, and the assumption that what is in the *res extensa* is real and objective. The entities in the *res extensa* all display a physical manifestation. This way of thinking leaves us with a difficulty to understand certain types of phenomena, such as the Eiffel Tower in Paris. In Cartesian thinking one would say that the Eiffel Tower is – in the *res extensa* or ‘objectively’ – something like ‘a bunch of steel screwed together’. Yet intuitively we can see that it is not just a bunch of steel screwed together in a particular way. If, for example, the Eiffel Tower would be painted pink or torn down, this would be taken as something very different from just painting a bunch of steel or moving a bunch of steel from one configuration to another. From a Cartesian perspective one could explain what happens in the following way: In the *res extensa*, what happens is that a bunch of steel is painted or moved from one form and place in space to another form and place in space. And then one might say that, in the *res cognitans* of people, the Eiffel Tower is a symbol or allegory for Paris. In the same way, constructionism assumes that there is an objective thing to which a social construction is added. This seems to be a perfectly sensible explanation and does not seem incoherent at all. Thus the task is not to prove this way of thinking wrong, but merely to offer a different perspective. The perspective that is presented below is considered to be wider and more promising for dealing appropriately with entities with the same or similar nature to the Eiffel Tower. Using the example of the painted or broken down Eiffel Tower, someone might say that, without it, Paris is no longer Paris; that ‘a world’ has disappeared, broken down or at least changed. It is the understanding that is expressed in these words that will be explored in the following section.

### *The Work as ‘Setting up a World’*

Heidegger takes a different stance to understanding entities such as the Eiffel Tower. He calls these types of entities ‘works’. For him, a work is not first and foremost an entity that is a physical object that is then interpreted in a certain way. For Heidegger, works are the kind of entities that set up the kind of background, significant whole or world that allows for an understanding in the first instance. Works set up a world and thus are a source of intelligibility. In other words, works are not something that we encounter and then interpret, but they are that which gives us an understanding. While any understanding is hermeneutic, meaning interpretative, this understanding is not something that is ‘added’ to an object, but something that is given by entities called ‘works’. Works give us the understanding that makes anything understandable. Human understanding is always given by *world*. This world is set up by works.

‘Rising within itself, the work opens up a *world* and keeps it abidingly in force. To be a work means to set up a world.’ (UdK: 30/OWA: 169–170)

Some of the examples of distinct types of works mentioned specifically by Heidegger are works of music, architecture, states, poetry, philosophy, art, and religion (Gel: 10/DoT: 44; BWD/BDT; UdK: 49/OWA: 186–187; EM: 146/IM: 191). Heidegger never gives a finite description of all possible works and therefore it can be assumed that other entities, such as movies or even people who have gained a certain status, like some of the Nobel laureates like Dag Hammarskjöld or movie stars like Charlie Chaplin who have become defining symbols and ‘institutions’ in their own right, could in some way be considered as works. It may be noteworthy that colloquially we refer to certain people as being an ‘institution’, which means that they play a particular defining role in a community and are therefore something other than only humans. Heidegger also adds some types of action that create a world and truth: political revolutions, divine revelation, ‘essential sacrifice’<sup>14</sup> and thinking (UdK: 49/OWA: 186–187).

To clarify the notion of these entities as works, we will choose a few examples for elaboration to understand the Heideggerian notion of works and how works set up a world. Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony is an example of a work of music. Listening to the symphony creates a world of humanity as a family (‘alle Menschen werden Brüder’). It is presumably for the setting up of this kind of world that its last movement has been made the European anthem. To explain the notion of the entity called ‘a work’, Polt uses the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial in Washington, which was designed by Maya Lin and is usually referred to as ‘the Wall’ (Polt, 1999: 135–136). The memorial is a simple V-shaped trench made from a series of black stone sheets inscribed with the names of all the American soldiers who lost their lives in the war. It has become a sacred site both in and beyond the United States. What makes it a work cannot be found in the material from which it is made nor in its beauty or aesthetic appeal, but in its effect of creating a world and the establishment of *truth*. The Wall makes the Vietnam War present, and establishes and preserves this event as a fundamental dimension of American identity, regardless of the political conviction of the visitor to this work. Such revelations belong to every work. Freudian psychology is a philosophical work that has profoundly shaped the Western understanding of humans of themselves. ‘Today everyone has an unconsciousness and makes Freudian slips. That *one* has a ‘defining relation’ or an ‘Oedipus complex’ seems to be simply a matter of asserting a truth that corresponds to the facts’ (Dreyfus, 1991: 276). Cartesian philosophy is, as claimed by Heidegger, that work that has set up the world of modern science. By communicating his philosophy, Descartes set up a world that was not there before. On the other hand, doing science in a Cartesian fashion may create new knowledge, but from the point of view of setting up a world it is not setting up a new world, but is repeating the world that is familiar and was already set up by the work of Descartes and, in this sense, science as a work is not original but unoriginal (UdK: 49/OWA: 187). There are moments in the scientific pursuit when so-called ‘paradigm shifts’

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<sup>14</sup>Examples of the ‘essential sacrifice’ might be Socrates drinking the hemlock or Nelson Mandela going to prison for his ideal of a just society without the prospect of ever being released.

occur, such as in the discovery of Newton's or Einstein's laws of physics. However, these moments are strictly speaking philosophical or, to be more precise, ontological achievements, as they change our understanding of the nature of entities. All these works mentioned above set up a world. This is more primordial than just providing a set of assumptions for people to think about.

By the opening up of a world, all things gain their lingering and hastening, their remoteness and nearness, their scope and limits. (UdK: 31/OWA: 170)

According to Heidegger, works set up and produce a world. Each work creates references so that, in the first instance, what occurs shows up for humans, and also so that it shows itself 'as' what it shows up as. As the work sets up a world, it is also that which 'truth establishes itself in' (UdK: 49/OWA: 186–187).

The actuality of the work has been defined by that which is at work in the work, by the happening of truth. (UdK: 45/OWA: 182)

The work sets up a world and, as said earlier, is defined by the happening of truth. In other words, by setting up a world, the work makes entities intelligible. Works therefore carry with them an interpretation of what it means for entities to be. Without the work there is no truth. Truth needs the work. But, as mentioned earlier, truth always also means un-truth. Thus, by unconcealing entities and issues, the work also conceals them. The interpretation provided by the work is always finite and never ultimate. Thus, what is true is always also un-true. This does not mean that truth is always wrong or false or that the opposite is equally true. It merely means that, in every revealing, something remains hidden or concealed and that this concealment is not apparent but remains denied. Thus, the work as the happening of truth is always and in each case also the happening of un-truth.

The essence of truth, that is, of unconcealment, is dominated throughout by a denial. Yet this denial is not a defect or a fault, as though truth were an unalloyed unconcealment that has rid itself of everything concealed. If truth could accomplish this, it would no longer be itself. *This denial, in the form of a double concealment, belongs to the essence of truth as unconcealment.* Truth, in its essence, is un-truth. We put the matter this way in order to serve notice, with a possibly surprising sharpness; that denial in the manner of concealment belongs to unconcealment as clearing. (UdK: 41/OWA: 179–180)

Works, by setting up a world, also open up an a priori understanding of the Being of entities and of Being as such (UdK: 25/OWA: 165). From a fundamental ontological perspective, works do participate in Being and, therefore, by definition have an ethical import if ethics is understood originally as pondering the abode of humans, which is first and foremost Being itself (Hum 47: LoH: 258).

The world that is set up makes the natural environment intelligible. Heidegger calls this natural environment 'earth'. The work sets up and erects a world and, at the same time, produces 'earth'. *Earth*, in the way that Heidegger uses the word, can be understood as all the entities that are already there, although they are not yet disclosed as entities without the work and the world that make them intelligible. *Earth* is what is already naturally given, but without the work and world remains undisclosed. In Heidegger's thought, there is a constant tension between the way the earth



shows up in a world and how the world is influenced by the earth. The interpretation of the earth when honestly confronted always makes it abundantly clear that we will never fully understand what is naturally given, and the interpretations of a world always fall short of fully describing the earth. Genuine works establish this tension between *world* and *earth*, and do so by having the earth show up as something that is showing itself as never fully known, never completely understood or ever fully mastered, and thereby in some fundamental way mysterious. An original work performs this setting forth of the earth by relating itself back to this very earth by the materials that are being used in creating a work, which in some way come from this same earth. For example, by using a certain type of stone a sculptor puts his or her sculpture in a certain relation to the natural environment in which the sculpture is placed. By using indigenous materials for creating a sculpture, for example, the sculpture will link itself back to its environment by repeating it. If the artist creates the sculpture with a material that is alien to the environment where the sculpture is put up, it brings forth the earth as something distinct from this work of art. In both cases, the earth remains open to question and mysterious, rather than fully explained and obvious. Another example is the creation of a nation state. Before a nation state is created there is already a territory with fauna, flora and people living there. The fact of founding a state makes the humans joint citizens, makes the territory the homeland and makes the animals and plants the home environment for everyone who lives there. It is the work that gives ‘things their look and to humans their outlook on themselves’ (UdK: 29/OWA: 168). *Earth* is to be understood as the natural material situation. This situation only gets disclosed in ‘the world’ (Schwan, 1989a: 22). At the same time the identity of every nation state is shaped by the natural environment in which the nation state is established. The successful work thus both sets up the world and interprets the material situation, the earth, in its own way.

That into which the work sets itself back and which it causes to come forth in this setting back of itself we call the earth. Earth is that which comes forth and shelters. Earth, irreducibly spontaneous, is effortless and untiring. Upon the earth and in it, historical man grounds his dwelling in the world. In setting up a world, the work sets forth the earth. This setting forth must be thought here in the strict sense of the word. The work moves the earth itself into the open region of a world and keeps it there. *The work lets the earth be an earth.* (UdK: 32/OWA: 172)

Every deciding happens within a world and earth. Every world both opens up possibilities and limits them. These limitations call for new works and new interpretations of the earth that open up new possibilities but will, by their very nature, bring new limitations with them. Any new work must already in some way respond to already given works, the given world and earth. Humans can never act or understand outside the hermeneutic circle, but can always – within the hermeneutic circle – go beyond a given interpretation.

Works also give people their outlook on themselves (UdK: 29/OWA: 168). They create an a priori understanding of what it means to be human. For humans to encounter each other they need to share a world. When this fails, we say about two people or communities of humans that they are ‘worlds apart’. Humans need works to become communities. Humans who do not encounter each other within a



world set up by works would, as Schwan points out, not encounter each other as human beings. Humans only meet each other as fellow humans in a world (Schwan, 1989a: 19). One could think of the situation of settlers or colonialists landing in new territory. The natives of this new land appear to the settlers as something strange, animal-like and not as fellow human beings; equally, to the natives, the settlers show up in a curious, non-human fashion. Works create community, a sense of belonging together, shared meaning and a shared understanding of what it is to be a human being. The work creates the possibility for a common history. Humans who do not encounter each other within a shared world are merely occurrent and cannot be with each other as humans. They are not present as humans, but are just occurrent somewhere. They can only become fellow human beings when they meet each other in a shared world. Only then can humans understand each other. It is a work that sets up the world in which humans can form relationships with each other as humans. It is thus the work that allows us to be humans, both as individuals and within a community (Schwan, 1989b: 19).

Only in such a spaciousness, only in the world that is opened through the work of art, poetry, thinking, religion and political community, only in the world that is united and formed by such works to a historic community of humans who by these works have a found meaning in common historical fate i.e. being passed over and discovered, so that they can experience, take over and design, only there is a fact of the matter and happens the encounter from one human to another human. Humans who do not encounter each other in this world-ness, who thus are outside of a particular historical life environment that is characterized by a work, are somewhere or were somewhen also 'available', are thus not relevant for the human beings in the environment of their historically determined world. (Schwan, 1989a: 19)

Though, even if we don't encounter humans in a shared world we can still remember, that they are openness-for-Being and therefore the possibility exists that we create a shared world within which they can and do show up and be related to as fellow humans.

As this is a fundamental ontological inquiry the question that arises is how works and Being relate to each other? Unlike mere physical objects or non-human organisms, works have a particular relation to Being. As Heidegger points out works lead to a change in Being:

The working of the work does not consist in the taking effect of a cause. It lies in a change, happening from out of the work, of the unconcealment of entities, and this means, of Being. (UdK: 60/OWA: 197)

As Polt points out, by embodying the strife between *world* and *earth*, a work shelters the truth of Being (Polt, 1999: 149). The work grounds and maintains the clearing that is Being and in this sense shelters the truth of Being (see also GA65: 389ff./CtP: 271ff.).

One of the things that distinguishes a work from an impressive mountain, for example, is that a work is created (UdK: 13–14, 45/OWA: 154, 183). Impressive phenomena in nature may put us in touch with nature, or *earth*, as Heidegger would say, but they themselves do not create a world. It is people who create works, and works, by setting up a world, give people – including the ones who created the work – an outlook on themselves. People create works, which in turn reveal people. By creating a work, people as openness-for-Being understand themselves in (the)

terms of the work. It is not possible to be an artist without creating art and one becomes an artist only by creating art. No one can create art and not be an artist. The creativity that we call art and allows for the creation of works cannot be controlled. It creates the work, which sets up the world, which reveals the artist. One does not understand a work by analysing the artist, but by having a sense for the world it sets up (NI: 474/niii: 4; HDic: 18).

To give an example: Nelson Mandela, as perhaps *the* person at the centre of the creation of a democratic South Africa, is now himself given a certain identity by the world that is set up by this new-found dispensation. As a matter of fact, within the democratic South Africa he is not only a mere human being, but also has become an 'institution' and thus a work himself. This becomes apparent when he attends an event and this event takes on a transformed meaning by his mere presence there.

Every work needs to be created, but also to be attended.<sup>15</sup> This means that the work only sets up a world when people put themselves into the presence of the work and stand in the world that is set up by the work. The work can only establish a world and keep itself and this world in existence by being attended to.

A work cannot be a work without those who attend to it. (UdK: 54–55/OWA: 191–192)

One example could be a symphony. A symphony is not a work if it is played by an MP3 player in an empty room without anybody listening, because it can only set up a world if it is performed, meaning played *and* listened to. When humans create and attend to a work, they move beyond just being a part of the world and also participate in generating a world. The world and the truth that are created by genuine and original works are never arbitrary. They always respond to a historical situation and take into full account the given environment they are placed in and bring forth the entities in it in their very nature.

### ***The Work as the Ontological Ascertainment of the Corporation***

The entities that the corporation has been compared to, namely physical objects, non-human organisms and human beings have been identified as metaphorical understandings of the corporation. The remaining way of understanding the corporation would be to understand it as a case of the type of entity called a work. Three conclusions to the project set out in this book are now possible in principle. One conclusion could be that the corporation is not a work either. This could mean that either there would be one or more types of entities that are real or exist, but that Heidegger has not discussed them, or that corporations are not entities in their own right in the first instance. The other conclusion could be that the corporation is a literal case of a work. Since the project of this book is to apply Heidegger's thinking to ascertain the very nature of the type of entity, the possibility that Heidegger

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<sup>15</sup>Heidegger uses the word 'bewahren,' which means 'preserve' and 'sustain', but is derived from the word 'wahr', which means true. The translation of 'bewahren' as 'attendance' and 'to attend to' tries to capture the connotation of *being present in a serving capacity* (OxDic: 69).

overlooked other possible types of entities will be discarded as falling outside of 'the brief' of the undertaking. The notion of the corporation not being an entity at all is discarded on the simple grounds that there seems to be no other possibility within Heidegger's thought to then ascertain what a corporation could be regarded as. Consequently, the following is based on the assumption that the corporation is a case of the type of entity that is called 'a work.'

Suggesting that the corporation is a case of a work is not meant as a final answer that does not leave room for further questioning and investigation. Rather, this suggestion is meant as a promising starting point for assessing the validity of existing thinking about corporations and to provoke further question at the ontological level. Indeed, within the project of original ethics it is critical to continue to do so. If this book was a scientific undertaking, the simple suggestion that the corporation is a case of a work would quite clearly be a rather unsatisfying way to proceed, because this chapter would never be able to prove, but only suggest, that the corporation is a case of a work. However, this is an ontological or – to be more precise – fundamental ontological undertaking. Ontology is never able to prove anything, since to prove something one needs a referential whole or pre-understanding within which proof can be deduced. Ontology in this case is concerned specifically with the very nature of this referential whole and pre-understanding. Since it is an ontological undertaking that uses hermeneutics as a method, it is illuminating to come back to the methodological point of departure. What is being attempted here is to make a suggestion that is then evaluated in the sense that Madison (1990) has suggested and that has been pointed out earlier. Thus, rather than demonstrate or theoretically deduct a conclusion, the reader is now asked to judge the text below by its ability to be persuasive and practical – by asking what is the genuine potential contribution of this way of thinking. The path to be followed is to then apply this contribution and see what opens up. The 'proof' for making a valid ontological statement is that it allows appropriate access to this type of entity, opens up new and powerful avenues of dealing with this type of entity and provides a sense of clarity, freedom and ease in dealing with the type of entity. The path that needs to be followed to fulfil this task is to make the perspective of the corporation as a work accessible and understandable, which is the task of the remainder of this chapter. This will be followed in the subsequent chapters by working out specifically and in appropriate detail what kind of a work the corporation is – in other words, how the corporation as a work can be distinguished from other works – and then by building avenues to show how this view can illuminate the practice of appropriately dealing with this kind of entity. In the context of an original ethics in the Heideggerian sense, the inquiry would then be to explore whether and to what degree the corporation sets up a world and truth of Being and its import on ethics and ethical conduct.

### **Considering the Corporation as a Work**

To make the notion of the corporation a bit more vivid, we will consider the following example: You walk into the corporate headquarters of Pilsner Urquell, a premium beer brewed in Plzen in the Czech Republic. As you walk through the gate

at the main entrance, there already is a certain atmosphere that surrounds the place. Everything exudes tradition. The people who work for this company have a certain identity. They walk like pilsner brewers, they talk like pilsner brewers and they think like pilsner brewers. There are certain truths in this business, such as 'we know how to make good beer'. The town of Plzen is known for its beer and would be a very different place without the brewery. When SABMiller bought the company, their first move was to let everybody know that they do not see themselves as 'owners' but as 'custodians' of the brewery. Some of these truths about Pilsner Urquell may not be articulated anywhere and are taken for granted by everyone who works there or deals with this corporation. Dealing with this company and participating in it means submitting to a world. It seems that the motivation for people to buy the beer is not only the taste and quality of the beer, but a wish to participate in this world. The brewery gives humans such as suppliers, employees, patrons and beer drinkers a common background that allows them to encounter each other in a certain way. According to Heidegger, people always need this shared world, which is set up by works, so that they can meet each other as humans in the first instance. Since this world is set up by works, it should be clear that any community can never be just an accumulation of individuals, but is revealed as 'fellow human beings' by a world that was set up by a work. In Heidegger's thinking it is untenable to understand the corporation as merely an accumulation of people. The corporation must be a work so that people can encounter each other as humans and as fellow employees, suppliers, customers etc. While the Pilsner Urquell brewery may in some ways be an atypical corporation, it nevertheless is in many respects still a corporation. Why this corporation is atypical will become clearer in the following chapters.

To elaborate further on the perspective of the corporation as a work, this notion will be compared to that of Morgan's metaphors of organisations and Mintzberg's strategic schools of thought that have not yet been covered under the other types of entities. This will permit a view of whether they are in harmony with the corporation as a work. The metaphors of Morgan that are in harmony with the notion of the corporation as a work would then lose their status as a metaphor and become a literal description of either the corporation as such or of aspects of the corporation. Secondly, it will look at those characteristics that Heidegger holds to be existential to the kind of entity that works are, which were laid out above, and explore whether corporations can legitimately be seen as entities that have those existential features.

Morgan's so-called metaphors that have not yet been looked at or have not been fully captured as examples of regarding the corporation as a case of physical objects, non-human organisms or humans are those of the corporation as culture, political system, flux and transformation and as instrument of domination. In this chapter, the notions of the organisation as culture, political system and flux and transformation will be dealt with. The notion of organisations as instruments of domination and some aspects of organisations as political systems, which will be an outflow of the discussion in this chapter, will be dealt with in the following chapter since, as will be pointed out, they are considered expressions of the kind of world that corporations tend to set up and produce, rather than as an existential feature of a work per se. The remaining schools of strategic thought for Mintzberg's are the power school,

the cultural school and the configuration school, which will all be dealt with in this chapter. It needs to be made clear that neither Morgan nor Mintzberg develop their arguments from within a Heideggerian vocabulary, and they will therefore never fit seamlessly. At best they will describe characteristics that point in a similar direction as Heidegger's existential features of works.

Some overlap between Morgan (1997) and Mintzberg et al. (1998) should already be visible here. Both Morgan and Mintzberg use culture as a distinctive label for a way of thinking, thus this perspective will be dealt with first. Secondly, we will deal with Mintzberg's 'power school', which has the subtitle 'Strategy formation as a process of negotiation', and Morgan's notion of 'organisations as political systems', which deals with 'interests, conflict and power'. Thirdly, we will deal in tandem with Mintzberg's 'configuration school', which regards 'strategy as a process of transformation', and Morgan's view of organisations as flux and transformation, which focuses on the 'unfolding logic of change'.

### **The Corporation as Cultural**

Some terms need to be 'translated' when one looks at cultures and the notion of a work. Polt says that 'a world can be interpreted as a culture: that is a system of meanings that makes it possible for a group of people to understand themselves and their environment' (Polt, 1999: 137). Heidegger does not prominently use the word culture in his philosophy, since he sees the notion of culture as an objectification of something that is then perceived subjectively. Cultural entities will consequently become the objects of conscious preservation and planning and humans will see the creation of these cultural objects as something that is a path to personal mastery and perfection (EM: 35–36/IM: 47–48), while Heidegger sees works as a way to set up the world that gives us that 'within' in which we can be who we are in the first instance. In this sense, the word 'culture' is a Cartesian impoverishment of the notion of works and worlds. In the Cartesian sense, looking at the Eiffel Tower as a cultural object would not be incorrect, although, according to Heidegger, it does not get us to understand its very nature as a work and its role in the setting up of a world. Rather, it becomes an object that can be grasped in a scientific sense. While Mintzberg et al. (1998: 265) first state that culture is 'collective cognition', they later move, with reference to Johnson (1992), to an understanding that seems to be closer to Heidegger's term 'world' by stating that it is something that eludes conscious awareness, lives as taken-for-granted assumption, and is something that is protected by a web of cultural artefacts (think: works) and that includes the way people behave, the narratives they tell and that which is historical (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 266; Johnson, 1992: 30). Morgan defines culture as a word 'to signify that different groups of people have different ways of life' (Morgan, 1997: 120), which is an understanding of culture that is easily compatible with Heidegger's notion of people living in different worlds. However, Morgan also moves back and forth between an understanding of culture as social construction or symbolism and of culture as a background that is taken for granted and shows humans who they are (Morgan, 1997: 119–152). In this regard it is interesting to explore the suggested

major limitations that both Mintzberg and Morgan see in the view of the corporation as a cultural entity and to ask whether these limitations stem from the conclusion that corporations are in fact not cultural, or, because the notion of a culture comes – as Heidegger points out – one step too late by regarding the corporation as themselves being a culture, as the word is commonly understood, rather that corporations are works that create a world.

It is noteworthy that Morgan talks about ‘risks’ rather than ‘limitations’ when emphasising the potential limitations of that which he calls the ‘cultural metaphor’. This indicates that to regard the corporation as a culture is not incorrect or lacks legitimacy in certain aspects, but rather is something that needs a great deal of responsibility. The first risk that he mentions is the risk of managers consciously employing totalitarian and manipulative tactics (Morgan, 1997: 150–151). This is an important insight and one that will be explored further in the remainder of this book. Whether one focuses on the cultural aspects of a corporation or regards the corporation as a work that sets up a world, it is critical to bear in mind that not every culture and not every work empowers people to develop in their very nature in equally appropriate ways. The notion of the corporation as a work should serve to bring this risk into sharper focus.

The second problem raised by both Mintzberg et al. and Morgan is the issue that culture is (mis-)understood ‘as a phenomenon with clearly defined attributes. Like organisational structure, culture is often reduced to a set of discrete variables such as values, beliefs, stories, norms, and rituals that can be documented and manipulated in an instrumental way’ (Morgan, 1997: 151). This concurs directly with Heidegger’s critique of viewing works as cultural and thereby turning them into physical objects. It should also not come as a surprise that Cartesian thinkers fault the cultural school for ‘conceptual vagueness’ (i. e. Mintzberg et al., 1998: 280). Quite clearly, works cannot be understood from a scientific point of view and ‘the “hard” methods of social science are bound to miss the point of a phenomenon as ethereal as culture, much as they have in the study of leadership’ (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 281). This is in line with Morgan’s warning against thinking that cultures can be fully understood from the viewpoint of an independent observer (Morgan, 1997: 151). A world is never something that can be described from ‘outside’ in a scientific manner. In this sense, the notion of culture as an accumulation of objects that can be understood by an independent observer represents an impoverished understanding that cuts us off from the primordial understanding of these entities as works.

Mintzberg criticises the cultural school for discouraging necessary change because it favours supporting a given culture, since culture is difficult to build but easy to destroy.

The problem with the discourse on culture in general (...) is that [it] explain[s] too easily what exists, rather than the tough questions of what can come into being. (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 282)

In principle, Mintzberg once again shows us a limitation that stems from seeing the organisation as a culture, rather than regarding it as a work. He points out the limitations of seeing it – to put it in Heideggerian terminology – as a physical object, which is a danger in viewing it through the ill-defined terminology typically

associated with the discourse on organisational culture, rather than as a work that sets up a world. As argued here, the possibility of making a difference in a primordial sense is already lost when corporations are dealt with on the level of the commonsensical understanding of culture. The primordial view of corporations as works may not give easy answers to how to create a work that sets up a world, but, as is argued throughout this entire book, it provides a starting point from where the locus of responsibility and ethics can be established and consequently an original difference can be made. It seems promising to build on the ontological foundation developed in this book to overcome the conceptual vagueness that Mintzberg et al. critique and avenues to overcome them. A foundation for this will be laid later in dealing with the notions of creating and attendance.

Considering the corporation as a work means that it is an entity that sets up and produces a world and thereby also produces that which is commonly referred to as a 'culture'. Since looking at culture comes in one step too late, it can give us hints about the symptoms of the failure of a work, but, since it does not get to the source, it is not capable of directing action towards those areas that are at the source and therefore are where the difference can be made. This highlights the importance of what is to follow, namely the need to understand the very nature of those actions that create a work and thus set up a world. Viewing the corporation as cultural seems to be a hint, couched in Cartesian vocabulary, of the corporation being a work that sets up a world.

It needs to be reiterated, however, that there is a wide variety of ontological assumptions in the various schools of thought regarding culture, some of which understand organisational and corporate culture in objective terms, while others are quite close to understanding culture in the sense of Heidegger's notion of 'world'.

This leads to another question: 'Who actually has the power to determine the world that is set up and who gains power by virtue of the way the world is set up?' This will be discussed in the following section.

### **The Corporation as Political**

Heidegger does not explicitly make comments about issues of power in the sense of the word power being used in connection with the corporation, which carries with it a connotation of politicking, negotiation, competition, backstabbing and the like (Mintzberg, 1983). However, he makes the following telling comment about works:

As a world opens itself, it passes victory and defeat, blessing and curse, mastery and slavery over to a historical humanity for a verdict. The dawning world brings out what is as yet undecided and measureless, and thus discloses the hidden necessity of measure and decisiveness. (UdK: 50/OWA: 187–188)

In other words, *world* sets up the possibility and, at the same time, the necessity for setting up the political. The work, by setting up a world, opens up the domain of the necessarily political. De Beistegui, a prominent scholar of the political aspects of Heidegger's thought, makes the following remark about organisations in general:

The political does indeed constitute a mode of organisation of beings, a way in which words, things and actions come together, but this gathering happens on the basis of a historical-destinal constellation of which the political is only a crystallisation. (De Beistegui, 1998: 6)



It is critical to distinguish ‘the political’ from politics. The political would be the world and truth in which entities come together and politics would be the game of formulating and achieving goals, negotiation, domination and power struggles. Politics always needs the political as the domain in which it can unfold. It seems that most scholars who address the subject focus on politics (Crozier, 1964; Etzioni, 1964; Lindblom, 1968; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978) and have little regard for ‘the political’, which allows for politics in the first instance. A work is always political and the corporation is no exception. This does not mean that the very nature of the corporation as being a work already decides who in each concrete case is the master and who is the slave, or how people will live together and what roles they will play. However, as will be elaborated further in the following chapter, there is a need to gain an understanding of the kind of world that the corporation sets up and how this world shapes the political within the corporation and legitimises or de-legitimises certain political actions.

Neither Morgan nor Mintzberg see the limitations of the metaphor of the organisation as a political system in relation to understanding the organisation appropriately. However, both Morgan and Mintzberg detect a tendency for seeing anything political purely as a ruthless competition that is fought with all kinds of hidden agendas (Morgan, 1997: 212; Mintzberg et al., 1998: 260). This is only one version of the way that political games can be played. According to both Mintzberg and Morgan, the political has usually been seen as something negative, although they both state that the political dimension of the corporation can be both constructive and destructive and in this sense ethical or unethical, regardless of which line of ethical reasoning is applied.

Mintzberg criticises the power school for overemphasising power and power struggles, rather than looking at the political patterns that give rise to those power struggles and at cooperative behaviour (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 260–261). In Cartesian terms, Morgan concludes that . . .

[a]s a result, the political metaphor may overstate the power and importance of the individual and underplay the systems dynamics that determine what becomes political and how politics occurs. (Morgan, 1997: 213)

This concurs with the context of this book. In the following chapter we will further explore that which determines ‘what becomes political and how politics occurs’, although the political can only be understood superficially by associating it with systems dynamics rather than locating it within a world set up by a work. As mentioned, any world is inherently political as it provides the ground of community as explained by Schwan (1989a).

### **The Corporation as Transformational**

Morgan’s metaphor of the ‘organisation as flux and transformation’ (Morgan, 1997: 251ff.) and Mintzberg et al.’s configuration school, which views ‘strategy as a process of transformation’ (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 301ff.), both highlight the issue of *transformation*. Morgan’s chapter on the organisation as flux and transformation is riddled with metaphors of the corporation as physical object, organism and human, which he uses to come to grips with the notion of transformation. Morgan



presents a whole number of approaches for understanding transformation that are derived from the notions of autopoiesis (i.e. Luhmann, 1995), chaos and complexity theory (i.e. Stacey, 1992), systems thinking (i.e. Weick, 1979) and dialectics (i.e. Allen, 1975; Heydebrand, 1977). While none of them regard the corporation as a work, it is argued here that these writers work with an inherently incomplete understanding of the corporation's very nature. These approaches lead Morgan to the conclusion that transformation is a phenomenon that ultimately cannot be controlled, a notion that will have to be explored further in the remainder of this book. Mintzberg et al.'s (1998) chapter on the configuration school sets out to give each one of the other nine schools of thought a place by showing that different configurations are based on different understandings of the corporation. In the context of the project at hand, transformation is to be understood as changing Being itself and by doing so altering the a priori understanding of entities. This understanding of transformation is broadly in line with, or at least not counter to, both Morgan's and Mintzberg et al.'s implicit understanding of transformation. Heidegger describes the type of change that is generated by the work and that is called 'transformation' in the following way:

The working of the work does not consist in the taking effect of a cause. It lies in a change, happening from out of the work, of the unconcealment of entities, and this means, of Being. (UdK: 60/OWA: 197)

A certain understanding of Being and the very nature of entities opens up a certain way of doing things. It generates and is reflected in certain appropriate configurations within the corporation to deal with the so-understood entities. As Mintzberg et al. put it:

These are really two sides of the same coin: if an organisation adopts states of being, then strategy making becomes a process of leaping from one state to another. In other words, transformation is an inevitable consequence of configuration. There is a time for coherence and a time for change. (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 302)

This can easily be read as putting emphasis on either one of the two aspects of handling works as works: creating and attendance [German: *bewahren*]. In times of transformation, strategy predominantly is about creating a work that sets up a desired world and in times of stability (or configuration, as Mintzberg et al. (1998) put it), strategy is more focussed on attending (to) the work and building and maintaining its integrity in the sense of making sure that all aspects of the corporation contribute fully to setting up the same world consistently. Long periods of attendance and stability and short periods of altering the work to set up a new world (with the inevitable unsettledness that comes with that) alternate. In different corporate epochs, different understandings of types of entities take a dominant form. Mintzberg et al. (1998) express these different understandings of Being and the very nature of entities in different configurations. Each one of these understandings of entities has, so to speak, its own demise built into it. While it cannot be seen from the outset, there will come a time when this way of being will become obsolete and a new way of understanding what it means to be or Being will emerge.

A genuine beginning, as a leap, is always a head start, in which every thing to come is already leaped over, even if as something still veiled. The beginning already contains the end latent within itself. (UdK: 64/OWA: 201)

Mintzberg et al. (1998) critique the configuration school for simplifying the different configurations and for lacking an understanding of nuances. This is done to bring order to the messy world of corporate strategy. Heidegger would agree that an understanding of entities and Being can never be fully articulated and that simplifications are therefore necessary and not particularly problematic, as long as they are acknowledged as such. It seems noteworthy that Morgan does not see any limitations to the metaphor of the organisation as flux and transformation. He merely cautions that, since we can never be in control of transformation and because we can understand transformation only with hindsight, the Cartesian thinker might be compelled to give up and abdicate any responsibility in the domain of transformation (Morgan, 1997: 300). Quite clearly, neither the creating of a work nor the consequences of the world that is set up are entirely predictable. In line with what has been set out above, it seems that transformation is an existential feature of any work. Works always transform our a priori understanding of the very nature of entities by either changing or further stabilising it. Thus, transformation is not a metaphor, but an existential feature and a literal aspect of the corporation as a work.

Morgan states that the transformation metaphors. . .

(. . .) seek to fathom the nature and source of change so that we can understand its logic. As has been shown, this has immense significance for how we understand and manage, for if there is an inner logic to the changes that shape our world, it may be possible to understand and manage change at a new and higher level. Instead of just responding to discrete events as novel happenings, we may be able to influence the processes that produce them. (Morgan, 1997: 298)

This is what this book seeks to accomplish through entertaining the notion of the corporation as a work.

Morgan (1997), explicitly, and Mintzberg et al. (1998), implicitly, present a view that corporations can legitimately be described in terms of metaphors of the corporation and its organisation as a culture, as political and as transformation. It was found that their critiques of these descriptions never took the form of showing that aspects of the corporation could not be described in these terms, but rather that there are possible misunderstandings of the terms themselves that need to be guarded against. While neither Morgan nor Mintzberg et al. present a Heideggerian view of the corporation and do not present their thinking in Heideggerian terminology, their understanding of corporations as cultural, political and transformational is broadly in harmony with the notion of the corporation as a work. Since this chapter ascertains the very nature of corporations as works, this changes their status from metaphorical descriptions to aspects of literal descriptions and the description of existential features of corporations in their very nature.

If corporations are considered as works, they are the kinds of entities that set up a world. By doing so, they create an a priori understanding of entities. This creates the background for a culture; it sets up the space of the political playing field; and it is

fundamentally transformational. Two questions result from this preliminary sketch of the notion of the corporation as a work. The first one is: What kind of a work is the corporation and how can the corporation be distinguished from other types of works? The second one is derived from the notion that works can be understood by the world they set up. Subsequently, the second question is: What kind of a world is the corporation setting up? The following chapter will illuminate these questions and elaborate on the consequences of the answers that are given to them.

In summary, from a fundamental ontological perspective corporations as being works have a direct relation to Being. By setting up a world they set up the openness of Being. By embodying the strife between *world* and *earth*, the work in general and the corporation in particular shelters the truth of Being (Polt, 1999: 149). If we understand an original ethics in the sense of pondering Being as the primordial abode of human beings, then understanding the corporation as a work provides a foundation for corporate ethics itself. Original corporate ethics then is to think the truth of Being in the world set up by the corporation generally and the variations thereof in each particular corporation.

## Chapter 3

# The Corporation as Technological Work and the Nature of Management

Having demonstrated the notion of the corporation as a work, the question is what kind of a work the corporation is and what kind of a world it is setting up. As Heidegger indicates, one way to distinguish works could be achieved by looking at the material that they are made of. In this context, a painting is made of paint, a work of music is made of sounds, architecture uses building materials like bricks and mortar, etc. (UdK: 4/OWA: 145). To distinguish corporations from other types of works in this way does not seem possible in the case of the corporation, since corporations are made up of corporate architecture (bricks, mortar, etc.), corporate image and brands (colour etc.), statements (words) and many more materials and media. Because the material is not singular or limited to a certain group of materials, it cannot be a distinguishing criterion. If not by the material, how then can the corporation be distinguished from other works? Another possibility for distinguishing works is by distinguishing the types of worlds they set up. Since the corporation cannot be distinguished by the predominance of a material that is used in creating this work, it seems appropriate to distinguish the corporation along the lines of the kind of world it creates and how entities are revealed in this world. In this sense, the two questions, ‘how can the corporation be distinguished from other works?’ and ‘what kind of a world is the corporation setting up?’ turn out to be answered by one and the same question: How is the world that the corporation is setting up distinct from the world that other works set up? This question is the starting point for this chapter.

With reference to works, Heidegger states that ‘by the opening up of a world, all things gain their lingering and hastening, their remoteness and nearness, their scope and limits’ (UdK: 31/OWA: 170). But in what way do things get ‘their lingering and hastening, their remoteness and nearness, their scope and their limits’ in the corporation? Heidegger never explicitly deals with the corporation, although he makes a few remarks about industry and the organisation (i.e. FnT: 18, 21/QCT: 15, 18; ID: 24/IaD: 35, Gel: 16–18/MA: 49–50), and it can be assumed that what he calls ‘the organisation’ is the same or similar to what is called ‘the organisation of the corporation’ or ‘the corporation’ in the context of this book.<sup>1</sup> All of these remarks occur

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<sup>1</sup>There is not a direct translation for the English word ‘corporation’ in German. The two words that are closest to the word ‘corporation’ as used by Heidegger are ‘Organisation’ and ‘Betrieb’.

in the context of exploring his notion of what he terms ‘technology’. This is taken as a hint and starting point to explore both the Heideggerian notion of technology and its possible relation to the corporation. As will be pointed out below, the way in which Heidegger uses the word ‘technology’ does not refer to technical instruments, but rather to a way of revealing in the same sense as *world* reveals. To answer the question relating to the kind of distinct world the corporation is setting up, the task will be to work out Heidegger’s understanding of the very nature of technology.

## Heidegger’s Term ‘Technology’

When there is talk about technology, it usually refers to sophisticated instruments and processes to achieve specific ends. Examples of this would be communication technologies, hydrogen bombs, pebble bed reactors and high-speed trains. These instruments are means to certain ends. Building and using these means comes with benefits and costs, opportunities and dangers. While there seems to be a lot of public talk about the dangers of technological devices such as nuclear reactors, Heidegger views these dangers as secondary. He acknowledges the risks related to the use of certain instruments, but points to a much more profound danger in technology:

What is dangerous is not technology. There is no demonry of technology, but rather there is the mystery of its very nature. (FnT: 31–32/QCT: 28)

Heidegger is not taking up a position for, against, or even neutral to technology, when ‘technology’ refers to means that come in the form of machinery, processes, gadgets, technological instruments and devices. Heidegger does not talk ‘against’ technology in a way that shuns every technical device from human life.<sup>2</sup> When Heidegger critiques technology, he goes deeper than merely exploring the consequences of building and employing these instruments. He states that. . .

Technology is not the same as the very nature of technology. (FnT: 9/QCT: 4)

What Heidegger brings into question is the taken-for-granted totality or significant whole that reveals everything in such a way that humans are compelled to develop and employ all of these technical instruments and gadgets. Heidegger holds that the proliferation of these instruments that we usually refer to when we use the word ‘technology’ is a result of a revealing and a truth, which is the very nature of technology.

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‘Betrieb’ is a word that could be translated as ‘hustle’, ‘busyness’, ‘business’, ‘firm’, ‘company’ or ‘corporation’. The word ‘organisation’ is the same in English as in German, except for the fact that nouns in German are spelt with a capital first letter. In Heidegger’s texts, the word ‘Betrieb’, similarly to ‘industry’ and ‘organisation’, appears in connection with notions of technology and the critique of the Cartesian tradition and science (SZ: 178/BT: 222).

<sup>2</sup>In his personal life, though, Heidegger preferred to keep things simple, basic and frugal and he steered clear of technological gadgets and devices as much as possible (Safranski, 1994).

Technology in its very nature is not a means towards an end, nor is it an end in itself. Its very nature is beyond the domain of end and mean, a domain which is ascertained by original realising and thus is determined as the real.<sup>3</sup> (GA 79: 62)

Technology as a way of revealing is therefore self-sufficient, just like the world set up by a work in Heidegger's sense. It is not something that is created in order to achieve a certain outcome.

Technology is therefore no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing. If we give heed to this, then another whole realm for the essence of technology will open itself up to us. It is the realm of revealing, i.e., of truth. (FnT: 12/QCT: 12)

Heidegger's term 'technology' refers to a way of revealing in which everything shows up in a purely instrumental way. Technology is a revealing in which everything is disclosed as resource or asset and is explored in terms of its utility in the sense of being exploited and employed to produce a return. Everything in nature reveals itself as a resource that is to be stored, controlled and utilised. Stones, for example, are revealed as a source of minerals, animals are taken out of their inherited relations and fitted into the production process, and human beings are revealed and managed as human resources and human capital (GA 79: 43). Time is revealed as a resource that is chopped into discrete units, the utilisation of which is to be maximised, and this leads to an endless frenzy. Language is revealed as a medium to transport data and information, which is then used towards achieving some pre-defined end. Technological revealing is the celebration of the achievement of total unambiguity in interpretation, along with total security and control. This way of being is perfectly expressed in a statement in the film 2001, when the robot HAL responds to the question about his satisfaction with the mission by saying:

I'm using my capacities to the maximum. What more could a rational entity want? (Re-quoted from Dreyfus (1993: 306))

... or in Bill Gates saying:

Just in terms of allocation of time resources, religion is not very efficient. (Re-quoted from Polt (1999: 171))

How are entities revealed within the very nature of modern technology? In his earlier work, Heidegger suggests that, within technology, everything – physical objects, animals, humans and works – is revealed as a physical object, but later he goes one step further in suggesting that, within the very nature of technology, everything shows up as an 'asset' [Bestand]. An asset is a specific type of object that is revealed in terms of commandeering and storing (FnT: 18f/QCT: 14f).

What kind of unconcealment is it, then, that is peculiar to that which comes to stand forth through this setting-upon that challenges? 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 further ordering. Whatever is ordered about in this way has its own standing. We call it the

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<sup>3</sup>The word realise [Wirken] is here understood as making something happen, as in saying 'I realised one of the dreams of my youth'. In a similar fashion, 'the real' [das Wirkliche] refers to that which makes something happen.

'asset' [Bestand]. The word expresses here something more, and something more essential than just 'stock'. The 'asset' assumes the rank of a title. It designates nothing less than the way in which everything presences that is wrought upon by the challenging revealing. Whatever stands by in the sense of the asset no longer stands over against us as object. (FnT: 20/QCT: 17)

In other words, what is encountered is not encountered in the sense of a physical object such as a stone, an entity whose very nature was pointed out earlier, but rather as a particular kind of entity that is called an 'asset'. While assets are objectified entities, they also already assume a certain function. An asset does not just lie around like a stone, but is something that is to be employed, something that can and is ordered to produce a maximum return. As an asset, everything becomes a 'component' [Stück] rather than a part [Teil] that is still inherently a part of a whole. A part always indicates the whole. Not so with a component. Components are not self-sufficient and yet they do not inevitably permit a backward conclusion about a whole that it came from. Components can be replaced, put and locked together in different ways and also indicate that the asset is not a whole, just an accumulation of components (GA 79: 36). A piece that has broken off a statue is in itself a piece of art and as such sets up a world itself. It still belongs to the statue and, by merely understanding the piece, one can get an idea of the statue that it belongs to. Not so with a bolt; a bolt can come from or go into a train, a car or a home appliance. Seeing a bolt does not provide an understanding of the machine that it came from and it can easily be replaced. The components within assets are to be forever manipulated to produce a maximum return.

Unlocking, transforming, storing, distributing, and switching about are ways of revealing. But the revealing never simply comes to an end. Neither does it run off into the intermediate. The revealing reveals to itself its own manifoldly interlocking paths, through regulating their course. This regulating itself is, for its part, everywhere secured. Regulating and securing even become the chief characteristics of the challenging revealing. (FnT: 20/QCT: 16)

The relation within technology to nature is determined in the same way. Rather than working with nature or bringing the 'earth' forth as an 'earth' as the artwork does, technology challenges and expedites nature. Technology demands energy and resources from nature so that they can be extracted and stored for further employment (FnT: 18/QCT: 14).

This setting up that challenges forth the energies of nature is an expediting in two ways. It expedites in that it unlocks and exposes. Yet that expediting is always itself directed from the beginning towards furthering something else, i.e., the driving on to the maximum yield at the minimum expense. (FnT: 19/QCT: 15)

Thus this expediting is not an expediting for some end in its own right. It is an expediting for the sake of further expediting and, in this sense, an expediting for its own sake. The commonsense understanding of technology as merely instrumental 'is therefore in principle untenable. And it cannot be rounded out by being referred back to some metaphysical or religious explanation that undergirds it' (FnT: 20/QCT: 21). In other words, according to Heidegger, any religious explanation such as the Protestant work ethic in the way it is currently understood would not be setting up

em-bankment, but would, within technology, turn out to be an ethic within or given by em-bankment.

## From World to Em-bankment

The totality that Heidegger calls ‘*world*’, as the very nature of technology, is no longer *world*. It is replaced by the very nature of technology, which Heidegger names ‘em-bankment’ [Ge-stell].<sup>4</sup> Em-bankment is of the same kind as *world* but it is not the same at all. Em-bankment also reveals entities, but this revealing happens purely in the terms of them being revealed as assets. Within that referential totality called ‘em-bankment’ everything is revealed as ‘bankable’, can be ‘banked’, ‘banked up’<sup>5</sup> and ‘banked upon’ to various degrees. According to Heidegger, the characteristic feature of the epoch that we are living in is that world has been replaced with em-bankment. The em-bankment is the very nature of technology (GA 79: 33).

As pointed out earlier, the hermeneutic ‘as’ is that which ontologically distinguishes humans from all other entities. Within the very nature of technology, this hermeneutic ‘as’ is replaced by a fixed relation within which everything shows up as an asset: physical objects, plants and animals, humans. Physical objects, plants and animals become providers of raw materials. Humans are revealed as entities that are resources and consequently are to be exploited. This form of human alienation will be elaborated on further below. Works do not show up as works at all, since it is the setting up of a world that distinguishes a work. Em-bankment only reveals that which can in some way be revealed as asset. A world itself cannot at all be revealed in terms of being an asset. Within em-bankment, a work like the Eiffel Tower would be a bunch of steel and a tourist attraction; a painting by Picasso would be a valuable piece in the art market; and music and theatre would be mere entertainment, the fulfilment of a need. Looking at these examples it is easy to see that the way that

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<sup>4</sup>The word ‘Ge-stell’ is usually translated an en-framing. ‘Ge-stell’ usually means ‘something put together’, as in the frame of a bed, a ‘rack’, although Heidegger seems to choose it primarily for the verb ‘stellen’, which means ‘to put, to place’. In many cases, the German words ‘stellen’ [put, bring to stand] or ‘stehen’ [stand] are used where the English word ‘sit’ would be appropriate. An example is that, in German, an asset [Bestand] would ‘stand’ [stehen] on the balance sheet, while in English an asset would sit on the balance sheet. The word asset carries with it a derivation of ‘sitting’, while the German translation of asset as ‘Bestand’ carries with it a derivation of ‘stehen’ [stand]. In many translations of Heidegger’s texts, the word ‘Bestand’ is translated as ‘standing reserve’. This misses the notion that ‘Be-stand’, which suggests that something stands, can in English be understood as something that ‘sits’. Thus, rather than translating ‘Bestand’ as ‘standing-reserve’, the literal translation of ‘Bestand’ as ‘asset’ seems to be more appropriate. In the context of technology, where everything is an asset, the more courageous translation of ‘Ge-stell’ is adopted. ‘Ge-stell’ is translated as ‘em-bankment’, which carries the connotation that what it does is ‘banking’ and ‘being sat’, rather than ‘standing up’ as ‘Ge-stell’ would suggest. An embankment of a river is also built to control the river and set it up (not ‘standing up’) for use, which is the connotation that is intended here.

<sup>5</sup>In the sense of ‘stored’.



em-bankment reveals entities is not incorrect, although it leads to an impoverished understanding of entities. After all, a painting by Picasso can also be traded on the art market and can be seen as an investment, but to understand the painting merely as an asset does not capture the artistic and world-causing aspects of the painting at all.

But the word 'em-bankment' [Ge-stell] does not here mean a tool or any kind of apparatus. Still less does it mean the general concept of such assets. The machines and apparatus are no more cases of kinds of em-bankment than the man at the switchboard and the engineer in the drafting room. Each of these in its own way indeed belongs as component, as asset, as orderer within the em-bankment, but the em-bankment is never the very nature of technology in the sense of genus. Em-bankment is a way of revealing having the character of the fateful, namely, the challenging. (FnT: 33/QCT: 29)

It needs to be borne in mind that em-bankment is of the same kind as *world*, although it is not a world, since it does not have the same richness in significance because every entity is simply revealed as asset within em-bankment. Within em-bankment humans don't show up as world-acquiring. Em-bankment is, like *world*, not something that can ever be encountered directly. It is an a priori understanding that makes everything intelligible in the first instance and it makes everything intelligible as an asset, as an entity that is to be commandeered and stored. For the modern human being, everything at first becomes intelligible as an asset. It is em-bankment that has anything show up at all for modern humans, since it is the significant whole that allows for anything to make sense in the first instance and that thus is the basis of intelligibility for modern humans.

While Heidegger does not name Descartes specifically as the cause of technology, he clearly states that the very nature of technology came about at a time that was also the lifetime of Descartes (GA 79: 43). Technological revealing finds its roots in the Cartesian dualism of the *res cognitans* and *res extensa*. Descartes started out with 'ego cogito sum', which put the human being (the *res cognitans*) at the centre of all concerns and then forces humans to make themselves secure and to dominate the external world (the *res extensa*). This is the genesis of technological revealing. The constitutive distinction between *res cognitans* and *res extensa* gives rise to everything being revealed first as an object in the *res extensa*, but also as an asset that is to be brought under the control of the human being. In Cartesian thought, the human being that one is oneself as *res cognitans* assumes a prominence by the mere fact that it is that which one has indubitable evidence for. For any human being it is only that human being that it calls 'me' itself for which it can have indubitable evidence for its existence in the 'cogito ergo sum'. From then on, everything is only intelligible and relevant in terms of being shaped for the benefit of that entity that one knows – which is oneself – for one's own security and benefit. This way of thinking brings legitimacy to seeing other humans as assets that are to be commandeered and controlled.

Heidegger clearly states that science, which objectifies everything in the way it deals with entities, began the kind of revealing that is the very nature of technology.

Even this, that man becomes the subject and the world the object, is a consequence of technology's nature establishing itself, and not the other way around. (WD: 290/WAPF: 112)

Science is the application of the very nature of technology (GA 79: 43). Science, in this sense, is not the cause of technology, but technology calls for science to fulfil its own project (FnT: 18/QCT: 14). Science is the work that repeats and reaffirms technological revealing. For the scientist as scientist, the world does not reveal itself in multitudinous ways. The scientist objectifies everything and scientific theory is an ‘entrapping and securing refining of the real’ (WB: 51–52/SR: 167). Within this way of revealing, everything is represented in endless chains of cause and effect. In being revealed that way, entities become amenable to experiment. It must be clear, however, that entities do not in and by themselves have this scientific character, but that they are revealed in this way within technology. It should then be no surprise that every scientific experiment, in exploring entities and relations in cause and effect relations, and by producing a ‘correct’<sup>6</sup> outcome according to science, seems to make it ever more obvious every time an experiment is conducted that everything happens in terms of cause and effect because it explains the outcome in these terms (Lovitt, 1977: XXVI–XXVII).

As explained earlier, *world* provides to possibility for Being in the first instance and in each case most fundamentally effects Being. If *world* is ‘replaced’ by em-bankment, then Being is altered.

Whoever, knowingly or unknowingly, takes technology as a means seems to estimate it positively and to demonstrate an appropriate encounter with it. In truth, however, where technology is depreciated, where it counts instrumentally as a means or even as a tool, it counts then as an entity among many other entities while in it and with it Being happens. (GA 79: 60)

In the history of Being Heidegger considers our epoch as being fundamentally given by technology and em-bankment (GA 79: 66). Em-bankment is ever more the Being of everything in our epoch, which reveals them as assets. Further to this, within em-bankment there is no longer a question of Being and this question is entirely forgotten (GA 79: 51ff.). This is most significant for the project at hand of investigating original ethics because within em-bankment where the question of Being is forgotten there is no longer the possibility of original ethics as the thinking of the truth of Being.

## Technology and Human Being

The issue of human beings within em-bankment has already been touched upon, but warrants further elaboration. As said before, within em-bankment, every entity is revealed as an asset. Consequently, the human characteristic of being world-acquiring is denied. The hermeneutic ‘as’, which is constitutive for humans, is negated by revealing everything ‘as’ asset. Within em-bankment, humans are merely repeating the revelation of everything as asset, rather than being genuinely world-acquiring. However, there is a fundamental difference between humans being

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<sup>6</sup>As opposed to ‘true’.

revealed as assets and other entities, such as physical objects, plants and animals, being revealed as assets. Since animals, plants and physical objects do not interpret themselves, they cannot be revealed to themselves as assets. The chicken in the chicken battery may be unhealthy and unable to relate to its artificial environment, but it will never be able to interpret itself as an asset. This is not so in the case of humans. Humans do interpret themselves and, as such, can reveal themselves and other humans as assets. Only humans can interpret themselves as assets and, by doing so, are denied and deny their own very nature. A dog can neither acknowledge nor articulate nor deny being a dog. Humans can deny being 'being-in-the-world' and can become the kind of being that is 'being-in-the-em-bankment'.

Human beings are exchangeable within the ordering of assets. That they are components of assets remains to be the precondition for them to be able to become the functionary of ordering. At the same time the human being belongs in the em-bankment in a wholly different way than the machine. This way they can become in-*humane*. Human beings never become a machine. The inhumane and still human is of course more unsettling, being more malicious and fateful than the human that would be merely a machine. (GA 79: 37)

In other words, the human being can reveal itself for itself as a machine, although, since it is not a machine, the human being within em-bankment is then in complete denial of its very nature. For example, personnel in a corporation are regularly referred to as 'human resources', which is a thoroughly technological term for humans. This is not only a term to describe others and to exploit them, but is also a way in which we understand ourselves within the corporation.

If humans are challenged, ordered, to do this, then don't humans themselves belong even more originally than nature within the asset? The current talk about human resources, about the supply of patients for a clinic, gives evidence of this. The forester who, in the wood, measures the felled timber and to all appearances walks the same forest path in the same way as did his grandfather is today commanded by the lumber industry, whether he knows it or not. (FnT: 21/QCT: 18)

The human being is therefore vulnerable to em-bankment in a completely different way from other types of entities. Human beings can be revealed in such a way that any obvious path to understanding their own nature is denied. And this denial can be concealed to such a degree that the human being does not even experience this total denial of his very nature as a loss. In a situation in which everything, including humans, becomes objectified as an asset, the path of humans to their very nature as openness-for-Being is so completely blocked off that it no longer even seems to be a faint possibility.

By building the world up technologically as an object, the human being deliberately and completely blocks its path, already obstructed, into the Open. The self-assertive human, whether or not it knows and wills it as an individual, is the functionary of technology. Not only does it face the Open from outside in: it even turns its back upon the 'pure draft' by objectifying the world. The human being sets itself apart from the pure draft. The human being of the age of technology, by this parting, opposes itself to the Open. This parting is not a parting *from* . . . it is a parting *against* . . . (WD: 293–294/WAPF: 116)

The threat to humans must therefore not primarily to be seen as the risk in using technological devices, which can cause bodily harm to humans. The real danger

lies in the very nature of technology, which endangers the very nature of the kind of entity that humans are. Em-bankment denies humans their very nature of being world-acquiring. What em-bankment does is prevent people from entering 'into a more primordial revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth' (FnT: 32/QCT: 28).

Within technology as em-bankment there is neither presence nor lingering or hasting. Within technology, time seems to be a succession of one now after the other, bundled into successive 'timeslots'. It is this succession of one now or one timeslot after the other that makes time measurable and calculable (ZuS: 11/TaB: 11). Within em-bankment, a day is not revealed in the sense of time being the possibility for being human, but as a one-dimensional string of successive instances of now, added up to a certain distance in time, into which all the activities and movements are to be squeezed that are to be fulfilled within that timeframe. What remains is an endless frenzy. Time within em-bankment is no longer the 'space' in which things and people are given presence. It is merely a resource that is to be used.

In a similar sense, remoteness and nearness are lost within em-bankment. As Heidegger points out, two solitary farmhouses that are an hour's walk away from each other can be close, since people know each other and are good neighbours and friends, while two corporate offices in downtown can be right next to each other with the occupants hardly knowing each other, 'know no neighbourhood' (UzS: 210/OWL: 103), and are therefore very far from each other. Technological revealing, in handing the question of nearness over to science, would merely account for the measurable distance between the buildings. This distance would never be able to give an appropriate account of the human relationship between the people living there. Within technology, the name of the game is no longer to get nearer to people; it is to discover how to cover vast distances within the shortest 'amount' of time. Communication technology and means of transportation such as cars, planes and high-speed trains make it possible for great distances to be covered in ever shorter time spans, but these technological solutions do not bring people nearer to one another.

## **The Corporation as Setting-up of Em-bankment**

The claim that was made earlier was that the corporation as a work does not distinguish itself by the material it is made of, but by the world that it sets up. Heidegger refers to industry and organisation in terms of technology and em-bankment and also talks about the 'brunt of the organisation (ID: 24/IaD: 35). If the corporation is a work and, as a work, it leads to technological revealing, then the 'world' that it sets up and produces is, as claimed here, not a 'world' at all. It is suggested that the corporation sets up em-bankment. The task of this section is to demonstrate the notion that the corporation is the kind of entity that is to be ascertained as a work, or maybe *the* work, that sets up em-bankment.

How can the corporation be ascertained to be the kind of entity that sets up em-bankment? Unlike other works, the corporation is understood first and foremost as an economic entity. Being economic carries with it an understanding of it being 'maintained for profit', being 'on a business footing', and serving 'the production and distribution of wealth' and 'resources' (OxDic: 372). In standard microeconomics, the corporation, in terms of being a firm, would be characterised by its objective to maximise profits by transforming inputs into outputs (Putterman and Kroszner, 1997: 8). Corporations are usually constituted by establishing long-term contracts between input providers and the assignment of control rights 'in which some agents hire others and direct them in the activities of production. Rather than being momentary assemblages of cooperating factor suppliers, then, firms are ongoing organisations, that manage and coordinate the activities of participating actors' (Putterman and Kroszner, 1997: 8). Coase argues that the reason that firms and, in this case, corporations exist is the reduction of 'transaction costs' by reducing the need for ongoing negotiations (Coase, 1937). In the title of his seminal article, 'The Nature of the Firm', Coase even goes so far as to claim implicitly that this coordinating mechanism is itself what characterises the very nature of the corporation. Williamson developed the notion of transaction costs further by suggesting that firms exist because individual assets are more risky than combined assets, as in the case of corporations, since they can be better coordinated and are not as vulnerable to the 'hold up' of certain components in the process and cost and profit allocation are less risky in larger firms (Williamson, 1985). Alchian and Demsetz suggest that the costs of monitoring and controlling the agents in the production process are the *raison d'être* for the formation of corporations. The reason for the formation and maintenance of corporations is directly linked to the technological ability to monitor large processes (Alchian and Demsetz, 1972). It would go beyond the scope of this book to elaborate further on the economic reasons for the formation and maintenance of firms such as the corporation. What should be clear in the light of what has been said about the notion of technology, however, is that all these reasons are purely technological. Much of why corporations are set up rests on the technological ability to combine and monitor the workings of processes and assets.

What makes corporations different from other works is that corporations are first and foremost created, attended to, and preserved for technological reasons. Other works, such as a painting, may also possibly be created for financial gain, but corporations seem to have a much narrower focus on being created and maintained for predominantly technological reasons. Corporations are formed to be an asset themselves. As such, they are set up in order to reveal everything in terms of being an asset. Not only are corporations created for technological reasons; they also set up technology as a way of revealing everything in its own terms. Corporations are entities that are formed to produce goods and services in order to generate maximum profits and shareholder value. The corporation is about production. As Heidegger points out: 'The possibility of all productive manufacturing lies in revealing' (FnT: 16/QCT: 12). The world that is set up and produced in the corporation is about revealing in terms of production: securing, storing, ordering and distributing things

in an effective, efficient and flexible manner. The corporation, as a work that sets up and produces a world, takes this kind of revealing to the extreme. It is fundamentally built on securing everything in every respect. One group of stakeholders for whom things are secured and ordered is the investors and shareholders.

The whole point of a corporation is to make investors feel safe: they cannot be sued if it goes bankrupt; they can sell their shares if they want to; and they never lose more than they invest. (The Economist, 2001: 78)

Not only investors, but also employees, customers and suppliers deal with the corporation to gain security and order. Employees join companies, in part at least, to secure a predetermined monthly income (hopefully with a raise and a bonus on top of it); suppliers deal with corporations to have a secure demand for their products; and customers buy from corporations because they assume that they can rely on the quality and integrity of a familiar and reputable corporation. That this security does not always materialise is another issue altogether and it may actually lead to the downfall of the corporation in the long run.

As pointed out earlier, the revealing that happens in the corporation has the character of challenging forth. As assets, entities are to be brought under control and challenged forth for maximum utility. Assets are to be 'sweated'. Any input is to be used to the maximum degree. This is a logic that is not strictly limited to businesses, but is also taking over many other aspects of human life. In this sense, as pointed out earlier, there is talk about the corporatisation of many aspects of the public sphere globally.

In place of all the world-content of things that was formerly perceived and used to grant freely of itself, the object-character of technological dominion spreads itself over the earth ever more quickly, ruthlessly and completely. Not only does it establish all things as producible in the process of production; it also delivers the products of production by means of the market. In self-assertive production, the humanness of humans and the thingness of things dissolve into the calculated market value of a market which not only spans the whole earth as a world market, but also, as the will to will, trades in the nature of Being and thus subjects all entities to the trade of a calculation that dominates most tenaciously in those areas where there is no need of numbers. (WD: 292/WAPF: 114–115)

Strictly speaking, it would be incorrect to talk about the 'corporate world'. Using a Heideggerian vocabulary it would be more appropriate to call it 'corporate em-bankment'. A fundamental assumption in this book is that the corporation is the kind of work that sets up em-bankment – revealing everything in terms of assets that are to be challenged forth and employed for maximum efficiency. This leads directly to the creation of modern organisations. Current theory on organisations, organisational structure and organisational design is focussed on the achievement of maximum return on investment, efficiency, effectiveness and the achievement of goals (Robbins, 1988: 1–8), which demonstrates the point that corporations create structures strictly along technological lines. This leads to the issue of the intellectual approach that guides decision making and the ascertainment of the real in the corporation.

## *The Corporation and Science*

It has been mentioned earlier that science is the application of em-bankment (GA 79: 43). This would suggest that corporations, as the work that sets up em-bankment, call for scientific methods as the prominent approach to any sort of inquiry, whether it is the understanding of the future, the solution to an operational or strategic problem or any other kind of managerial decision. Heidegger states clearly that . . .

(. . .) the sciences have been intersecting in all forms of modern life: in industry, in commerce, in education, in politics, in warfare, in journalism of all kinds. To be acquainted with this intersection is important. In order to be able to give an exposition of it, however, we must first have experienced that in which the very nature of science lies. This may be expressed in one concise statement. It runs: *Science is the theory of the real.* (WB: 42/SR: 157)

The same is true of the corporation, where scientific reasoning has overtaken all other ways of reasoning. Morgan notes that scientific or rational reasoning and the outcomes of the application of scientific methods within the corporation have much in common with the use of primitive magic (Morgan, 1997: 145–146). Whatever is quantitatively analysed and scientifically processed has credibility and whatever escapes technical calculation is eliminated (Morgan, 1997: 240). Over and above that there seems to be an ever-diminishing public permission to question and critique science itself. How did science become the predominant way of inquiring into corporate issues? Is this a coincidence or is it inherent in em-bankment that it calls for the exclusive application of scientific approaches?

Science corresponds with the technological revealing of everything as asset, that everything is to be predicted, ordered and secured. It is the appropriate form of dealing with entities in cause and effect terms. Heidegger points out very clearly that em-bankment calls for the employment of science as the appropriate and legitimate way of approaching that which is considered real.

Because the very nature of modern technology lies in em-bankment, modern technology must employ exact physical science. Through its so doing the deceptive appearance arises that modern technology is applied physical science. This illusion can maintain itself precisely insofar as neither the provenance of the very nature of modern science, nor indeed the very nature of modern technology is adequately sought in our questioning. (FnT: 27/QCT: 23)

Rather than saying that science allowed for the emergence of corporations, what is said here is that the very nature of technology, em-bankment, as set up by the corporation, demands science. Because modern science is the only legitimate way of ascertaining truth in em-bankment and thus within the corporation, the corporate discourse cuts itself off from philosophical questioning and dismisses it as illegitimate and inappropriate and listens only to that which can claim to be scientific. Science annihilates the specific type of entity that every entity in each case is. This annihilation carries with it two delusions: firstly, that science is superior in ascertaining reality; and, secondly, that entities as revealed by em-bankment would still be what they actually are. However, within science and em-bankment they can never occur in their very nature (DD: 162–163/TT: 170–171).



Similarly, the corporation as a work does not correspond to *earth*. In the original work the . . .

. . . rock comes to bear and rest and so first becomes rock; metals come to glitter and shimmer, colours to glow, tones to sing, the word to the saying. All this comes forth as the work sets itself back into the massiveness and heaviness of stone, into the firmness and pliancy of wood, into the hardness and lustre of metal, into the brightening and darkening of colour, into the clang of tone, and into the naming power of the word. (UdK: 32/OWA: 170)

Clearly this is no longer the case in the corporation, since all forces are mobilised to unconceal everything only as a resource. Within em-bankment as set up by the corporation, everything is revealed as an asset that is to be dominated and exploited as a resource. In this sense, the earth becomes an un-earth. Any area is only seen in terms of the resource that it may be and thus may be uprooted to allow for exploitation of whatever kind. ‘The earth and its atmosphere become raw material’ (WD: 289/WAPF: 111).

### ***Human Alienation and Exploitation***

Technological revealing as it happens in the corporation is fascinating and tempting, as it opens up ever new possibilities of ordering, securing, moving and transforming things, as well as being tranquillising, as it gives a fundamentally stable understanding of all entities. But, at the same time, it is alienating by denying humans access to their very nature as world-acquiring and, therefore, threatens the very nature of being human itself by equalising everything as assets and thus leaving no possibility for ascertaining entities with different ontological natures.

What threatens the human being in its very nature is the view that technological production puts the world in order, while in fact this ordering is precisely what levels every *ordo*, every rank, down to the uniformity of production, and thus from the outset destroys the realm from which any rank and recognition could possibly arise.

It is not only the totality of this willing that is dangerous, but willing itself, in the form of self-assertion within a world that is admitted only as will. The willing that is willed by this will is already resolved to take unconditional command. By that resolve, it is even now delivered into the hands of total organisation. But above all, technology itself prevents any experience of its nature. For while it is developing its own self to the full, it develops in the sciences a kind of knowing that is debarred from ever entering into the realm of the essential nature of technology, let alone retracing in thought that nature’s origin. (WD: 295/WAPF: 117)

Within em-bankment as set up by the corporation, the human being is revealed as asset. Not only do people relate to others in terms of being assets, but they also understand themselves largely in those terms. They are thus not relating to themselves as openness-for-Being, as world-acquiring and as being-in-the-world, but everyone and anyone is an asset and a resource. It is precisely this understanding of oneself and others that makes it possible for a suggestion like Taylor’s – namely that people will comply if they are paid the right price (Pugh and Hickson, 1996) – sound like an accurate proposition. Everyone and anyone considers others and him- or herself only in economical terms and thus will adopt a logic that leads



to taking on the most alienating of jobs simply because the remuneration seems to be at or above an acceptable level for the task to be fulfilled. Employees will therefore actually ‘voluntarily’ comply with Taylor’s suggestion within em-bankment. In the corporation humans are ‘employed’; they take up ‘a position’; they are administered as ‘human resources’; are developed for appreciation and depreciation as ‘human capital’; and they are challenged to account for and to be accountable to. (GA 79: 26–27). Everyone becomes a ‘component’ that can be added or subtracted depending on the requirements of the economic condition, rather than being viewed as a member that is still inherently part of a whole.

Humans become human material which is disposed of with a view to proposed goals. (WD: 289/WAPP: 111)

Heidegger also talks in this context about humans as being understood as mechanised or technicised animals (GA 65: 275/CtP: 194; NI: 494). But humans do not just reveal themselves and other humans in this mechanised fashion; they also reveal everything else in this mechanised way. The mechanical understanding does not allow for an understanding of revealing, since in cause-and-effect mechanical relations there is no place for the notion of revealing. This understanding turns every relation into a cause-and-effect relation that leaves no possibility for interpretation, revealing or creation. Consequent to the mechanical revealing of everything in mechanical cause and effect terms, ordering, controlling and exploiting become the only possible ways of dealing with anything. The only relation that humans can have to anything is both antithetical and rigorously ordered and the very nature of humans as revealing can no longer appear (FnT: 31/QCT: 27).

Technological revealing brings with it a tranquillisation of humans, since scientific understanding makes it clear how everything is to be understood and gives rise to a common understanding of the best order (SZ: 177/BT: 222).

However, this tranquillity in inauthentic Being does not seduce one into stagnation and inactivity, but drives one into uninhibited ‘hustle’ [Betrieb].<sup>7</sup> (...) When openness-for-Being, tranquillised and ‘understanding’ everything, thus compares with everything, it drifts towards alienation in which its own-most potentiality for being-in-the-world is concealed. (SZ: 177–178/BT: 222)

In this regard, Heidegger also says that, instead of acknowledging the human spirit, people are reinterpreted and judged along the lines of intelligence and cleverness. This intelligence and cleverness in terms of a personal profile for employment purposes creates the possibility of moving employees around and . . .

(...) complementing them to make new things. This cleverness is a matter of mere talent and practice and mass division of labour. The cleverness itself is subject to the possibility of organisation, which is never true of the spirit. (EM: 35/IM: 46–47)

The metaphor of the corporation as an organism is therefore appropriate in the sense that, within the truth of technology, both corporations and humans are revealed as entities that relate to their environment as a surrounding to which they are linked.

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<sup>7</sup>The word ‘Betrieb’ can also be translated as ‘corporation’.

They consequently behave as such and are managed as such. The relationship to the environment becomes instinctual; it only distinguishes between the useful and the harmful and does not strive for anything else. Thus the instinct of animals and the *ratio* of humans become identical (ÜdM: 90). Instinct, in this sense, is the assignment of all possible tendencies towards the entirety of planning and securitisation. It describes a dazed relationship. Comparisons such as the one drawn by complexity theory between the complex logic of ant-colony behaviour and the behaviour of corporations therefore become legitimate, even though they deny humans their very nature and only describe humans accurately if they remain predominantly within technological revealing.

### *Corporate Values and Em-bankment*

One might argue against the dominance of em-bankment within the corporation by suggesting that there are value statements in corporations that go beyond technology and instrumental objectives. The question is whether value statements are sufficient to overcome em-bankment, or whether they remain within em-bankment and would then only be employed for further securitisation and ordering. To answer this question, it is critical to ask about the very nature of value statements.

Values have validity. But validity is still too suggestive of what is valid for a subject. Exalted as value, the ought was again in need of bolstering up. To this end a Being was attributed to the values themselves. *Basically* Being does not mean anything other than the presence of something that is occurrent. Except this Being is not as vulgar and handy as chairs and tables. With this Being of values a maximum of confusion and uprootedness was achieved. Since the term 'value' was gradually beginning to look worn, particularly as it also played a role in economic knowledge the values are now called 'totalities'. But with this term only the letters had changed. Though in what tends to become visible at these totalities is what they basically are, namely half measures. (EM: 151–152/IM: 198–199)

What Heidegger tells us here is that values are ontologically similar to physical objects. They are thus revealed by a world or – in the case of the corporation – by em-bankment. As such they do not reach and transform em-bankment itself but they become something that is only revealed in terms of securing and ordering. As long as em-bankment makes values intelligible and makes them intelligible as asset, all value statements become an issue of compliance in order to further secure and order, commandeer and store. As said at the outset, the typical response of politicians and lawmakers to corporate scandals, but also to other ongoing ethical issues regarding corporations, is to tighten and to increase the number of rules and regulations to prevent unethical behaviour. These are perfect expressions of technological revealing and action themselves and are completely disconnected from any sort of original ethics.

The signs of the last forgetfulness of Being are the proclamations of 'ideas' and 'values', the indiscriminate back and forth of proclamations of 'deed' and the indispensability of 'spirit'. All this is already clamped in the mechanism of the ordering process. (ÜdM: 87)

It seems then that the more there is talk about values in a corporation, the more it is clear that, within the corporation, nothing is inherently valuable anymore and that the talk about values is a technological attempt to bring back value into a totality that itself is entirely meaningless and devoid of genuine value in itself. It signifies an attempt to deal with the nihilism in corporations in an entirely inappropriate and hopeless way. The talk of values is consequently the clearest indication of the absence of genuine value and the growing nihilism of technology within the corporate 'world'.

Value is the objectification of needs as goals, wrought by a representing self-establishing within the world as picture. Value appears to be the expression of the fact that we, in our positional relationship to it, act to advance just that which is itself most valuable; and yet that very value is the impotent and threadbare disguise of the objectivity of whatever is, an objectivity that has become flat and devoid of background. No one dies for mere values. (ZdW: 101–102/AWP: 142)

Values are therefore merely another tool in the technological toolbox. In corporations we talk about values and ethics in order to further secure and order. To give an example, there is talk that keeping chicken in large batteries is bad. We say this not because we understand chickens as organisms in the way they were earlier described in their very nature, but because chickens in batteries give inferior meat, tend to get sick, make us feel bad and lead to an inferior reputation. All these are unintended consequences of chicken batteries and therefore the value of having free-range chickens is generally not based on an understanding of the very nature of chickens, but tends to be based on the need to further secure and order and avoid insecurity and loss of control over certain aspects of our lives. The proclamation of values therefore indicates a repetition and affirmation of em-bankment, rather than being a sign of being outside of or beyond em-bankment.

Ironically, since corporations set up em-bankment and embankment blocks off the possibility of any engagement with Being and the truth of Being itself, there cannot be any original ethics discourse in the corporation any longer if original ethics is understood in the Heideggerian sense as the thinking that thinks the primordial abode of humans, which is the truth of Being.

### ***Morgan's Metaphor of Organisations as Instruments of Domination***

To elaborate further on the notion of the corporation that is the kind of work that sets up the very nature of technology or em-bankment, we will consider Morgan's notion of corporations as instruments of domination (Morgan, 1997: 301–344) and discuss how this notion of the corporation is a type of Cartesian understanding of the corporation as setting up em-bankment.<sup>8</sup> In the name of the metaphor, Morgan already gives away that this metaphor remains in the Cartesian tradition

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<sup>8</sup>All other metaphors have been dealt with in [Chapter 2](#).

and that it is inherently technological. Considering the corporation as an instrument already demonstrates an understanding of its very nature as being an instrument. In Heidegger's terminology, instruments are equipment and a specific kind of physical object, which he locates somewhere between mere physical objects and works:

A piece of equipment, a pair of shoes for instance, when finished, is also self-contained like the mere thing, but it does not have the character of having taken shape by itself like the granite boulder. On the other hand, equipment displays an affinity with the artwork insofar as it is something produced by the human hand. However, by its self-sufficient presencing, the work of art is similar rather to the mere thing, which has taken shape by itself and is self-contained. Nevertheless, we do not count such works among mere things. As a rule it is the use-objects around us that are the nearest and the proper things. Thus the piece of equipment is half thing, because it is characterised by thingliness, and yet is something more; at the same time it is half artwork and yet something less, because of lacking the self-sufficiency of the artwork. Equipment has a peculiar position between thing and work, assuming that such a calculated ordering of them is permissible. (UdK: 13–14/OWA: 154–155)

Since everything within em-bankment is revealed in order to be used for certain ends, everything tends to be revealed as equipment. This would also be expressed in the answer given when a child asks, for example 'Why has God made trees?' and the parent answers that 'They are made so that we have wood and shade'. Both the question and the answer turn the tree into a resource for wood and an umbrella by divine designation and suggest that it is made as equipment through God's creation. Heidegger detects a tendency that modern humans reveal everything as equipment (UdK: 14/OWA: 155), and that, within em-bankment, everything is automatically a type of equipment because of it being an asset. As argued here, corporations are not first and foremost instruments, but set up the instrumental in the first instance. However, within em-bankment as set up by corporations, corporations themselves show up as instruments. If one bears this in mind, the metaphor of the corporation as an instrument of domination provides rich insight into the consequences and symptoms of em-bankment as set up by the corporation.

Morgan admits 'that domination may be intrinsic to the way we organise and not just an unintended side effect. It shows us that there is often a "seamy" side to otherwise excellent organisations and suggests that this should be a mainstream concern of managers and organisation theorists' (Morgan, 1997: 341). Corporations have always revealed humans as a resource and this has always led to the exploitation of humans to varying degrees (Morgan, 1997: 340ff.). This exploitation was particularly brutal in Europe and North America in the nineteenth century and remains similarly brutal in many parts of the so-called third world right into the twenty-first century. The notion of the corporation as a form of domination sheds light on the various forms of the advancement of certain interest groups at the expense of others. Morgan asserts that the domination metaphor. . .

... encourages us to recognise and deal with perceived and actual exploitation in the workplace rather than dismiss it as a 'radical' distortion of the way things are. Clearly if those managing organisations were to attempt to deal with the radical frame of reference by accepting rather than denying its legitimacy, as tends to be the situation at present, this would help initiate a new era of employee relations and conceptions of corporate responsibility. A new aggressive form of social consciousness would oblige corporate

decision makers to take personal responsibility for the inhuman consequences of so many conventional practices. (Morgan, 1997: 342)

Morgan seems rather optimistic and perhaps even simplistic about management's ability to end exploitation. An assessment of management's ability to make a difference will be the theme of much of the rest of this chapter.

Morgan sees two major risks in the metaphor of organisations as instruments of domination. As will be shown later in this book, both of these risks are a function of seeing organisations as *instruments* of domination rather than as *works* that, in the case of corporations, set up em-bankment. The one risk, according to Morgan, is that our normal Cartesian way of thinking leads us to the question: who has set all of this up? assuming that, in each case, the domination happens by design rather than default. This way of thinking tends to lead to conspiracy theories that suggest that certain individuals are to blame for the current situation and also that, because these individuals have central control, they could change our fate in corporations and the corporations themselves (Morgan, 1997: 342–343). The question how corporations, as works setting up em-bankment, came into being and who or what controls them is an important one and will be dealt with later in this chapter. The other risk, according to Morgan, is that one could come to the conclusion that corporations should be overthrown or abolished altogether, without offering a feasible alternative. This could cause more harm than good. A comparison between exploitation and working conditions in the so-called 'capitalist' countries and former 'communist' countries can serve as a reminder that even a well-motivated change in political and economic systems is fraught with risks and might lead to a situation that is sometimes worse than the situation that was to be remedied (Morgan, 1997: 343). The question of how em-bankment should be appropriately 'dealt with' and how or whether humans can gain access to their very nature within the corporation is critical to this entire project and will be the focus of the following chapter.

### ***The Corporation as Unoriginal Work that Cannot Reveal its Own Very Nature***

The corporation sets forth and produces em-bankment, which, in its technological terms, is already familiar rather than original. In setting up em-bankment, it brings forth a continuously refined version of what is already revealed, understood and known. In this regard there is a telling similarity between the corporation and the way that Heidegger understands science as a work.

[S]cience is not an original happening of truth, but always the cultivation of a domain of truth already opened, specifically by apprehending and confirming that which shows itself to be possibly and necessarily correct within that field. When and insofar as a science passes beyond correctness and goes on to a truth, which means that it arrives at the essential disclosure of entities as such, it is philosophy. (UdK: 49–50/OWA: 187)

As already pointed out, science and technological revealing are complementary. Technological revealing asks for scientific methods as the appropriate methodology

to ascertain characteristics of entities within technology, and science repeats the kind of revealing that technology is. In the same way as science is not an original happening of truth, the corporation is the repetition of a revealing that is already familiar and therefore unoriginal. The corporation continuously repeats and entrenches a way of revealing that started with the birth of the Cartesian dualism of *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. The corporation is thus a fundamentally *unoriginal* work.

This unoriginality of the corporation is not only to be seen in a negative light, as it can also be seen as an advantage of the work called ‘the corporation’. In continuously revealing entities in a certain way, there is simultaneously a certain way of dealing with them that becomes ever more sophisticated and advanced. While this denies humans access to their very nature, it is undeniable that technological revealing in corporations has led to enormous progress in providing humans with all kinds of goods and services.

Another fundamental issue with regard to the corporation is that, by setting up em-bankment and revealing humans in terms of asset, works are not revealed as works at all. Consequently, corporations cannot be revealed as works within themselves or, to be more precise, within em-bankment as they set it up. It is thus impossible for anyone in the corporation to recognise the corporation for what it truly is. The same is true for the science of economics, which informs much of the intellectual debate, research and teaching about corporations. According to Heidegger, the science of economics reveals everything in terms of being equipment – i.e. physical objects – and reveals their utility in economic terms (SZ: 361/BT: 413). Since the corporation, as argued here, is to be understood as a work, it is neither a physical object nor equipment and thus cannot itself be truly understood within the science of economics. Both practice and theory seem to be in total denial of the very nature of the corporation as being a work, the very nature of its human creators and preservers, and the very possibility of creating and attending a work. The fact that Porter (1980, 1985) propagates an understanding of strategy that is entirely based on economics and that has a pervasive influence in the contemporary literature, education and practice of management (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 99ff.) should erase any doubt that the denial of the corporation as a work is deeply entrenched, even in those institutions of management thought that enjoy high popular regard. This denial is what Heidegger calls ‘the danger’, since it endangers both the work and the human being in their very nature with such overwhelming force that Heidegger calls this force ‘the brunt of the organisation’ (ID: 24/IaD: 35).

## Management and the Question of Power

The understanding that has been gained from what has been said so far is approximately this: We live in an epoch in which em-bankment reigns supreme and makes all other ways of revealing illegitimate. The corporation is the perfect and most prominent case of the kind of work that constantly repeats and affirms this way of revealing and which, via ‘corporatisation’, is finding its way into all aspects of human life and into all parts of the globe. Two questions suggest themselves at this

point: How or who started all of this? And how and who has been given the power in all of this? Related to this question would be the question of who would have an interest in this or could gain from this? To think of these questions in terms of an individual or group who intentionally caused corporations to come into being in the first place could lead us to think along the lines of conspiracy theories. As Spinoza et al. (1997: 8ff.) point out, this question of power resting in the hands of individuals or groups is itself a clear expression of the Cartesian tradition and utterly technological. It is a question born out of the notion and fear that there is someone – an individual or a group of people – who has a grand plan and the necessary information, knowledge and resources to control the global spread and control of em-bankment, corporations, the ‘corporate world’ and the corporatisation of all aspects of our lives. That this is a Cartesian or technological concern does not make it illegitimate. And dismissing the resulting conspiracy theories as being Cartesian does not in itself give any insight into how em-bankment as a way of revealing came into being, whether it was by design or accidental or whether it happened in some other way. It also does not answer the question about who has now been given power or has gained advantage within em-bankment. These questions will be further elaborated upon below.

If one follows Heidegger’s argument in *Being and Time*, which shows traces of the setting up of em-bankment in the paragraphs on the Cartesian understanding of the world as *res extensa* (SZ: 89–101/BT: 122–134), one might be inclined to blame Descartes personally for this conspiracy. Heidegger, however, avoids any direct reference to Descartes as a person in his elaborations on technology and there is no sign in Descartes’ writing that he had any intention of starting a conspiracy in the sense of giving certain individuals or institutions an advantage or control over others. It should be clear from what was said earlier that corporations are a sign and manifestation of an epoch that celebrates technological revealing and achievement. The notion that this way of revealing does not occur by design also gives us useful hints about why communist economies, which were designed to avoid domination, exploitation and alienation, were not able to escape these aspects. The answer presumably lies in the fact that Marx’s thinking, according to Heidegger, still remained within em-bankment (Hum 30–31/LoH: 243–244). Indeed, Lenin, after assuming power, moved from opposing Taylor’s scientific management to become a devoted supporter (Scoville, 2001). In this sense as a main contributor of Marxism in its translation into industrial policy, Lenin became a main proponent of managerial approaches that promote technology as a revealing.

Who then holds the power within corporations and would therefore be the one to assume responsibility? Who could be the person who is given power by em-bankment as set up by the corporation and who has the power to overcome em-bankment? One might at first assume that it is the owners or shareholders who hold the power. But this kind of power seems to be diminishing. According to Drucker (1993), Western societies seem to be moving towards becoming ‘post-capitalist’. In these post-capitalist societies, capital ownership is spread so widely that Drucker calls their economic order ‘pension fund socialism’. It no longer seems reasonable to assume that the centre of power is simply in the hands of a rather small elite group of so-called capitalists (Drucker, 1993). Most capital is held by pension funds and



corporations are becoming ever more complex and difficult to comprehend by an outsider. It seems that much of the power has moved away from the shareholders to those managing funds and to the management of the corporation. Morgan elaborates on this by saying that '[t]he "owners" are not really in a position to know what is happening, especially on a detailed level, because multinationals usually control a network of subsidiary companies. Power is firmly concentrated in the hands of senior management' (Morgan, 1997: 329). This echoes Drucker's assumption, which was referred earlier, that it is the managers who carry ethical responsibility. With reference to a quotation from Morgan that was cited earlier, where Morgan squarely puts the responsibility for alienation and exploitation into the court of the managers, it is also critical to explore the situation and resulting power of management in greater detail. The starting point for understanding management will be to look at some of the more prominent definitions of management and then to develop and gain a Heideggerian understanding of management and its situation within the corporation.

### *The Etymology and Definitions of Management*

The word management is derived from 'manus', the Latin word for hand. One could therefore see it as being similar to 'handling.' With the notion of something done with the hand comes the connotation of dealing with physical objects, even though hands also heal and the expression, 'someone is talking with his or her hands', suggests that hands also communicate.

Introna (1997) has compiled the following telling definitions of management:

Management may be defined as getting things done through others (Holt, 1987).

Management is the art of getting things done through other people (Hellrigel and Slocum, 1989: 6).

The term management refers to the process of getting activities completed efficiently with and through other people (Robbins, 1988: 6).

Management is the process of working with and through others to achieve organisational objectives in a changing environment. Central to this process is the effective and efficient use of limited resources (Kreitner, 1989: 6).

Management is the process undertaken by one or more individuals to co-ordinate the activities of others to achieve results not achievable by one individual alone (Donnelly and Gibson, 1990: 7). (Introna, 1997: 83)

As Introna points out, these definitions are rather obvious (Introna, 1997: 84). They all contain an element of action and the notion that this action is taken with or through others. This notion of involving others in an endeavour to get something done is fundamental to the communal nature of humans and has been a feature of human life through the ages. What has changed in the industrial era, though, is that the understanding of management has become scientific, as in Taylor's *Principles of Scientific Management* (Taylor, 1911). Scientific management, in summary, involves:



... a systematic study of work to discover the most efficient methods of performing the job, and then a systematic study of management leading to the most efficient methods of controlling the workers. This would bring a great increase in efficiency and with it prosperity to the benefit of all, since a highly efficient prosperous business would be in a much better position to ensure the continuing well-paid employment of its workers. (Pugh and Hickson, 1996: 103)

While it is quite clear that Taylor propagates the most obviously technological approach to management, it should be borne in mind that even the examples of defining or understanding management as quoted above carry strong elements of viewing people as resources to get things done. Given that management is an activity that seems to comply with technological revealing, this notion will become critical and needs to be elaborated further.

### ***Management as Setting-into-Work of the Truth of Technology***

According to Heidegger, within em-bankment the natural leaders are those that have a 'good instinct' for utility for the purposes of consumption and are thus appropriately employees as organs for control (ÜDM: 92).

They are the first employees within the process of business of the unconditional use of entities in order to secure the emptiness of the oblivion of Being. (ÜDM: 92)

It is almost trivial to state that managers are employees too. If we follow Heidegger, managers are employed in a much more encompassing way, since managers are not only employed by shareholders to secure and order, but employ others to secure and order and therefore belong in em-bankment in a double sense. They are the ordered that are ordering and they are the secured that are securing (GA 79: 30). This is remarkably in line with Friedman's (1970) earlier mentioned assertion that executives have no responsibility other than to maximise shareholder value and that they are not a locus of potential responsibility in the ethical sense. This demonstrates that Friedman remains totally within em-bankment with his conception of corporate management and his understanding of the role of ethics in corporations. Heidegger provides a few descriptions of humans within em-bankment that could make the reader think that he spent his entire life in the managerial echelons of the corporate world. An example would be this quotation:

All mere chasing after the future so as to work out a picture of it through calculation in order to extend what is present and half thought into what, now veiled, is yet to come, itself still moves within the prevailing attitude belonging to technological, calculating representation. All attempts to calculate current reality morphologically, psychologically, in terms of decline and loss, in terms of their fate and catastrophe, of doom, are merely technological behaviour. That behaviour operates through the device of the enumerating of symptoms whose asset value can be increased to infinity and always varied anew. Such analysis of the 'situation' does not notice that it is working only according to the meaning and manner of technological dissecting, and that it thus furnishes to the technological consciousness the historical-technological presentation of happening commensurate with that consciousness. (GA 79: 76/QCT: 48)

It seems that, for the most part, managers are oblivious of their own situation, otherwise no one would find a managerial career attractive and worth pursuing, as it often entails significant personal sacrifice and cost. Heidegger explains this situation as follows:

As soon as what is unconcealed no longer concerns humans even as object, but does so, rather exclusively, as asset, and humans in the midst of objectlessness are nothing but the orderers of the asset, then they come to the very brink of a precipitous fall; that is, humans come to the point where they will have to be taken as asset. Meanwhile humans, precisely as the ones who are threatened, exalt themselves to the posture of lord of the earth. In this way the impression comes to prevail that everything humans encounter exists only insofar as it is their construct. This illusion gives rise in turn to one final delusion: It seems though that humans everywhere and always encounter themselves. (. . .) *In truth, however, precisely nowhere do humans today any longer encounter themselves, i.e., their very nature.* Humans stand so decisively in attendance of the challenging forth of em-bankment that they do not apprehend em-bankment as a claim, that they fail to see themselves as the one spoken to, and hence also fail in every way to hear in what respect they ek-sist, from out of their very nature, in the realm of an exhortation or address, and thus *can never* encounter only themselves. (FnT: 30–31/QCT: 26–27)

Both employees in the traditional sense and management are therefore both denuded and alienated (Lovitt, 1977: xxx), meaning that they have lost access to their very nature to such an extent that, for the most part, this loss no longer shows up as something missing or lacking. This is amplified by managers being denuded by their own achievement or lack thereof.

But to what degree is management at liberty to break out of technological revealing. Heidegger gives a vivid example of what would happen to a management team that would suddenly refuse to continue to secure and order or that would close down the corporation altogether.

As a component of assets it remains locked into it. Let's consider the unlikely case that the management of a radio station suggests the abolition of the radio station. It would be removed overnight only because it is only what it is as the ordered of an asset in the em-bankment of the ordering of the public. (GA 79: 38)

Heidegger points out that viewing management as the culprit in alienation gives managers a respect and role that they actually do not deserve, since they themselves are given by technological revealing. In other words, the public outcry over alienating management practices or even evil management assumes that management has power over em-bankment, while it actually is further removed from that than possibly anybody else and its power is actually granted by em-bankment itself.

One is of the opinion that the leaders by themselves, in the blind frenzy of a selfish self-centeredness, have presumed everything and have set up everything according to their obstinacy. In truth they are the inevitable consequence of the fact that all entities have changed the fashion of the astray, in which emptiness spreads and that demands a uniform organisation and securitisation of entities. Therein is the necessity of 'leadership', meaning the planning calculation of the securitisation of the totality of entities. Towards this such people have to be set up and equipped who serve in leadership. The 'leaders' are the authoritative armament workers who oversee all the sectors of the use of entities, because they see through the entire surrounding and as such dominate the astray in its calculability. The way

of seeing through is the calculability, that has in advance let itself go into the requirements of the ever increasing securitisation and organisation in service of further possibilities of organisation. The assignment of all possible tendencies towards the entirety of planning and securitisation is called 'instinct'. (...) The instinct of animals and the *ratio* of humanity become identical. (ÜdM: 89–90)

What Heidegger seems to say is that to blame management for acting in a way that alienates humans from their very nature would be similar to accusing a dog of following its instinct. Simply blaming management for the ills of the corporation and the manner in which the struggle for influence is fought between different stakeholders is therefore misguided. Furthermore, these fights for influence are not fights against technological revealing, but are an affirmation of em-bankment.

The struggle between those who have power and those who want to have power: on each side the struggle is about power. Everywhere power itself is the determination. Through this struggle for power is the very nature of power placed into the very nature of its unconditional dominance from both sides. At the same time what is concealed here is that this struggle is in service of power and wanted by it. The power has already taken hold of these struggles. The will to will alone authorises these struggles. But power takes hold of that which is human in a way that human beings are expropriated of the possibility to ever get out of the forgetfulness of Being in such a way. This struggle is necessarily planetary and as such in its very nature undecidable, since it has nothing to decide, since it is excluded from all distinction of the difference (of Being to entities) and remains as such excluded from truth and though its own force is pushed out into the fateless: into the forgetfulness of Being. (ÜdM: 86)

Mintzberg et al.'s power school, which see the formation of corporate strategy as a process of more or less fierce negotiations with varying means, thus describes in its own terminology the struggle for power as a defining characteristic of the corporation as setting up em-bankment rather than just an occasional occurrence.

If we compare managers, as those who create and attend to the unoriginal work that is called 'the corporation', with the artist who creates a work of art that is an original work, we see a critical difference. While the artist, by creating a work, sets up a world and thereby also gives him- or herself an understanding of his or her own identity and manner of being, the manager, by creating and attending to the corporation, repeats and reaffirms em-bankment and turns him- or herself as well as other humans into assets. In both cases, these are acts over which neither the artist nor the manager ultimately has control. To ascertain that which allows the artist to create an original work and to understand that which holds the manager hostage to the repetition of em-bankment and whether at all or in what way it is possible to build a path for managers to become artistic will be a critical project of the remainder of this book.

But how does management actually repeat em-bankment in managing the corporation? What are the actual activities that management engages in? The path that opens up through this question will lead us to language.

## *The Technological Language of Management*

In asking about the actual activity of management, it is critical to understand the medium that the work 'corporation' uses. With what or through what medium is the corporation made? In what ways do people encounter the corporation? Corporations can be encountered in buildings, logos, colours, founding statements and constitutions, political action, policies, in meeting members of the corporations and in many other forms and ways. But if we look at managers and managerial actions, it becomes obvious that managers do not usually use all these mediums directly. Managers do not usually build the headquarters that are the symbols of corporate might. Managers do not themselves design logos and the style of corporate identity. As Winograd and Flores point out, management is first and foremost a communicative activity, meaning it is an activity that is conversational. Managers thus operate in the domain of speech acts and the use of language (Winograd and Flores, 1986: 54ff. and 144ff.).

This is in remarkable harmony with Heidegger's notion that the works of language, namely poetry, have a privileged position among works (UdK: 61/OWA: 198). Heidegger explains that . . .

To see this, only the right concept of language is needed. In the current view, language is held to be a kind of communication. It serves for verbal exchange and agreement, and in general for communication. But language is not only and not primarily an audible and written expression of what is to be communicated. It not only puts forth in words and statements what is overtly and covertly communicated; language alone brings entities as entities into the open for the first time. Where there is no language, as in the Being of stone, plant and animal, there is also no openness of entities, and consequently no openness of the non-Being and of the empty.

Language, by naming entities for the first time, first brings entities to word and to appearance. Only this naming nominates entities *to* their Being *from out of* their Being. Such saying is a projecting of clearing, in which announcement is made of what it is that entities come to the open *as*. (UdK: 61/OWA: 198)

Language and saying, as in poetry, show something; they make something apparent. It is a way of providing a fundamentally new understanding of an entity, an issue or the totality of significance that humans live in. It will thus be justified to carefully look into the issue of language as a medium of management. Heidegger's notion of technological language will be explored in order to do this.

Technological language is a language that is reduced to unambiguous bits of information that are employed to achieve maximum efficiency, effectiveness and flexibility. Technical language is similar to sign language. For a sign language to work, the signs need to be agreed upon upfront. An example of this would be Morse code. Every sign has a specific meaning that leaves no room for interpretation. This is very different from poetry, in which words often start to gain a whole new meaning. For a codified language like Morse code to work, every sign has to be unambiguously predefined. Since no poetic dimension is left in technological language, everything that is said is merely information. Examples of this in a managerial situation would be the monthly management accounts. For these figures to make sense, every figure needs to have a tight definition and everyone involved

has to have a clear understanding of what a specific figure means. This allows, via the use of information technology, for the development of systems that can collate managerial accounts from a multitude of subsidiaries of a multinational corporation within hours at month end. For information technology to work, language has to be codified into unambiguous signs.

The construction and building of mainframe computers is based on the technological-calculating principles of the conversion of language as saying to language as merely signalling notification. What is critical for our contemplation lies in the fact that the technical possibilities of machines are given by the direction how language may and shall still be language. The type and the character of language are determined by the technical possibility of formal assignment of signs that executes a sequence of continuous yes/no decisions at the highest possible speed. Which programmes can be entered into the computer is set by the construction and the level of performance of the machine. The type of language is determined by technology. But isn't the opposite valid as well?: The construction of the machine is determined by the linguistic task, for example the one of translation. But also in that instance the linguistic task is already fundamentally predetermined by the machine, which demands everywhere the unambiguity of signs and the sequence of signs. That is why a poem can fundamentally not be programmed. (ÜSTS: 23–24)

Lovitt explains that, within technology, language is deprived of its power by being reduced to mere information (Lovitt, 1977: xxiv). As Morgan points out, the combination of the reverence for rationality and the need for a shared and rather unambiguous vocabulary are key characteristics of corporations (Morgan, 1997: 145–152). It is in this sense fair to say that, in managerial action in a corporation, which happens in language acts, everything is predominantly articulated in technological terms and that other ways of using language become illegitimate. This is amplified by the use of information technology in corporations, which often determines the language that is still permissible within the system. Because vast amounts of information can only be processed via information technology and a standardised vocabulary, a fundamental aspect of language gets lost in the corporation: the use of language to hint at something that has never been said or never been said a certain way, or the ability of language to hint at something unspoken and possibly unspeakable. In this sense, technological language is an attack on the very nature of humans as being world-acquiring and as being able to freely interpret and articulate anything and everything.

Because managers, as the ones who control, secure and order, need huge amounts of information, and this information can only be made available in technological language, technological language becomes the highest form of language. Learning is therefore no longer the ability to understand something in an entirely new and more appropriate way, but is reduced to reacting to feedback (i.e. single-loop learning (Senge, 1990)), which comes in the form of information about a certain issue.

The way in which the corporation sets up and produces the technological world is first and foremost by giving sole legitimacy to technological language. With this language, both managers and employees can acquire the world exclusively in technological ways. As Heidegger points out, the difference between the inherited or natural human language and technological language. . .

at first looks like the difference between two kinds of language, [but now] turns out as a prevailing happening over the human being, which concerns and unsettles no less than the human being's relationship to the world. It is a world life whose tremors are hardly noticed by today's human being, because it is continuously covered with the newest information. (ÜSTS: 27)

### ***The Inability of Management to Accomplish the Work***

As has been pointed out in this chapter, the corporation, while being a work, is a kind of work that is to be distinguished by the world that it sets up. This world turns out to be no world at all, but em-bankment. Management, as the group of people who create and attend to the corporation, are not genuine artists, but experts at repeating the setting up of em-bankment, rather than creating a world that sets up a new world. While management may have a lot to say about the choice of direction in the corporation, all of these responses remain predominantly within technological revealing. Management cannot see this and is probably the group of people who are lost in em-bankment more than any other stakeholder. What adds to this impasse is management's notion that it actually is in control and that it has a say. However, it only has a say in technological language. This, in turn, cuts off the possibility of creating genuine or original works, or even recognising works as works in the first instance. In particular, managers are cut off from the possibility of creating genuine works because works are fundamentally poetic (UdK: 59ff./OWA: 197ff.). All that remains available for management within em-bankment is the exchange of information in technological language.

This leaves us in a rather depressing situation. The corporation seems to be the pinnacle of nihilism – an entity that is locked into a quest for endless improvement for efficiency and effectiveness, which denies humans their own very nature, and that does not seem to be able to liberate itself but is lost in . . .

. . .the same dreary technological frenzy, the same unrestricted organisation of the average human. . .What for? – Where to? – And what then? (EM: 28–29/IM: 37–38)

If the further development of the corporation does not lead to a place where entities can show up in their very nature, does this mean that humanity is lost in the 'wasteland of the industrial districts' (Gel: 15/DoT: 48) and in the 'corporate world'? Does this mean that everything will inevitably 'now fall into the clutches of planning and calculation, of organisation and automation?' (Gel: 16/DoT: 49). How can we relate to or 'deal' with em-bankment in such a way that humans can gain their humanity? Is it possible for humans to gain access to their very nature within the corporation and overcome their alienation? Is there still a possibility for genuine and original ethics? How can we understand the notion of 'another beginning'? To respond to these questions will be the task of the following chapter. The argument therefore now moves from the question of what *is* to the question of what *can be* (HDic: 242).

## Chapter 4

# Coming to Terms with the Corporation

The question that this chapter deals with is: what is the appropriate way to relate to and deal with technology so that humans can reveal themselves as openness-for-Being and become originally ethical by gaining access to ponder Being? The three obvious ways of relating to technology would be either to endorse technology, to resist technology or to find a way of staying neutral to technology. These three ways of relating to technology and their implication for the very nature of humans will be discussed below. As will be shown, none of these ways of relating to technology are capable of creating the possibility of revealing humans as openness-for-Being. The remainder of this chapter is therefore dedicated to exploring the kind of response that would allow for humans to be revealed in their very nature and by doing so gaining access to the possibility of original ethics as the thinking of the truth of Being.

### **Endorsement – Resistance – Neutrality**

Having read the preceding chapter, the reader might come to one of four conclusions. Firstly, one could be of the opinion that the corporation and technology are thoroughly misunderstood and that technology is really ‘a good thing’. This can easily be made plausible by showing the benefits to humanity that have been brought about by the technological advances in areas such as medicine, food technology, communication and transport technology. One might even cite an example of a child who would have died in an accident if the same accident had occurred a 100 years ago, when neither a rescue helicopter nor the complex medical equipment to save the child’s life would have been available. Most, if not all, of the life-saving devices are provided at least partially in some way by corporations. This argument is undisputed here, although it has nothing to do with the very nature of technology. This view praises the gadgets and instruments and does not say anything about the very nature of technology. The critique of the very nature of technology neither suggests that the technological instruments should be abolished, nor does it suggest that instrumental thinking is always inappropriate. It is a critique of the very nature of technology – em-bankment – as a replacement of world.



A second response could be the acknowledgement that, although technological devices and the corporation come with certain risks and potential negative effects, they can also be beneficial. The corresponding project would therefore be to tirelessly work at moving technology and the corporation away from where they can be harmful or destructive towards where they could be constructive. For example, one could tirelessly work at improving road safety, the peaceful use of nuclear energy with safe reactors, or corporate ethics and values. Although this thinking is realistic about the opportunities and threats of building and using technological devices and 'running' corporations, it remains within em-bankment as an ongoing securing. The effort to deal with technology in a responsible fashion therefore still means that we remain within em-bankment and that we, as humans, both serve technology and are revealed by em-bankment, which still remains disguised.

One is also exposed to this self-disguise of the em-bankment where one occasionally dimly senses and for a moment clearly concedes that technology has long withdrawn from being a means of mere application, and that rather technology draws the human as its instrument behind it, be it that the human being blindly follows being carried away, be it that the human being makes a never ending effort to turn technology in its effect into something healing and useful. (GA 79: 61)

One might be of the view that both technological instruments and corporations, as setting up em-bankment, should be abolished altogether. Much of this is visible in the anti-globalisation movement, movements that encourage going 'back to nature' or back to the way our ancestors lived and other 'green' projects. On the one hand, many of these efforts are laudable and in many ways critically important in ensuring the sustainability of life on the planet, protecting the environment, curbing the exploitation of humans and other undesirable consequences of human organising and behaviour. On the other hand, the argument that corporations provide many helpful things and services still stands undisputed. An obvious criterion and demand for judging any such effort to resist technology and corporations is therefore that the outcome of these efforts must be better than what was there in the first instance. Any attempt to abolish technological instruments and the corporation would therefore only have legitimacy if it can demonstrate that a better alternative exists and can be implemented. Heidegger seems to concur with this when he says:

For all of us, the facilities, devices and machinery of the technological world are to some to a greater and to others to a lesser extent indispensable. It would be foolish to assault technology blindly. It would be short-sighted to condemn it as the work of the devil. We depend on technical devices; they even challenge us to even greater advances. (Gel: 22/DoT: 53)

The question is whether these efforts to abolish technology and the corporation really deal with em-bankment itself and whether they really ultimately lead to a better solution or fundamental improvement, or whether they remain piecemeal and within em-bankment. Are those wanting to abolish the corporation and everything technological confronting em-bankment or are they merely offering another technological solution to a problem that was given by em-bankment in the first place. According to Heidegger, Marx's effort to overcome alienation and exploitation is one such example. Marx looked at the unfulfilled basic needs of humans, such as



food, clothing, procreation and economic wherewithal, and suggested a solution that would create an economic system to provide in these needs (Marx, 1976; Hum: 11/LoH: 224). But Marx looks at everything from an economic point of view, a perspective that, as laid out earlier, remains totally within em-bankment.<sup>1</sup> While these efforts are important for improving the economic situation of many humans and, in many cases, for ensuring their survival, they remain within calculative thinking and em-bankment and do nothing to overcome em-bankment as such. Therefore, resisting an order, making changes to a system or redistributing power are all responses that remain within the securing and ordering, commandeering and controlling of technological revealing. Morgan shows a similar sentiment by stating:

Changes in technology, rules, systems, procedures and policies are just not good enough. (Morgan, 1997: 150)

A fourth response might be to say: ‘Well, all this may be so, but I am really the master of my own life and I am not buying into the corporate world. For me all this is really a means towards an end and I use it as such and otherwise stay neutral to it. I may be employed by a corporation, but I am an independent individual who makes his or her own choices.’ Heidegger regards this kind of response as the most fateful, because the notion that one could be neutral to technology assumes that em-bankment is something that one can relate to as an entity, rather than acknowledging that em-bankment is what gives us who we understand ourselves to be and how everything becomes intelligible but is never intelligible itself. Consequently, assuming that technology is something that we can be neutral to ignores em-bankment altogether and leaves us totally at the mercy of em-bankment.

[W]e never experience our relationship to the very nature of technology as long as we merely conceive and push forward the technological, put up with it or evade it. Everywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately approve or negate it. But we are delivered over to it in the worst possible way when we regard it as something neutral; for this conception of it, to which today one particularly likes to pay homage, makes us utterly blind to the very nature of technology. (FnT: 9/QCT: 4)

In other words, it is a fundamental misconception to think that one can possibly be neutral to technology. Em-bankment is not something that one can be outside of and thus, being neutral to em-bankment is an utterly inappropriate form of relating to it. As a matter of fact, it is precisely em-bankment that makes people think that they conceive of themselves as independent individuals who can think independently and freely. It is not possible to stand outside em-bankment, because it is em-bankment that makes anything and everything intelligible for the modern human being in the first instance.

Wherever the humans open their eyes and ears, unlock their hearts and give themselves over to contemplation and striving, shaping and working, entreating and thanking, they find themselves everywhere already brought into the unconcealed. The unconcealing of the unconcealed has already come to pass whenever it calls humans forth into the modes of revealing allotted to them. (FnT: 22/QCT: 18–19)

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<sup>1</sup>See also Hum: 26 and 30/LoH: 239 and 243.

Therefore, by stating neutrality, humans deny technology as a revealing and actually repeat and affirm em-bankment as that which gives them their outlook on themselves. In this sense em-bankment is not something that can be conquered, overcome or ended by appointing a group of experts or authorised people (Gel: 20–21/DoT: 52). The question that then arises is: if all of these responses are just a repetition and affirmation of em-bankment, can humans gain their humanity at all, particularly within the corporation? And if it is possible to regain their very nature, particularly within the corporation, how would that be accomplished? The remainder of this chapter will respond to these questions.

## Coming to Terms with Em-bankment

Dreyfus gives us a hint about where the starting point can be found for the endeavour to deal with the danger that em-bankment poses for the very nature of being human. He says:

This threat is not a *problem* for which we must find a *solution*, but an **ontological condition** that requires a *transformation of our understanding of being*. (Dreyfus, 1993: 305)

The task of this chapter is to work out the nature of this transformation. As pointed out previously, Heidegger makes it clear that em-bankment and technological revealing are not something that can be prevented or abolished. They remain the background to all our understanding. He describes the transformation with regard to technology with the German word ‘*verwinden*’ (GA 79: 69). *Verwinden* is not a word that is common in standard or High German. It is a word that is used in the south-western part of Germany for ‘coming to terms’ with something. ‘Coming to terms with’ means being able to deal and be with something that one may not be able to change or overcome as a fact of life in the first instance. For example, it might not be possible to ever get over the death of a child or a very close friend in the sense of not experiencing the loss and grief any longer. These kinds of experiences might never go away, but one can learn to live with them, to integrate them into one’s life as a reality, which is what is meant by ‘coming to terms with’. In coming to terms with something, that which one comes to terms with is accepted, integrated and acknowledged in a way that allows it to be there without getting in the way or being destructive.

This ‘coming to terms with’ is similar to what happens when in the human domain one comes to terms with pain. (GA 79: 69)

The ‘coming to terms with’ is a transformation, and with regard to em-bankment it is a transformation of acknowledging that background or significant whole which makes anything intelligible. This transformation or coming to terms with em-bankment is the transformation of our own understanding, both of being revealed as an asset *and* being openness-for-Being, and the acknowledgement of em-bankment as *the* danger for the Being of human beings. This transformation starts with the acknowledgement of our always already understanding of ourselves as asset. This acknowledgement carries within itself already an understanding of ourselves as

openness-for-Being, since neither a stone nor a dog can acknowledge its own understanding of itself as an asset or as anything else, for that matter. We as humans can only acknowledge this appropriately when we open ourselves up to both the very nature of technology and to the very nature of being human. This is not something that can be accomplished within technological revealing. This requires genuine thinking. To guide us in this thinking, Heidegger starts out with the following question and elucidations:

How do we need to think?; since thinking is the genuine action, if action means to lend a hand to the very nature of Being [Seyn], so that to prepare the abode for it in which it brings itself and its very nature to utterance in language. Without language, any attempt to think would be without path and guidance. Without language, for any action any dimension for inquiring and realising would be missing. Language here is never primarily the expression of thinking, feeling and willing. Language is the primordial dimension within which the very nature of humans is able to co-respond [entsprechen] at all to Being and its claim, and, in co-responding belongs to Being. This primordial co-response accomplished for its own sake is thinking. In thinking we learn the dwelling in the realm in which the coming to terms with the fate of Being, the coming to terms with em-bankment happens [ereignet]. (GA 79: 71/QCT: 40–41)

Quite clearly, technological language alone will never be able to give us ‘path and guidance’ to think about the very nature of technology itself, since, as pointed out earlier, the very nature of technology is nothing technological at all. Technological language is information. To inform people about them being an asset is entirely senseless, because, on the one hand, this view is obvious and correct within em-bankment and, on the other hand, it does not give humans any hint about their very nature. To give people insight into the revealing that technology is, we need to find our way into the primordial dimension of language. This primordial dimension can no longer be found in technological language. It can be found in inherited language. As Heidegger points out, access to inherited language remains preserved in technological language, since technological language is a derivative of inherited language.

Meanwhile the information theory of language inevitably comes to a limit. Because ‘each attempt to make a part of language (by formalisation into a system of signs) unambiguous already presupposes the use of natural language even as far as it is not unambiguous.’<sup>2</sup> Still, the ‘natural’, meaning the not previously technologically invented and ordered language, remains preserved and as it were remains in the back of all technological conversion of the nature of language. (ÜSTS: 26–27)

Coming to terms with em-bankment cannot happen within technological terminology. The translation of ‘verwinden’ as ‘coming to terms with’ gives us an even deeper insight than the German original, since it carries with it the hint that this ‘coming to terms’ is a linguistic task. ‘Coming to terms with’ happens as an understanding of the terms of em-bankment and as an articulation of technology in appropriate terms. This articulation in appropriate terms can only happen in inherited language, since it is not passing on information that is already understood in a

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<sup>2</sup>von Weizsäcker (1959: 70).

predefined way and that reckons with conditions that are already given. This articulation is not a labelling, but a calling into Being. Calling into Being is available in inherited language. Because human language can call entities into Being, it can call humans into Being as openness-for-Being, but it can also call them into Being as asset.

What is called the 'natural' language – the not technologised colloquial speech – is called the inherited language in the title of this lecture. Inheritance is not the mere handing on, it is the preservation of the primordial, is the safekeeping of new possibilities of the already spoken language. These themselves contain and present the unspoken. The handing down of language is carried out by language itself, in fact this happens in the way of claiming the human being to say the world anew out of the kept on language and in that way to make the not-yet-seen shine. This however is the job of the poet. (ÜSTS: 27)

What is critical for coming to terms with technology is a profound and primordial understanding of language. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger questions whether philosophical research has already sufficiently thought about the very nature of language (SZ: 166/BT: 209). According to Heidegger, language is much more than just information; it allows humans to be humans in the first instance (UzS: 11/PLT: 189). Language and speaking are usually regarded as a human expression, a human action or the imagination of something real or unreal (UzS: 14–15/PLT: 192–193). In this sense, it could be a human faculty or action like many others. But language, according to Heidegger, is not only a faculty. It not only distinguishes humans from non-human organisms and physical objects. Language, as the quote above indicates, allows humans to have and create an understanding of both the world and all entities, including themselves. Language, understood that way, transports our understanding of what it means to be a human being. He notes:

It is not us who have language, but it is language which has us, in the proper as well as in the improper sense. (GA 39: 23)

Language is therefore not only that which transports our understanding of ourselves, but it also reveals all entities. Since language is at the foundation of every understanding, it is something that acts itself and, as such Heidegger notes, 'language speaks' (UzS: 12/PLT: 190) itself.

Due to the power of language human beings are the witness of Being. They vouch for it, stand up to it and fall prey to it. Where there is no language, as with animal and plant, there is despite all life no revelation of Being and therefore also no non-being and no emptiness of nothing. Plant and animal are standing on the other side of all of that; here there reigns only blind obsession and dull flight. Only where there is language, there the world prevails. Only where there is world, meaning where there is language, there is the highest danger, *the danger* itself, meaning the threat of Being as such through the Non-Being. Language is not only dangerous, because it endangers humans, but the *most dangerous*, the danger of all dangers, because it creates and keeps open the possibility of endangering Being. Because humans *are* language, therefore they create this danger and bring the inherently lurking destruction. As the most dangerous, language is the most double-edged and most ambiguous. It puts humans into the zone of highest achievement and holds them at the same time into the area of the most abysmal decay. (GA 39: 62)

As long as we remain in technological language, *the* danger is already inherently turned into a loss, because humans can no longer reveal and be revealed as anything other than an asset and the corresponding information about this asset. Within technological language, thinking is limited to calculation or calculative thinking. Calculative thinking is the kind of thinking that remains within em-bankment. The peculiarity of calculative thinking . . .

. . . consists in the fact that whenever we plan, research and organise we always reckon with conditions that are given. We take them into account with the calculated intention of their serving specific purposes. Thus we count on definite successes and results. This calculation is the mark of all planning and investigative thinking. Such thinking remains a calculation even if it neither works with numbers nor uses an adding machine or computer. Calculative thinking computes. It computes ever new, ever more promising and at the same time more economical possibilities. Calculative thinking races from one prospect to the next. Calculative thinking never stops, never collects and contemplates itself. Calculative thinking is not contemplative thinking, not thinking that thinks for the sense and nature, which reigns in everything that is. (Gel: 12–13/DoT: 46)

Within technological language and calculative thinking there may be an acknowledgement of many risks, but there is no revelation of *the* danger to the very nature of humans. Humans are not revealed as openness-for-Being within technological language and calculative thinking. Besides, since humans are merely revealed as assets in the first instance, and there is no danger of them suddenly not being assets, there is only the danger of these assets being more or less valuable. *The* danger for the very nature of humans comes from technological language and calculative thinking itself, since it cannot think in terms of the very nature of entities. On the other hand, in inherited or natural language *the* danger can become fully present, because humans can reveal themselves in many ways and they can also acknowledge the danger to the very nature of being human that is inherent in being revealed as an asset. In this sense, technological and inherited language are not merely two different types of language, but ‘a prevailing happening over the human being, which concerns and unsettles no less than the human being’s relationship to the world. It is a world life whose tremors are hardly noticed by today’s human being, because it is continuously covered with the newest information’ (ÜSTS: 27). Once *the* danger is present – and it can only become present in inherited language – humans can *turn* from being revealed as asset to being revealed as openness-for-Being (GA 79: 71/QCT: 41). Thus, coming to terms with technology becomes available out of the confrontation and is indeed itself the confrontation of *the* danger as technological language.

The transformation from technological language and viewing humans as assets to inherited language and viewing humans as openness-for-Being is similar to forgetting something and remembering something. When something is forgotten, then it is no longer remembered. But the moment one remembers that one has forgotten something, that which was forgotten is no longer entirely forgotten and one at least has a glimpse of what it is that one has forgotten. Remaining within technological language is like having forgotten that one has forgotten and speaking a language in which what has been forgotten can no longer be articulated and thus

can no longer be remembered. Inherited language, so to speak, allows us to remember and think of humans as openness-for-Being. This remembrance of how we are currently revealed, as well as who we are in our very nature, is what Heidegger calls 'being an echo'.

Being an echo is more difficult and therefore more rare than having opinions or holding points of view. To be an echo is the endurance of thinking. Its passion is the silent sobriety. It is infinitely more difficult, because it is more dangerous than the often-quoted objectiveness of scientific research. Being an echo, namely the claim of Being, requires a carefulness of language of which the technological-terminological way of using language of course can't know anything. (GA 79: 66)

Therefore, to come to terms with technology it is critical to distinguish technological language and to become familiar with the world-disclosing nature of inherited language. When language is understood as that which makes humans the witness of Being, a critical insight becomes apparent. Technological language is information, but as a language it is never just information. Even technological language, as language, makes the human being a witness of Being and of all entities in purely technological terms. It reveals and repeats everything as asset. With every sentence, it repeats and confirms technological revealing and em-bankment (SvG: 202–203). If we become aware of the revealing nature of technological language, we are already seeing that, even in technological language, the very nature of language remains latent as being hidden.

The corporation is the kind of work that sets up em-bankment by giving primary legitimacy to technological language and calculative thinking (see also: Morgan, 1997: 144–146). To enter into a relation with em-bankment in order to be able to come to terms with it means to enter into a relation with technological language, which means to enter into a relation with the very nature of technological language and, with that, to the very nature of language itself. It is critical to keep this linguistic nature in mind in coming to terms with the corporation and we will pick up on this line of thought in the next chapter when dealing with the question of how to deal with the kind of work that brings together people's productive capabilities in an original manner.

## **The Corporation – *the* Danger – Deliverance**

How do we deal with these insights into the corporation? How do we need to relate to em-bankment as set up by the corporation so that we can come to terms with it when we are in the corporation? Heidegger provides helpful guidance:

Em-bankment is the gathering together which belongs to that setting-upon which challenges humans and puts them in position to reveal the actual, in the mode of ordering, as asset. As the ones who are challenged forth in this way, humans stand within the realm of the very nature of em-bankment. They can never take up a relationship to it only subsequently. Thus the question as to how we are to arrive at a relationship with the very nature of technology, asked this way, always comes too late. But never too late comes the question as to whether we actually experience ourselves as the ones whose activities everywhere, public and private, are challenged forth by em-bankment. Above all, never too late comes the question as

to whether and how we actually admit ourselves into that wherein em-bankment unfolds in its very nature. (FnT: 27–28/QCT: 24)

Thus the task is to experience how we ourselves, and everything that we deal with in the corporation, are given by em-bankment and technological language. By considering this, we will not change technological revealing in the corporation, but by acknowledging us and everything else as being revealed by em-bankment we already come into the vicinity of revealing itself, which points us towards the very nature of being human and the very nature of the corporation.

When we move from seeing technology as a revealing it reminds us of our very nature as humans and it allows us to see that technological revealing is not an absolute, but a possibility among infinite other possibilities of revealing. Technological language can thus be viewed as a vocabulary among many other vocabularies. Suddenly we can think about where this possibility of technological revealing and a technological vocabulary are appropriate and where they are inappropriate. This is the moment of transformation when humans come to terms with technology. It is a profound liberation, because it is not just the liberation from a circumstance or condition, but it is a liberation of the very nature of being human itself (FnT: 29/QCT: 25–26).

The critical step is the realisation that we, as modern humans and as being involved in corporations, encounter anything and think about anything within em-bankment and within technological language. While technological revealing is the extreme danger for the very nature of human Being, it is still that which grants anything to be in the first instance. Whatever we encounter in the corporation is given by em-bankment. This has a twofold meaning. On the one hand, everything is revealed as asset and humans are thereby denied their very nature and, on the other hand, it is em-bankment as a significant whole within which we can make sense of anything and encounter anything in the first instance. Because em-bankment is a revealing, it is profoundly human and cannot happen without humans. It contains in itself already an understanding of the very nature of humans as openness-for-Being when acknowledged as a revealing (FnT: 36/QCT: 31–32). One therefore could and appropriately should be grateful to em-bankment and the corporation, since they make everything intelligible in the first place. This, of course, does not mean that there could not be other backgrounds or worlds that make everything intelligible, but as humans we depend on this type of background and can therefore appropriately be grateful for it, whatever it is. In the corporation, this background happens to be em-bankment. Furthermore, if understood appropriately as a revealing and the corporation as setting up of a revealing, em-bankment in a way shows us our very nature as humans and, as such, is the source of the deliverance of the very nature of humans (Dreyfus, 1993: 307; Gel: 64–65/DoT: 85).

The very nature of technology is in a lofty sense ambiguous. Such ambiguity points to the mystery of all revealing, i.e., of truth.

On the one hand, em-bankment challenges forth into the frenzy of ordering that blocks every view into the event of revealing and so radically endangers the relation to the nature of truth.



On the other hand, em-bankment happens for its part in the granting that lets man endure – as yet inexperienced, but perhaps more experienced in the future – that he may be the one who is needed and used for the safekeeping of the nature of truth. In this way appears the rise of deliverance. (FnT: 37/QCT: 33)

To sum up, the task of bringing about the transformation of em-bankment to *world* is not in doing away with em-bankment, but in acknowledging its very nature. Once we see its very nature as revealing, it remains the basis for intelligibility, but it does this no longer as an absolute, but as an always already understanding that can be the springboard to infinite re-interpretations. Within this, the acknowledgement of em-bankment as a revealing carries in itself the beginning of the understanding of the very nature of humans as openness-for-Being and as the ones who are needed for any kind of revealing. To acknowledge em-bankment does not make em-bankment itself intelligible. It remains hidden itself, but we can see how what is hidden touches us in various areas of our life.

But if we explicitly and continuously heed the fact that such hidden meaning touches us everywhere in the world of technology, we stand at once within the realm of that which hides itself from us, and hides itself just in approaching. That which shows itself and at the same time withdraws is the essential trait of what we call ‘the mystery’. I call the comportment that enables us to keep open the meaning hidden in technology, *openness to the mystery*. (Gel: 24/DoT: 55)

Two things happen in this manner. Firstly, technology and the corporation retreat into their limits and the domain of their own legitimacy and appropriate correspondence, which is, amongst others, the domain of pure economics dealing with economic issues. Since many aspects of life have an economic dimension there are a number of areas where this way of thinking remains appropriate and legitimate. Secondly, by standing in the openness of the mystery, we acknowledge humans as world-acquiring. By acknowledging humans as world-acquiring we can also acknowledge the danger to this world-acquiring nature that lies in em-bankment. Thus the acknowledgement of *the* danger and the deliverance of the very nature of human Being are like two sides of the same coin. Heidegger states:

The selfsame danger is, when it is *as* the danger, the deliverance. (FnT: 45/QCT: 42)

At the moment when the danger is acknowledged as *the* danger for the very nature of human beings, the oblivion to the very nature of human being *turns* and em-bankment is transformed into a way of understanding, rather than being the totality of significance that makes anything intelligible in an absolute manner. It is the insight into em-bankment as em-bankment and *the* danger that *is* in itself the *turning* (Mizoguchi, 1990: 191). When em-bankment is exposed as em-bankment, the danger in em-bankment becomes apparent as *the* danger, and *world* happens (GA 79: 73/QCT: 43). Deliverance grows in the happening of *world*. This growing of that which gives deliverance grows as little in cause and effect terms as the work sets up a world in cause and effect terms.

In what respect does the deliverance grow there also where the danger is? Where something grows, there it takes root, from thence it thrives. Both happen concealedly and quietly and in their own time. But according to the words of the poet we may not expect that where

the danger is we should be able to lay hold of the deliverance immediately and without preparation. (FnT: 33/QCT: 29)

The kind of growth that is meant by the ‘deliverance that grows’ could be explained by the metaphor of growing vegetables. The gardener does not actively grow vegetables as an ongoing activity that has a direct impact. The gardener creates the right kind of conditions by making sure that there is fertile soil and enough water and light, and the vegetables then grow by themselves. Similarly, for the deliverance in respect of technological revealing we must create an understanding that technology, in its very nature, is actually a revealing. We must experience ourselves and everything else as being revealed by em-bankment. The preparation for the deliverance is to nurture an understanding of em-bankment as both that which makes anything intelligible and that which, by being understood as a revealing, hints to humans that they are not just assets, but openness-for-Being. In understanding that which gives humans intelligibility and by acknowledging that as a revealing, the human being, as being openness-for-Being, is the ‘shepherd of Being’ (Hum: 22/ LoH: 234).

Where does this leave our understanding and appropriate relationship to the corporation? Is the corporation the location of the danger or the location of the deliverance? The poet Hölderlin, whom Heidegger quotes in ‘The Question Concerning Technology’, provides guidance:

‘Where though danger is, grows That which gives deliverance too.’ (FnT: 32/QCT: 28)

Because the corporation is the kind of entity that is intended to set up revealing for the purposes of production in effective and efficient terms, it is setting up em-bankment in the extreme. Because em-bankment comes to an extreme in the corporation, it is a prominent location of *the* danger. As such, em-bankment can most clearly be come to terms with within the corporation, because humans can more easily and more decisively unconceal how they have admitted themselves into em-bankment and are challenged forth by em-bankment. By acknowledging the extreme power of em-bankment as a revealing in the corporation, humans are also allowed to come to terms with it in an extremely thorough way. The corporation, when confronted this way, shows two sides. On the one side it endangers humans in their very nature by setting up technological revealing as an absolute, but is also that location where *the* danger can be acknowledged as *the* danger in a conspicuously thorough way and can thereby become the prominent location of deliverance. It is also worthwhile to remember that, besides this ontological description of the corporation, it remains an entity that provides us with numerous products and services. This leaves us in a position to say ‘yes’ to the corporation as the entity that provides helpful products and services and ‘no’ to the corporation as the entity setting up em-bankment, although we also acknowledge that the chance for deliverance lies within this em-bankment. These might at first seem like rather conflicting statements that do not permit any coherent or appropriate way to think about the corporation. Heidegger calls the appropriate way of being and thinking of this situatedness the letting-be [Gelassenheit] and contemplative thinking [besinnliches Denken].

## Letting-Be and Contemplative Thinking

In what was said above we can see a simultaneous ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to technology. This is not some sort of schizophrenia or uncertainty. It brings us to a place where our relation to technology becomes simple, calm and peaceful (Gel: 23/DoT: 54). This relation says ‘yes’ to technological objects as equipment of a certain kind, that depends on something higher, and it says ‘no’ to technology as em-bankment, as a revealing that is absolute. Heidegger calls this simultaneous ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to technology ‘the letting-things-be’ [die Gelassenheit zu den Dingen] (Gel: 23/DoT: 54). The word ‘things’ in ‘the-letting-things-be’ does not just refer to physical objects. The word ‘thing’ has a broader meaning. Heidegger points out that, in English, one can say, for example: ‘he knows how to handle things’ or ‘that is a great thing’ (GA 79: 14). In both senses these things are not just physical objects but could also be a cause, an issue, any other entity or, according to Meister Eckhart, even a soul or god (GA 79: 15). The ‘letting-be’ in the ‘letting-things-be’ contains a double meaning. The *letting*-be can be understood as letting go or leaving something on its own or alone. In this sense it would be passive. Letting-*be* can also be understood as granting something its own very nature or way of being. Letting-be is then highly active. Letting-be is similar or possibly even the equivalent to the Taoist *wu wei*, which is often translated as non-interference (Stambaugh, 1990: 85). According to Stambaugh, the Heideggerian letting-be is a kind of *waiting*, which is in sharp contrast to expecting. Expecting already knows what is being expected, while waiting is an openness that does not have something definite in mind. Letting-be is waiting, but is neither a waiting that is necessarily characterised by not doing anything else in the meantime, nor is it an awaiting for entities themselves or for a particular situation. Letting-be in the Heideggerian sense is a waiting for the co-respondence<sup>3</sup> with the very nature of entities and that which gives us entities in the way they are revealed and unconcealed (i.e. em-bankment, world) (Gel: 57ff./DoT: 79ff.). Letting-be as waiting is an *openness* to being in co-respondence with the very nature of entities with their Being. This waiting is an engagement with the very nature of entities. It is a way of being that is congruent with the very nature of humans as openness-for-Being. It is a way of being in which humans, by co-responding to their own very nature, are truly free. Letting-things-be and freedom are the same for Heidegger. Freedom is therefore no longer freedom from conditions or circumstances. This understanding of freedom under conditions and circumstances understands freedom merely in cause and effect terms. If we see freedom in cause and effect terms, the quest for freedom will result in a constant management, preservation, tending, and planning of the entities that are either perceived to have a potential positive or negative effect with regard to removing or creating limiting circumstances. As Heidegger points out:

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<sup>3</sup>‘Co-respondence’ is chosen here as a translation for the German word ‘entsprechen’. Entsprechen in this sense means to bring oneself in relation to an entity in a way that is in harmony with its very nature. In this sense it is a type of ‘responding’ to this very nature appropriately.

Freedom is not merely what common sense is content to let pass under this name: the caprice, turning up occasionally in our choosing, of inclining in this or that direction. Freedom is not mere absence of constraint with respect to what we can or cannot do. Nor is it on the other hand mere readiness for what is required and necessary (and so somehow an entity). Prior to all this ('negative' and 'positive' freedom), freedom is engagement in the disclosure of entities as such. (VWdW: 189/OET: 126)

Humans, according to Heidegger, become truly free when they come to listen to that which reveals and then stop being the slave of a particular revealing such as em-bankment. As such, freedom has little to do with human willing or effort. It is a way of listening. It is a listening for that which gives us what we hear (FnT: 28–29/QCT: 25). To let-things-be and to be free is a form of taking a stand on things.

Taking this stand, we are no more seeing merely technologically. We are becoming clair-voyant and notice that the production and use of machines demands of us another relation to things, which nevertheless is not senseless. (Gel: 23/DoT: 54)

This other relation to things, which is not senseless, is not accomplished by letting-things-be. It permits that, but does not create it. It opens up the realm of the mystery of being human.

The letting-be towards things and the openness to the mystery belong together. They grant us the possibility of dwelling in the world in a totally different way. They promise us a new ground and foundation upon which we can stand and endure in the world of technology without being imperilled by it. (Gel: 24/DoT: 55)

Letting-things-be is neither something that can simply be done nor is it something that happens out of passivity. It is as tricky as wanting to relax, working towards calming down or trying to be free of wishes. While all these are not things that can simply be done, they are unlikely to happen by themselves and there are things that can be done to make them more likely (Stambaugh, 1990: 86–87). Letting-be and freedom require a kind of dedicated thinking that Heidegger calls 'contemplative thinking', which he distinguishes from 'calculative thinking' (Gel: 25/DoT: 56). This kind of thinking is critical for building a foundation and ground for creating of and attendance to genuine works (Gel: 26/DoT: 56–57). How can we come to contemplative thinking? We come to contemplative thinking by first distinguishing it from calculative thinking. Calculative thinking takes the familiar for granted. It already understands – being given by em-bankment – everything in a certain way. Contemplative thinking contemplates the very nature of entities and is therefore inextricably linked to letting be and freedom. Contemplative thinking is always unfamiliar and unsettling. It thinks in a domain where usefulness and immediate application are withdrawn. It is a place that does not give guidance for dealing with current business. It does not provide obvious instructions for fulfilling a task (Gel: 13/DoT: 46). To master letting-be and human freedom we must make ourselves at home in this domain. But how is that done?

What could the ground and foundation be for the new nativeness? Perhaps the answer we are looking for lies at hand; so near that we all too easily overlook it. For the way to what is near is always the longest and thus the hardest for us humans. This way is the way of contemplative thinking. Contemplative thinking demands of us not to cling one-sidedly to

a single idea, nor to run down a one-track course of ideas. Contemplative thinking demands of us that we engage ourselves with what at first sight does not go together at all. (Gel: 21–22/DoT: 53)

Contemplative thinking is the engagement with that which gives us who we are now (historically), our very nature and who we could be. One might say that this is too high a demand for those involved in corporations. But those involved in corporations are humans. Contemplative thinking is inherently available in the very nature of being human as being openness-for-Being.

Finally one might say the pure contemplative thinking, the persevering contemplation is too ‘high’. In this excuse only this much is true, that contemplative thinking does not just happen by itself any more than calculative thinking. At times it requires a greater effort. It demands more practise. It is in need of even more delicate care than any other genuine craft. But it must also be able to bide its time, to await as does the farmer, whether the seed will come up and ripen. (Gel: 13/DoT: 47)

Contemplative thinking is the co-respondence to the very nature of humans as openness-for-Being: being the kind of entity that can open itself up to the very nature of entities and to Being. Contemplative thinking is the flipside of letting-things-be and human freedom and both belong to and co-respond to the very nature of being human.

## The Corporation as the Two-Fold Location of Deliverance

From the vantage point of what has been said about letting-be, freedom and contemplative thinking, the corporation once again appears differently. As has been pointed out, by acknowledging em-bankment as *the* danger, both the very nature of em-bankment as a revealing and human nature become apparent. This allows coming to terms with technology and opens up the possibility of letting-things-be, human freedom and contemplative thinking. Because the corporation sets up em-bankment in the extreme, it is also the location where, by coming to terms with em-bankment, deliverance can be accomplished in a very thorough way. This kind of deliverance is predominantly a deliverance *from* and, as such, gives us a freedom *from* em-bankment.

By opening up the possibility for letting-things-be, human freedom and contemplative thinking, we also gain a different access to the corporation itself. By letting the corporation be in its very nature we can explore its very nature. We can see that it is neither a tool or equipment nor merely an instrument or asset as em-bankment would suggest, but, in setting up em-bankment, it exposes itself as the kind of entity that we call a work. As a work it is something that is created by humans (UdK: 13–14, 45/OWA: 154, 183). Seeing the corporation as a work, which is a human creation, leaves us with a different kind of freedom. Rather than a freedom *from*, this is a freedom *for*. It is a freedom *for* creating the kind of entity that sets up a world. By having come to terms with technology and by having access to contemplative thinking, we no longer have to repeat re-creating the corporation as an unoriginal work. We can understand in what way the corporation as a work sets up

em-bankment and we can create or re-create the company in such a way that it sets up a world rather than em-bankment. In acknowledging the company as a work, we have gained the freedom *for* creating it as an original work and thereby setting up a world. The corporation is therefore not simply the place for deliverance in the sense of it being a prominent place where em-bankment can be acknowledged and come to terms with; it is also the kind of entity that allows us to create it as setting up a world that reveals humans as openness-for-Being. The corporation is therefore a *two-fold* location for the deliverance of the very nature of human beings. This leaves humans not only free, but it leaves them – as creators of works – with the awesome responsibility to create works that give humans their outlook on themselves and all other entities. But then we might no longer call this original work a corporation, but are called to find a different term to depict this kind of company.

In coming to terms with the corporation, we come to a similar relation to the corporation as we came to em-bankment. It is a ‘no’ to the corporation as unoriginal and setting up em-bankment, and a ‘yes’ to understanding the corporation as a work. Heidegger clearly sees the role of works in coming to terms with technology and the possibility of ‘another beginning’:

Yet the more questioningly we ponder the very nature of technology, the more mysterious the very nature of art becomes.

The closer we come to the danger, the more brightly does the way that that which gives deliverance begin to shine and the more questioning we become. For questioning is the piety of thought. (FnT: 40/QCT: 35)

But what allows new works to be brought about? This is where step-by-step prescriptions, as well as hints and guidelines, fail. The process requires genuine thought. The path to this thinking has been sketched out above. In his reference to the epoch that we now call Greek antiquity, Heidegger provides a distant hint of the kind of incident that brings about the dawning of a new epoch.

As the breach for the revelation of Being set into work, the openness-for-Being of the historical human is an *in-cident*, the incident in which suddenly the might of unbound powers of Being are let loose and come forth and enter into the work as history. Of this suddenness and uniqueness of openness-for-Being the Greeks had a profound presentiment, into which they were compelled by Being itself, which disclosed itself to them as *physis* and *logos* and *dikē*. It remains inconceivable that the Greeks should have told themselves that they want to turn out culture for the next millennia of the Occident. Because they needed only power in the desperation of their openness-for-Being and thus did not do away with the desperation, but only augmented it, they forced on themselves the fundamental condition of true historical greatness. (EM: 125/IM: 164)

Nowhere does Heidegger claim that a single work could usher in a new epoch, but, as the quote above indicates, he suggests that the creating of those works that set up a new world come from out of the co-respondence with Being and the very nature of entities. In correspondence with this, it is notable that classic works and new understandings for Being do not necessarily begin with a grand plan for creating a work that then sets up a kind of new world which is with hindsight called an epoch. Works like the Eiffel Tower and Shakespeare’s plays were not created to become classics. As a matter of fact, they were only created for temporary use, but they

were driven by a certain call of the possibility of openness-for-Being. We should also be clear about the fact that, although the Greek epoch was created from a certain relation to the very nature of entities, it became the prejudice and pre-understanding for millennia to come (Mizoguchi, 1990: 190–191). It is therefore necessary that we should refrain from the arrogance of assuming that we could ever create a world that is absolute and therefore no longer historical. To develop a way of thinking that allows humans access to both the possibility and the responsibility that open up here is the task of the remainder of this book.



# Chapter 5

## Towards the Enterprise as an Original Work

### The Task of this Chapter

The task of the previous chapter was to work out a path for coming to terms with the corporation as the kind of work that sets up em-bankment and, by setting up em-bankment, denies humans and other entities their very nature. The task of this chapter is to show how the kind of original work that is to be called ‘the enterprise’ can be created, attended to and governed.<sup>1</sup> It should be clear that, because the creation of a work is an artistic act, this cannot be achieved fundamentally by merely applying the tools, processes, theories and knowledge handed to us by em-bankment. How then can the task of understanding the creation, attendance to and governance of the enterprise be made intelligible in a way that is meaningful for theory and practice? To respond to this appropriately, this chapter must build a path towards a certain kind of knowing. This path is taken by being engaged and applied, not just by being evaluated from a theoretical perspective. To use a metaphor, taking this path is not like going on a commercially pre-planned tourist outing during which impressive sights are presented without the need to get out of a familiar comfort zone. One cannot appropriately understand a path by just standing next to it and looking at it; it can only be understood appropriately by being taken. In taking this path, this chapter provides guidance as a series of signposts that show directions for exploration. The task of this chapter is therefore not to give answers and prescriptions, but to give guidance for being on the way, a way that requires genuine thinking.

Thinking itself is a way. We respond to the way only by remaining underway. . . . We must get on the way, that is, must take steps by which alone the way becomes a way. The way of thinking cannot be traced from somewhere to somewhere like a well-worn rut, nor does it at all exist as such in any place. Only when we walk it, and in no other fashion, only, that is, by thoughtful questioning, are we on the move on the way. This movement is what allows the way to come forward. (Re-quoted from Stambaugh (1990: 81–82)<sup>2</sup>)

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<sup>1</sup>The terms ‘creating’, ‘attending to’ and ‘governing’ will be explained in more detail in the course of this chapter.

<sup>2</sup>Stambaugh references this quote as OWL: 126, although it cannot be found on this page in the publication.

In other words, this path develops by walking it. There is no clearly defined point of departure and no clearly defined ultimate goal. Being on the move on this path means thinking (Stambaugh, 1990: 82). The first task of this chapter is to give access to the very nature of the enterprise as an original work. The second task of this chapter is to provide an understanding of the very nature of creating and maintaining the enterprise.

### *Towards a Vocabulary for the Enterprise as an Original Work*

It seems appropriate to introduce a different vocabulary here so as to distinguish between the unoriginal work and the original work and the corresponding ways of dealing with these entities. The words that are introduced in this chapter are to be understood in a particular way, namely as ‘words’:

Words [Worte] are not terms [Wörter], and thus are not like buckets and kegs from which we scoop a content that is there. Words are wellsprings that are found and dug up in telling, wellsprings that must be found and dug up again and again, that easily cave in, but that at times also well up when least expected. If we do not go to the spring again and again, the buckets and kegs stay empty, or their content stays stale.

To pay heed to what the words say is different in its very nature from what it first seems to be, a mere preoccupation with terms. Besides, to pay heed to what the words say is particularly difficult for us moderns, because we find it hard to detach ourselves from the ‘at first’ of what is common; and if we succeed for once, we relapse all too easily. (WhD: 89/WCT: 130)

It is critical to remember this way of relating to the vocabulary introduced for the remainder of this book, otherwise one might fall prey to the temptation to lower the introduced vocabulary to ideological status.

The ‘corporation’ is the word that was used to describe the unoriginal work that sets up em-bankment. The original equivalent that sets up a world is termed ‘the enterprise’. ‘Enterprise’ is defined as an *undertaking*, especially a *bold* or *difficult* one, a *readiness to engage* in such undertakings or a business firm (OxDic: 390). Etymologically it is derived from the French ‘entreprise’ and ‘entreprendre’, which signify an ‘undertaking’ and ‘to undertake something’. In addition, it seems useful to consider the definition of the word ‘enterprising’ as *resourceful, imaginative* and *energetic* (OxDic: 390).

Running a corporation was referred to as ‘management’. The term used to refer to the action of dealing with the enterprise appropriately is ‘entrepreneurial governance’. ‘Entrepreneurial’ is the adjective of the word entrepreneur, which is defined as a person who *undertakes an enterprise* or business with the *chance of profit or loss*, a contractor *acting as an intermediary*, the person in *effective control* of a commercial undertaking. Similarly to the word enterprise, it is derived from the French word ‘entreprendre’ (OxDic: 392). ‘Governance’ is defined as *the act of governing, the office or function of governing* and *sway and control* (OxDic: 511). The choice of the word ‘governance’ has been inspired by the understanding developed by Spinoza, Flores and Dreyfus (1997: 26) and is chosen here to signify a way of dealing with entities that allows for the acknowledgement of their very nature and

therefore the emphasis on dealing with humans is on ‘sway’ rather than ‘control’. Governance signifies styles of leadership that are within an understanding of leadership as fundamentally political and that include the possibility of dealing with different types of entities in accordance with their very nature. For example, appropriate governance in this sense would deal with humans as openness-for-Being and allow them to be entrepreneurial, since this is an expression of their very nature, while it would deal with physical objects and organisms in different ways because they are not cases of openness-for-Being and cannot be entrepreneurial themselves.

The terms ‘creating’ and ‘attending’ will also play a central role in this chapter. ‘Creating’ means *bringing into existence* and *causing* (OxDic: 272). In the context of this book, it signifies a certain type of ‘bringing forth’ that is the genesis of any work. ‘Attending’ means *being present in a serving capacity* (OxDic: 69). The word is used for the activity of appropriate and understanding participation in the world that is set up by a work. All the mentioned terms will be explored further in the remainder of this chapter.

### *Creating an Ethos for the Enterprise*

As mentioned earlier, the task and endeavour of this chapter is to open up avenues to create, attend to and govern the enterprise. The all-important challenge in this endeavour is to ascertain the appropriate approach. In an attempt to point out the possibility of the creation of enterprises, entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial governance, one might consider attempting to achieve this by developing a value system that values the enterprise as an original work. One could even, within this effort, develop various stages of development towards a ‘fully fledged’ enterprise and attach different values to the various stages. However, Heidegger points out that the values of truth and art are, as values, only a prescription for the creative in technological terms (ÜdM: 78). Heidegger would therefore decidedly be against thinking in terms of values. This thinking against values needs to be clarified further:

The thinking against ‘values’ does not maintain that everything considered as ‘a value’ – ‘culture,’ ‘art,’ ‘science,’ ‘human dignity,’ ‘world’ and ‘God’ – is valueless. Rather, it is important finally to realise that precisely through the characterisation of something as ‘a value’ what is so valued is robbed of its worth. That is to say, by the assessment of something as a value, what is valued is admitted only as an object for human estimation. But that, what something is in its Being, is not exhausted in its being an object, particularly when objectiveness takes the form of a value itself. Every valuing, even where it values positively, is a subjectivising. It does not let entities: be. Rather, valuing lets entities: be valid – solely as the object of its doing. The bizarre effort to prove the objectivity of values does not know what it is doing. (Hum: 39/LoH: 251)

In other words, thinking in values remains within technological and calculative thinking, since it turns those entities that are valued – by attaching value to them – into the type of objects that are of value: assets. The thinking that is required here is a thinking that makes intelligible both the very nature of the entity called ‘the enterprise’ and the very nature of the activities of creating, attending to and governing the enterprise. But since what we are ultimately after is to empower people to master

these activities, would not an ethic in the sense of a code of conduct be helpful in this regard? One might, after all that has been said, wish for clear guidelines on how to behave as an entrepreneur, how to create the enterprise and, hopefully, a whole framework for entrepreneurial governance. Quite clearly, what has been elucidated so far gives no such guideline. Would it not be possible to create an ethic that protects humans in their very nature, particularly since humans are endangered in their very nature? Heidegger suggests that while one might want to develop such guidelines it is questionable whether they will ever give genuine guidance to our everyday action. What is more promising is to teach people in understanding what is going on in terms of the question of Being in this regard that will make people genuinely ethical. It is this thinking that guides us to a fundamental ontological understanding of the very nature of entities that Heidegger is interested in foremost, since he considers this to be the primordial task of an original ethical discourse. The thinking that thinks the truth of Being and contemplates the very nature of entities, particularly the very nature of the corporation and the enterprise, enables us to create enterprises that set up an abode, a space or a place from which an entirely different possibility of ethics becomes possible. Quite clearly, as long as thinking remains limited to calculative thinking, such ethics remains within proper planning, ordering and controlling of everything as assets (ID: 22/IaD: 35). To do this is not a meaningless task, although it will never reveal humans as openness-for-Being and probably lead humans further away from understanding their very nature. As such it would always be in danger of being an ethics of how to properly treat humans as assets, rather than opening up the question of how humans would be treated appropriately as openness-for-Being. The thinking that attempts to gain an understanding of the truth of Being and of the very nature of entities is much more simple – but not as easy – and much less complicated – but more difficult – than the kind of thinking that a strict ethics would demand. It is a thinking that moves in the dimension of language as a revealing of truth, rather than language as a description of facts in the scientific sense (Hum: 47/ LoH: 258–259). But can this thinking give us either theoretical or practical guidance for everyday life in general and ‘corporate’ or ‘entrepreneurial’ life in particular?

The answer is that such thinking is neither theoretical nor practical. It comes to pass before this distinction. Such thinking is, insofar as it is, recollection of Being and nothing else. Belonging to Being, because thrown by Being into the preservation of its truth and claimed for such preservation, it thinks Being. Such thinking has no result. It has no effect. It satisfies its very nature in that it is. But it is by saying its matter. The matter of thinking belongs in each case historically only to one saying [or ‘myth’ in the Greek sense of the word], which is in each case appropriate to its matter. Its material relevance is essentially higher than the validity of the sciences, because it is freer. For it lets Being – be. (Hum: 48/LoH: 259)

In this sense, the project is, as mentioned at the outset, neither ethical nor unethical in the way these words are commonly understood in everyday language. Rather, it should be seen as *pre-ethical*. The thinking that is undertaken here provides a basis for moral thought, but it is not moral thought itself.

To create an ethic depends on an already understanding of Being and the very nature of entities. The task here is to ascertain the very nature of entities sufficiently

to make the creation, attendance to and governance of the enterprise as an original work intelligible. However, this ascertainment is more appropriately ‘a being on the way’ towards the very nature of entities. While it would be possible to come up with an ethics of governance, such an ethics would, as pointed out at the outset, have to rely on a specific understanding of the very nature of the entities that it is concerned with. Therefore, as an ethics it would no longer be on the way towards an understanding and getting into co-respondence with Being and the very nature of these entities. Such an ethics could only be developed within a work, where entities are already revealed in a certain way. As such it would build on, but ultimately fall outside of, the project that is undertaken here, which is to be on the way towards an understanding and getting into co-respondence with their very nature and the truth of Being. Furthermore, this specific understanding would block off the possibility of creating and authentic governance, because, as will be pointed out later, genuine creating and authentic governance rely on standing in an understanding of truth as un-truth. As such, it is never certain of Being and the very nature of entities, and therefore a perceived fixed understanding of the very nature of entities as presumed in an ethics can never serve to guide genuine creating and authentic governance.

Does this leave the door open for just any sort of arbitrary creating and governance? No, because, as will be pointed out in this chapter, genuine creating and authentic governance necessarily rely on the co-respondence with the very nature of entities and, as such, will call them into a lawfulness that is higher than the mere obeying of a code of conduct (Hum: 51/LoH: 262). However, the question of ethics will continue to follow us, particularly since the choice of example of a company as an original work is an enterprise that is very vocal about ethics.

Given what has been said so far, to remain ‘ethical’ means to keep bringing oneself into the truth of Being and being on the way towards the very nature of entities. This is the task of thinking. In this spirit, the remainder of this chapter will firstly sketch out an understanding of the enterprise as an original work with the help of an example to illustrate this notion. This will be followed by developing an understanding of the appropriate creating and attending to the work as the kinds of actions that bring forth and realise the enterprise. Building on the notions of ‘creating’ and ‘attendance’, an understanding of ‘entrepreneurial governance’ as the ongoing maintenance of the enterprise as an original work will be worked out. Finally, the notion of the enterprise will be confronted with the requirements for financial sustainability.

## **A Sketch of the Enterprise as an Original Work**

Within Heidegger’s thinking, the notions of art, artist and the creation of and attendance to art are derived from the notion of a work (UdK: 47/OWA: 185). Likewise, in this book the notions of entrepreneurship, the entrepreneur, entrepreneurial action and entrepreneurial governance will be derived from the enterprise. The focus will therefore be first on the enterprise as an original work. To illustrate the notion of the enterprise as an original work, it will be useful to explain this by way of an example.

The example that is chosen here is The Body Shop International PLC or, in short, The Body Shop. Heidegger follows a similar approach to illustrate his notion of a work by using, among others, one of Vincent van Gogh's paintings. Any example and account of an actual company as an original work might not turn out to do justice to the chosen company in all respects. The following discussion could therefore make errors in talking about the chosen enterprise. As a side remark, Heidegger makes a similar mistake by asserting that the Van Gogh painting that he chose as an example shows a pair of farmer's boots. In fact, the painting shows Van Gogh's own boots (Safranski, 1994: 346). However, this error in no way diminishes the example's ability to illustrate Heidegger's notion. Accordingly, the intention here is not first and foremost to give an accurate account of The Body Shop, but rather to clarify the notion of the enterprise as an original work. It should also be borne in mind that any reference to The Body Shop is an account by an outsider and is to be understood as such. Some of the impressions of the example may turn out to be idealistic (or possibly cynical). Furthermore, The Body Shop, like any other company is constantly changing and therefore what may have been a reasonably accurate description at some time in the past may no longer be reasonably accurate now. Thus, in no way is the example meant to show that there is an 'ideal' enterprise in the same sense as there cannot be such a thing as an 'ideal' painting. Furthermore, this example and the description of the example will never be able to prove that it is a work that sets up a world. No proof is ever possible in the domain of works and *world*. Rather, it will give the reader an opportunity to make him- or herself familiar with some hints for a possible example of an enterprise as an original work.

To confront The Body Shop with the notion of a work it is also necessary to translate the terminology that is used by The Body Shop. We need to listen to what is actually being said in the statements made by The Body Shop and its founder, Anita Roddick, rather than to get caught up in what is literally being spoken, because, as Heidegger points out:

What is spoken is never, and in no language, what is said. (AED: 83/TaP: 11)

Thus, the task is to listen to what is being said, rather than to get stuck in the vocabulary that is used.

The Body Shop is a retailer producing high-quality skin and body care products and operates more than 1900 shops in 50 countries. It offers a range of about 600 products and more than 400 accessories. The Body Shop is listed on the London Stock Exchange and has the hallmarks of a fairly successful multinational corporation. Among its successes are being ranked 27th among the most respected companies globally by the Financial Times, being named as the 28th top brand in the world, according to an Interbrand survey in 1997, and being voted as the second most trusted brand in the United Kingdom (The Body Shop, 2003a). The Body Shop is very different from traditional skin and body care retailers. It is furnished and decorated in a very basic and earthy style. The materials used in its furnishing and decoration are predominantly natural and provide a direct reminder of the natural environment that all living entities live in and come from. It speaks of the profound connectedness with 'mother earth'. The people behind the counter are not

made up like the fashion models who are used to promote the glitzy image of traditional cosmetics products, but are 'normal', everyday people. The customer in the shop is immediately drawn into a world that calls for people to be themselves with all their 'warts and wrinkles' and to be fully self-expressed the way they naturally are. The products are packaged basically without any wastage of packaging material or attempting to generate a sense of exclusivity. Everything in the retail outlet has the air of simplicity, calls for an appreciation of nature, and gives people a sense of self-worth the way they are. There is a very high degree of integrity in everything in the shops, which consistently sets up the world that The Body Shop is all about. Nothing seems to be arbitrary or out of line with the world of The Body Shop. In what follows, the notion of an original work will be confronted with the realities of a company and in particular with The Body Shop in order to show how the notion of the enterprise can find expression in an actual multinational company.

Heidegger maintains that all works have a thingly character (UdK: 3/OWA: 145). This is also true for any company, whether it is regarded as a corporation or as an enterprise. It is certainly true for The Body Shop, which had more than 1900 outlets worldwide by the year 2002. The physical presence is a prerequisite for any work, but obviously that in itself does not yet mean that it is an original work and it does not mean that it is an enterprise. However, something that is typical of an original work can already be observed in the thingly nature of The Body Shop. What is critical about this thingly nature of works as works is that the material that is used signifies a relation to the 'earth' in the Heideggerian sense of the term (UdK: 56–57/OWA: 193–194). It is clear that The Body Shop, both in the way its products are made and presented and in the way that the shops are furnished and decorated takes almost every opportunity to closely repeat the acknowledgement of this relation.

One of the key features of an original work is that it sets up a world (UdK: 30/OWA: 170). As pointed out earlier, a world in this sense is the significant whole which makes anything intelligible. But how does the enterprise set up a world? How does an enterprise like The Body Shop set up a world? Walking into an outlet of The Body Shop at an airport is certainly not the same as walking into the duty-free shop next door, which also sells skin and body care products. As a matter of fact, the worlds set up by The Body Shop and the duty-free shop are so different that the kind of person who goes into the duty-free shop for perfume seems unlikely to go into The Body Shop to look for a competitive product. And even if he or she would go into The Body Shop, this would not be done with similar expectations or objectives. Going into the duty-free shop one would be immersed in the world of extravagance and exclusivity. The duty-free shop sets up a world that values people according to their wealth and comparative beauty. Buying a product in the duty-free shop is likely to give a sense of societal superiority and achievement or the impression of getting 'a good deal' on some valuable product.

The world that is set up by The Body Shop is not even a response to the duty-free shop and therefore cannot be properly understood in terms of competition in the traditional sense. Being in the world The Body Shop has things show up as being part of the earth. It is telling that the idea for The Body Shop was born on trips through territories and indigenous biospheres and communities far from Western



civilisation, which is clearly a setting that would put any Westerner in touch with the very nature of a whole range of entities, such as the fauna and flora and humans from a variety of backgrounds, in previously unknown ways (Roddick, 1991; Roddick, undated). Quite clearly, this, and possibly other insights, created an ethos that makes The Body Shop stand in self-sufficiency and ‘in a world of its own’ among other outlets in shopping centres. Being in the world of The Body Shop means being within a significant whole that makes everything, including oneself, intelligible in a particular way. One is not able to articulate this fully, but it is clear that, in the world set up by The Body Shop, there are certain things that are considered desirable and others that are not in a way that is quite different from the world set up by other body care and cosmetics retail outlets.

According to Heidegger, original works stand on their own and are self-sufficient (UdK: 27/OWA: 166). Quite clearly, The Body Shop sets up a world that is self-sufficient and that legitimises itself through the world that it sets up itself. As Anita Roddick, the founder of The Body Shop put it:

What has also upset the old guard, I think, is how hard it’s been to categorise us. We measured our success by how many people we employed – in an era when the stock market positively frowned on employment. Most marketing awards we won came when we didn’t even have a marketing department. (Roddick, 2002b)

By standing on its own and by being self-sufficient as a work, The Body Shop sets up its own criteria for what success is. While one of the criteria is profit, the enterprise sets up this criteria for itself so that it can show ‘to the world’ that earth, world and business can live with respect for each other, protect the earth, set up a world and make business sense.

One of the key characteristics of original works is that they are ‘unusual’ (UdK: 53/OWA: 190) in the sense of being unique. The Body Shop explicitly states that it is doing ‘business as unusual’ (The Body Shop, 2003b). This means that The Body Shop sees itself and displays itself as unusual. This may, of course, just be a marketing trick in the same way that Arthur Andersen had a slot on CNN that was similarly called ‘business as unusual’ until it ceased to exist in the midst of its involvement in the accounting scandal surrounding Enron in 2001. However, what is more telling is that The Body Shop has repeatedly been characterised as ‘idiosyncratic’ by the media (Roddick, 2002a) rather than being characterised as having a clever differentiation strategy in the sense of Porter’s (1980, 1985) generic strategies. This indicates that The Body Shop was unusual in a way that did not easily allow even experts to categorise it according to a given framework.

Participation in a work gives people a way of being with each other and being there for one another in a certain way (UdK: 55/OWA: 193). There is a strong sense of collegiality in enterprises that signifies the way humans understand each other as humans that they share a world with, and which gives them a way to relate to each other. This usually does not remain just within the enterprise. Even suppliers and customers usually belong to an enterprise in their role as suppliers and customers. The Body Shop promotes this way of looking at the enterprise by stating:



The Body Shop has always believed that business is primarily about human relationships. We believe that the more we listen to our stakeholders and involve them in decision-making, the better our business will run. (The Body Shop, 2003a)

By promoting listening to stakeholders, The Body Shop seems to recognise the ability to listen as an existential feature of being human, both in the listener as well as in the person being listened to (SZ: 163/BT: 206). Involving someone in decision making in the hermeneutic phenomenological understanding means including someone into one's own world (UdK: 42/OWA: 180). This effort would inherently carry with it an acknowledgement of both the very nature of people as openness-for-Being and of The Body Shop as a work.

A visitor to an outlet of The Body Shop will see that its values and principles are widely displayed on banners, postcards and other means of communication. One might easily conclude from this that, by using The Body Shop as an example, after all that has been said about values and ethics, the notion of the enterprise as an original work is still just about ethics and values. Traditional ethics and values themselves are only a derived concern in the project of this book and the thinking against values here certainly does *not* say that everything is valueless, that value statements are necessarily an expression of em-bankment or that value statements have no estimation for the ethical in the primordial sense. What is central to the project of this book is the ethos of which these values and ethics are an expression. Furthermore, it is crucial to ascertain whether what The Body Shop calls 'values' are actually values in the sense that Heidegger views them. The primary question with regard to The Body Shop is therefore rather: What is the understanding of the very nature of entities and truth of Being that these 'values', principles and ethics are an expression of? At a later stage in this chapter, the nature of the statements that The Body Shop calls 'values' will be discussed and the understanding of the very nature of entities that is articulated in these 'values' will be analysed.

Works, by revealing the very nature of entities, create their own lawfulness in dealing with these entities (UdK: 55/OWA: 192). In the ethos of The Body Shop, there seems to be a different 'lawfulness' in which everyone who is involved in The Body Shop, either as personnel, supplier or customer, is immersed. It would be hard to become involved with The Body Shop and not become aware of environmental and social issues. There is a certain obviousness of what is true in any company and in an enterprise this would have a transformational impact. One cannot but start to ask oneself where one stands with regard to issues such as fair trade and being active in the protection of the environment when one participates in The Body Shop, because a certain truth is established there. Furthermore, in creating this truth the original work or enterprise generates an inquiry into our interpretation of that which is to be taken as given, or what Heidegger calls 'the earth'. This is what Heidegger calls the strife between *earth* and *world*, between the earth as something similar to that which we would call the *res extensa* in Cartesian terminology, and the world as the significant whole that makes anything intelligible, but that always makes it intelligible in a certain way. This strife generates an ongoing inquiry about *world*

and *earth* and thereby continues to open up *world* and show us *earth* and how they are intimately given by each other (UdK: 50ff./OWA: 187ff.)

With this in mind, the ultimate question on whether The Body Shop is an original work is actually whether it will keep the strife between *earth* and *world* open, rather than trying to find an answer that has the air of something final. The strife is not just the understanding of facts in our environment, but also our understanding of Being and the very nature of entities. As long as a work generates questioning about our understanding of Being and the very nature of entities, rather than falling prey to a seemingly all-explaining answer to our understanding of Being, the very nature of entities and an obvious method to ascertain truth of whatever kind, it will appropriately be called an original work of our time.

## Accomplishing the Enterprise

Having clarified the notion of the enterprise as an original work, the question is how such a work can be brought forth and maintained. Both the bringing forth and the maintenance would presumably be a certain type of action. As Heidegger points out, our everyday understanding of action is given by *em-bankment* (WhD: 55/ WCT: 24–25), which looks at action as something that causes some (more or less) intended effect. This effect justifies the initial action by its validity, which is usually evaluated along the lines of some sort of measure or system of measurements. Heidegger challenges this notion of action. In his view, the very nature of action is accomplishment, which in turn, in its very nature, is thinking.

We are still far from pondering the very nature of action decisively enough. We know action only as causing an effect. Its actuality is valued according to its utility. But the very nature of action is accomplishment. To accomplish means: to unfold something into the fullness of its very nature, to lead it forth into this fullness – *producere*. Accomplishable is therefore really only that, which already is. But what ‘is’ above all is Being. Thinking accomplishes the relation of Being to the very nature of humans. It does not make or cause the relation. Thinking brings this relation to Being solely as something handed over to it from Being. (Hum: 5/LoH: 217)

This handing over is articulated by the original work. To create and maintain original works therefore relies on a profound understanding of the truth of Being and the very nature of entities. The understanding of the very nature of entities comes from a letting-be of things, and the truth of Being can be understood from out of the openness to the mystery in the way it was laid out earlier.

Yet letting-be towards things and openness to the mystery never happens of themselves. They do not befall us accidentally. Both flourish only through persistent hearty thinking. (...)

If letting-be towards things and openness to the mystery awaken within us, then we should arrive at a path that will lead to a new ground and foundation. In that ground the creating of lasting works could strike new roots. (Gel: 25–26/DoT: 56–57)

Having arrived at a path that will lead to a new ground for the creating of lasting and original works, the question is what kind of action accomplishes original

works. As will be pointed out in the following, Heidegger sees two types of actions as necessary for the work to 'be at work'. These are the *creating of* the work and the *attendance to* the work. Therefore the task in the following will be to gain clarification of the very nature of these types of action.

## *Creating*

The kind of bringing forth that brings forth a work is called 'creating'. For a preliminary clarification of the notion of creating, it will firstly be distinguished from other types of bringing forth, namely manufacturing and mass production. Unlike creating, manufacturing and mass production do not bring forth works. Manufacturing and mass production bring forth equipment. The word 'manufactured' has in it the Latin word for hand, 'manus', and is therefore closely related to 'handicraft'. Manufacturing and management have an interesting kinship, as they are both a derivation of the Latin word for hand. While manufacturing in the sense of handicraft brings forth equipment that can still radiate mastery in a certain field, the mass product no longer does this.

We think of creation as a bringing forth. But the making of equipment, too, is a bringing forth. Handicraft – a remarkable play of language – does not, to be sure, create works, not even when we contrast, as we must, the handmade with the factory product. (UdK: 45–46/OWA: 183)

The bringing forth that we call manufacturing is not something that remains present, but is disappearing by the use of the equipment for usual purposes. In this way, manufacturing is fundamentally different from the creation of a work. In contrast to mass produced goods, the products of manufacturing and creating are in need of genuine craftsmanship.

The creation of a work requires craftsmanship. Great artists prize craftsmanship most highly. They are the first to call for its painstaking cultivation, based on complete mastery. They above all constantly take pains to educate themselves ever anew in thorough craftsmanship. (UdK: 46/OWA: 184)

This highlights the fact that creating is not just a function of having a moment of creative insight or liberation. For creating to succeed in bringing forth a work requires highly developed qualities and abilities in craftsmanship. Examples of this craftsmanship in the enterprise would be the mastery of understanding and dealing with the finances and the economics of the business, technical know-how and understanding the operations and administrative capability as some of the dimensions of the business. This is technical knowledge that, in the domain of the artist, is understood as technique. It should be clear that, while technique is critical, it is by no means sufficient for the creating of great art or a great enterprise. Therefore the clarification of 'creating' deserves further attention.

Usually we try to understand the act of creating from the perspective of either the artist or the entrepreneur and then tend to praise him or her as a person with almost mythical characteristics and capabilities (Mintzberg et al., 1998: 143ff.). Heidegger

repeatedly dismisses the notion that the act of creating and the notion of a work can in any way be understood as a result of extraordinary traits in a person who is then labelled a 'genius' (UdK: 26, 52, 63–64/OWA: 165–166, 190, 200). Heidegger suggests the work itself as the appropriate starting point to understand the notion of creating. In other words, creating can, according to Heidegger, only be appropriately understood from out of the work (UdK: 47/OWA: 185). But what aspect do we have to understand about the work to get proper access to creating? The work is the happening of truth (UdK: 48/OWA: 186). As the work comes forth, truth comes forth and happens. The creating of the work rests on the knowing that any truth is at the same time un-truth, that any entity being revealed in one way also remains concealed in many other ways.

As pointed out earlier, Heidegger's understanding of truth is fundamentally different from and more primordial than that of Descartes. According to Descartes, truth is the correspondence between a statement and facts in the external world. Heidegger points out that for the Cartesian statement of truth to make any sense in the first instance, there needs to be a certain background or world which makes all the relevant entities in the statement intelligible in the first place. According to Heidegger, telling the truth is not the announcement of correct statements but the articulation of how things are always already revealed to us. He calls this kind of articulation 'unconcealment'. As has been pointed out, unconcealment is never ultimate and timeless, but always limited and historical. In other words, there is no such thing as 'seeing things for what they ultimately are'. Therefore truth is always un-truth. This is not to say that whatever is true is also false, but that whatever is true can never be an ultimate and a-historical truth, as there are always other truths that remain concealed. The need for ongoing creating and attending is kept alive by staying in this insight:

Truth is un-truth, insofar as there belongs to it the reservoir of the not-yet (of the not) unconcealed in the sense of concealment. (UdK: 48/OWA: 185)

It is this reservoir, the reservoir of that which is not yet unconcealed, from which creating draws. Creating is the unconcealment of that which was concealed by bringing forth the work in such a way that it establishes an openness in which it can show up itself as that which establishes truth. This kind of bringing forth is creating:

The establishing of truth in the work is the bringing forth of an entity such as never was before and will never come to be again. The bringing forth places this entity in the open region in such a way that what is to be brought forth first clears the openness of the open region into which it comes forth. Where this bringing forth expressly brings the openness of entities, or truth, that which is brought forth is a work. Such bringing forth is creating. As such a bringing, it is rather a receiving and removing within the relation to unconcealment. (UdK: 50/OWA: 187)

Creating rests on a particular kind of knowing. It rests on knowing truth as the strife between clearing and concealing in the opposition of *world* and *earth*. Creating comes from standing in the strife and using the work to start the strife as a way to unite *earth* and *world* (UdK: 50/OWA: 187). Furthermore, creating rests on the

knowing that the createdness of the work is itself standing out in an express and particular way. Rather than having the creator (i.e. artist, entrepreneur), process or circumstances stand out, it has the createdness stand out itself in its uniqueness.

How does this relate to enterprises? To illustrate, let us get back to the example of The Body Shop as an enterprise. It seems intuitively obvious that The Body Shop is not a business that happened by ‘economic accident’ or that was just a lucky coincidence. While the founder Anita Roddick could probably not have foreseen at its inception that the idea of The Body Shop would take off the way it did and eventually become a multinational business, The Body Shop clearly was created and this createdness is obvious in The Body Shop even if one does not know Anita Roddick. Business concepts like The Body Shop are not a function of a niche that someone discovered by accident by stepping into a discovered market and which is significant enough to sustain a business. The Body Shop itself ‘says’ a world that clearly demonstrates its heritage in a creative act that came out of an extraordinary co-respondence with the strife between world and earth and the very nature of a whole range of entities. It should not be a surprise that this co-respondence came about by the founder putting herself into circumstances that provoked this co-respondence. In this case, as mentioned earlier, it was Anita Roddick taking trips that presumably put her into a whole new relation to nature, the physical environment and the world of people from very diverse cultures. This probably allowed her to see that what was true for her was now un-true. This does not mean that her previous understanding is now wrong, but that she is now in a closer co-respondence with the very nature of a whole range of entities. She then manifested this new understanding in creating The Body Shop.

In the public discourse, as can be followed in popular publications such as Fortune Magazine, there is a strong emphasis on entrepreneurs, managers and business leaders in terms of them as people being more or less capable subjects in an objective world. The narrative seems to continually describe companies created and run by an individual with extraordinary capabilities or companies that are destroyed by someone who seems to lack those capabilities. To a degree, the narratives about The Body Shop seem to have fallen into the same category by repeatedly putting forward Anita Roddick as the business genius behind The Body Shop. For this reason it will be important to bring the understanding of entrepreneurs as those who create enterprises and entrepreneurship as an art into sharper focus and to ascertain in what way entrepreneurship is critical.

### ***The Entrepreneur and Entrepreneurship***

The enterprise as a work is in each case something created (UdK: 45/OWA: 183). A work is created by the artist and, in the case of the enterprise, this artist is called an ‘entrepreneur’. As mentioned earlier, we usually understand the act of creating in terms of the artist. However, Heidegger does not pay much attention to the artist with regard to the work and appears to see the artist as someone almost insignificant in relation to the work (UdK: 26, 52, 63–64/OWA: 165–166, 190, 200):

It is precisely in great art – and only such art is under consideration here – that the artist remains indifferent as compared with the work, almost like a passageway that destroys itself in the creative process for the work to emerge. (UdK: 26/OWA: 166)

This is contrary to our normal, everyday appreciation of works that holds the artist in prominence. What seems most important about paintings in the everyday discourse is the painter. A painting seems to have a much higher value if it is by Picasso than by the hobby painter down the road. What seems to interest us most about a piece of music is the composer. Companies like the Ford Motor Corporation are known by and named after their founder and original entrepreneur. Why would Heidegger see this as inappropriate?

Heidegger rejects this view of the artist or entrepreneur as the aspect that is most prominent in understanding a work, because this understanding still remains within the Cartesian dualism of a subject performing the act of producing an object that is then interpreted as art. But, as elucidated above, works are not produced; they are created. Creating is the bringing forth of truth by manifesting it in the work. As such, in creating a work the artist brings him- or herself forth as who he or she is in the world set up by the work (UdK: 1/OWA: 143). To give an example, Henry Ford could easily be seen as the person who is the genius behind the historical success and societal impact of the Ford Motor Corporation. However, in Heidegger's understanding Henry Ford is only the kind of person he is within that significant whole that the Ford Motor Corporation has set up both inside and beyond the company. In this sense, the Ford Motor Corporation made Henry Ford who he is. As a function of creating the company, Henry Ford had to be willing to be altered in who he was. After having created the company he was no longer the person as he was known to be previously. The entrepreneur can only be understood from out of the enterprise and, as such, whoever undertakes an entrepreneurial venture alters his or her identity by engaging in such a venture. In this context, Gilder speaks about entrepreneurs having 'to endure the eclipse of self' (Gilder, 1992: 296). The entrepreneur is therefore prominent in the enterprise by being insignificant and by him- or her-self being transformed in the course of creating the enterprise.

Given the nature of the entrepreneurial undertaking it should not be surprising that the core entrepreneurial virtues, as suggested by Gilder, are giving, humility and commitment (Spinosa et al., 1997: 43; Gilder, 1992). The entrepreneur needs to be giving and generous because the outcome cannot be determined in a calculative way as in manufacturing or mass production and thus any return or outcome is uncertain. The entrepreneur needs to be humble, because the creation of the enterprise will alter the entrepreneur's own identity. And the entrepreneur needs to be committed, because to create something unusual, like an enterprise, is not something that can be produced by just following the drift, but needs a relentless commitment to being true to the unconcealment that is brought forth in the work.

The image of the successful entrepreneur as the super human who is in sovereign control, as often portrayed in the popular press, is either a misrepresentation of the entrepreneur after the fact of the creation of the enterprise or is a requirement stemming from the Cartesian thinking that we can only understand the work as a

product of the action of a genius and, as such, it would be a case of ‘entrepreneurial pomp by popular demand’.

But why do people become entrepreneurs? Why would they be generous, humble and committed without a certain outcome and without even knowing who they will be within the world that is set up by the enterprise they are about to create? What entrepreneurs get as a gift from creating the enterprise is the unconcealment of their own very nature as openness-for-Being. As entrepreneurs, humans are daring in a way that goes beyond the technological revealing and the technological concerns of protection and security. It is a daring that takes a leap into the domain of Being and the very nature of entities. By being entrepreneurial, people act in co-respondence with their very nature as openness-for-Being and as being world-acquiring, since no other type of entity has access to the domain of Being and the very nature of entities. Being entrepreneurial is a way for humans to bring themselves into the Open in a way that co-responds with them being openness-for-Being. By doing that they acknowledge the fundamental uncertainty that comes with being human. This acknowledgement of fundamental insecurity does not make humans less secure, but rather makes them more secure:

The daring that is more venturesome, willing more strongly than any self-assertion, because it is willing, ‘creates’ a secureness for us in the Open. To create means to fetch from the source. And to fetch from the source means to take up what springs forth and to bring what has so been received. The more venturesome daring of the willing exercise of the will manufactures nothing. It receives, and gives what it has received. It brings, by unfolding in its fullness what it has received. The more venturesome daring accomplishes, but it does not produce. Only a daring that becomes more daring by being willing can accomplish in receiving. (WD: 297–298/WAPF: 119–120)

This understanding is fundamentally different from the view of entrepreneurs propagated by traditional economics such as Schumpeter (1947). The view that entrepreneurs are merely reallocating and re-combining resources in the sense that economists would suggest (Spinosa et al., 1997: 35) remains totally within technological understanding. The inquiry into entrepreneurship would then turn out to be a type of research project for economic opportunity (Drucker, 1985). This does not mean that this type of research is to be discarded, but it means that it is not helping towards gaining meaningful access to entrepreneurship in and by itself. This view would be similar to suggesting that an exceptional piece of architecture demonstrates first and foremost that the architect is merely a good structural engineer. Similarly, the sovereign understanding of the economics of a business is part of the craftsmanship that the genuine and masterful entrepreneurs demand of themselves (compare to UdK: 46/OWA: 184). Needless to say, the creation of and attendance to the enterprise need many different types of crafts and techniques to succeed, depending on the nature of the type of business that the enterprise is in and the way it is set up. But this craftsmanship in and by itself, while required for creating the enterprise, is not at the heart of entrepreneurial creating at all and, as a craft, is itself of an entirely different kind than creating (UdK: 46–47/OWA: 184–185), because creating does carry in it an inquiry and heightened co-respondence to the domain of Being and into the very nature of entities.



Having brought the enterprise, the creating of the enterprise and the entrepreneur into sharper focus, how then must we understand entrepreneurship as the origin of all these? The path to gaining an understanding of entrepreneurship is by taking the same route as with the enterprise, the creating of the enterprise and the entrepreneur – namely by understanding them from the point of view of the work of art, the creating of art and the artist. Entrepreneurship would then be an art. But what is art? Heidegger asks the same question and guides us by bringing us into co-respondence with this question:

What is art? We seek its very nature in the actual work. The actuality of the work has been defined by that which is at work in the work, by the happening of truth. This happening we think of as the instauration of strife between world and earth. Repose occurs in the concentrated agitation of the striving between world and earth. The self-composure of the work is grounded here. (UdK: 45/OWA: 182–183)

Art is then the setting-into-work of the truth. It is the bringing forth of the unconcealment of entities, which is truth, and the bringing of it into manifestation as a work. Truth cannot be understood from entities themselves, particularly when we regard entities as merely available objects, but from projecting and sketching the thrownness in which the openness arrives (UdK: 59/OWA: 196). In other words, by articulating the openness that gives entities their appearance, art lets truth arrive. At the risk of slightly oversimplifying things, this is like saying that the artist or entrepreneur does not look at the entities that everybody looks at but that he or she looks at *how* people look at those entities and focuses on articulating the ‘how’ in the work. The articulation of the ‘how’ carries in it both how things were previously seen and a whole new realm of possible ways of revealing things. This articulation, though not necessarily happening in the form of words, is in its very nature poetic (UdK: 59–64/OWA: 197–200). It is poetic in the sense that it articulates the very nature of entities and of Being itself.

Art is in its very nature an origin and a founding. It is not a reaction to what was previously available. It cannot be compared to or evaluated by what is familiar. As such it is not an exchange or trade but a bestowing (UdK: 63/OWA: 200).

The setting-into-work of truth thrusts up the unsettling and at the same time thrusts down the settled and what we believe to be such. The truth that discloses itself in the work can never be proved or derived from what went before. What went before is refuted in its exclusive actuality by the work. What art finds can therefore never be compensated and made up for by what is already at hand and available. Founding is an overflow, a bestowal. (UdK: 63/OWA: 200)

As a founding it is a grounding and a beginning, since it does not derive itself from something previously available. It lays a foundation and, as such, constitutes a beginning for an understanding that, in a concealed way, already carries in it its own demise. It tells us what will from now on be understood as Being and provides an understanding of the very nature of entities (UdK: 64–65/OWA: 200–201). Understanding entrepreneurship as art, it then is, as understood in the Heideggerian sense, the origin of both the entrepreneur and the enterprise (UdK: 1–2/OWA: 143).

## *Attending to the Enterprise*

Entrepreneurship and the enterprise themselves do not happen or have an impact just by themselves. They need people who participate in the enterprise as personnel, as customers, as suppliers or the like. The appropriate participation which co-responds to the work in its very nature and which makes it real is called 'attendance'. Without attendance a work can never be a work and the founding in the work cannot become real (UdK: 63/OWA: 199). Because attendance is critical to the work being a work, it will be elaborated on below.

While works are self-sufficient in the way they are created, they nevertheless do not make truth happen by just being created. For works to make truth happen they also need those who are willing to stand in this truth. They need those who give themselves to the truth given by the work and be in the world as set up by the work. Heidegger calls this 'attendance' [bewahren] (UdK: 54/OWA: 191).

Quite clearly, the enterprise can only exist if there are people who work for it, who participate in it – for example, as personnel, customers or suppliers. All these people are putting themselves into the world that is set up by the enterprise. People often seem to join companies, buy from companies or sell to companies because they want to participate in the world that the company is setting up. It seems, for example, to be a self-evident critical reason for people joining the staff of The Body Shop, coming into the shop as customers or being interested in being suppliers that they want to be in the world as set up by The Body Shop. It seems that the more original and thus solitary the enterprise is, the more the world that the enterprise sets up becomes the main attractor for the desire to participate in the enterprise in one way or another, which would be a form of attendance to the enterprise. To attend to a work means to be willing to be transported out of the ordinary and into the unfamiliar.

To submit into this displacement means to transform our accustomed ties to the world and earth and henceforth to restrain all usual doing and prizing, knowing and looking, in order to stay within the truth that is happening in the work. Only the restraint of this staying lets what is created be the work that it is. This letting the work be a work we call attending to the work. It is only in such attendance that the work yields itself in its createdness as actual, which now means present in the manner of a work. (UdK: 54/OWA: 191)

No enterprise can be real merely by being created; it needs attendance for what is created to become real. To attend to the work is a way of knowing by participating in rather than just observing the work in a detached way. Attending to the work in this case means to be involved in the world that is set up by the work. The proper way of attending to and being involved in the work is solely given by the world that is set up by the work itself. It is easy to see why stakeholders like staff, customers and suppliers are drawn towards enterprises like The Body Shop. The people who attend to The Body Shop usually cherish the world of social and environmental activism set up by The Body Shop and, at the same time, the world as set up by The Body Shop calls forth this kind of activism from the way issues and entities are revealed. This is what is at the heart of the notion of attendance to a work.

Attending to the work means standing within the openness of entities that happens in the work. This ‘standing-within’ or attendance, however, is a knowing. Yet knowing does not consist in mere information and notions about something. Those who truly know entities know what they will to do in the midst of them. (UdK: 54–55/OWA: 192)

Attendance itself is therefore a call to action or, perhaps more precisely, a call to accomplishment. But, if it is attendance in the Heideggerian sense, this is not like an order given to a slave who is immersed in a world without knowing it. It is a call to action to someone who knows *world* and who knows the world that is set up by the work as a world and the very nature of the entities within the world. This willing that is given by the knowing of a world and the very nature of entities in a world is what Heidegger calls resolvedness [Entschlossenheit].<sup>3</sup> Resolvedness is not the decisiveness of the commonsensical meaning of the words resoluteness or determination. Resolvedness is a willing that comes from a knowing of the world and a knowing that openness-for-Being’s way of being is being-in-the-world. It comes from choosing ourselves as openness-for-Being and as who we are in a particular world. In this case it is the world as set up by an enterprise (see also: SZ: 297/BT: 343–344). This can, of course, happen entirely intuitively and not be articulated and known in the vocabulary used in this book.

In the case of the enterprise, being resolved means knowing the enterprise as a work, knowing the world that is set up by the enterprise, knowing oneself and others as openness-for-Being within the world set up by the enterprise, knowing who one is oneself and who others are in this world and knowing the purpose (or ‘in-order-to’ and ‘for-the-sake-of-which’) of everything in this world (SZ: 297: BT: 344). Such a knowing is the acknowledgement that we belong to the enterprise rather than that the enterprise belongs to us. From such knowing comes a willing that stands in and is at home in the truth of the work.

Willing is the sober resolvedness [Entschlossenheit] of that existential self-transcendence which exposes itself to the openness of entities as they are set into the work. In this way, standing within is brought into lawfulness. The attendance to the work, as knowing, is a sober standing-within the awesomeness of the truth that is happening in the work. (UdK: 55/OWA: 192)

This knowing of oneself does not result in the solitary experience of oneself, but in giving people a sense of belonging by belonging to the truth happening in the work. As such, it grounds their ‘being with’ and ‘being for’ each other in a relation to unconcealedness that is foundational for genuine community.

Attending to the work does not reduce people to their private experiences, but brings them into affiliation with the truth happening in the work. Thus it grounds being-for and being-with one another as the historical standing-out of human existence in relation to unconcealment. Most of all, knowledge in the manner of attendance is far removed from that merely aestheticising connoisseurship of the work’s formal aspects, its qualities and charms. Knowing as having seen is a being resolved; it is standing within the strife that the work has fitted into the rift.

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<sup>3</sup>In most translations the word ‘Entschlossenheit’ is translated as resoluteness. The connotation of ‘being determined’ seems inappropriate here, since ‘Entschlossenheit’ is a form of openness.

The proper way to attend to the work is co-created and prescribed only and exclusively by the work. Attendance occurs at different levels of knowing, with always differing degrees of scope, constancy, and lucidity. When works are offered as sheer artistic enjoyment, this does not yet prove that they stand in attendance as works. (UdK: 55–56/OWA: 193)

What Heidegger tells us here indirectly also sheds a different light on the destruction of enterprises as original works. The destruction may primarily come about by people involved in the enterprise not attending to the work appropriately. This lack of attendance may stem from the inability of the individual to attend to the work, or from the way the work is created making it difficult to attend to the work appropriately. An example of the former might be the hiring of personnel that have no affinity to a company and its products (see also Spinosa et al., 1997: 49). The latter might happen, for example, when a performance evaluation system is set up that values actions and the production of results that are not in harmony with attending to the work. Such a performance evaluation system would constitute a lack of integrity in the work itself and would likely lead to inappropriate and destructive ways of attending to the enterprise. On the flipside, to foster attendance to the enterprise, both the effort to make people familiar with the world as set up by the enterprise in such a way that their affinity can awaken, and the effort to create the work in such a way that it consistently sets up and repeats the same world and subsequently achieves a high level of integrity are helpful.

## Governing the Enterprise

The final major question to which this book responds is how the enterprise can remain an original work rather than become a corporation. Heidegger does not directly pose or elaborate on the question of how to maintain the originality of the work, other than stating that there are works whose world has perished, such as a Greek temple or a medieval cathedral, which both stem from another epoch (UdK: 26/OWA: 166). But enterprises do not only cease to be able to set up a world because the epoch is changing. They can also perish as original works by changing themselves and becoming something other than an enterprise – namely a corporation. The question that then arises is how the enterprise can remain an original work and what is the very nature of entrepreneurial governance as the kind of governance that maintains the enterprise in its originality?

For the people in charge of governing the enterprise and who are committed to upholding the originality of the enterprise, it is firstly critical to understand it as a work and to understand its originality. To understand the enterprise as a work, it is helpful to have distinguished it from other types of entities, to understand the world that it is setting up and to be able to say what is true in the enterprise. Broadly speaking, the journey of this book so far has been to draw these distinctions. Governing an enterprise to maintain its originality cannot just entail preservation of the way things have always been. Enterprises are continuously challenged in a number of ways and merely imitating previous ways of dealing with issues is highly unlikely to maintain the originality of the enterprise. Therefore, the task of governing the

enterprise appropriately is an ongoing effort of attendance and creating. But how can this continuous effort of attendance and creating be kept up instead of subsiding into a trivial copying of historical solutions of which the search for universally applicable ‘global best practice’ is one example? It is suggested here that the key to the challenge of ongoing creation and attendance lies in both understanding the truth happening in the enterprise and, at the same time, understanding that truth is always and in each case un-truth, and to keep this understanding alive. But before we inquire into creating and truth as un-truth it is critical to give some guidance on how to understand what world, Being and truth of Being are currently set up in the world set up in each case by a company.

### *Articulating the World of a Company*

To govern a company in a way that leads it towards becoming an enterprise or maintaining its originality as an enterprise it is critical to remain in the inquiry of understanding and bringing oneself into the appropriate relation to the world set up by the company.<sup>4</sup> As it turns out, this remains also within the project to be ethical in the original sense as thinking the abode of humans, which is the truth of Being. The purpose of the following paragraphs is to explore how such an inquiry can be guided. Being in a particular company, whether it is in each case more akin to a corporation or to an enterprise, is given by the world the company sets up. The project to think the truth of Being in a company starts with the contemplation of the world as set up by the company. Such thinking happens in language and is an act of articulation.

Thinking does not become action only because some effect issues from it or because it is applied. Thinking acts insofar as it thinks. Such action is presumably the simplest and at the same time the highest, because it concerns the relation of Being to the human being. But all working or effecting lies in Being and is directed towards entities. Thinking in contrast, lets itself be claimed by Being so that it can say the truth of Being. Thinking accomplishes this letting. (Hum: 5/LoH: 217–218)

The thinking that says the truth of Being in the company is characterised here as the ‘action is presumably the simplest and at the same time the highest’ should not be underestimated as usually we are mostly educated and managed towards coping with entities or situations and hardly ever with the kind of thinking that says the truth of Being. To allow oneself to be claimed by the world and truth of Being in the enterprise cannot be a simple exercise of following a prescribed process that provides unambiguous and necessarily obvious answers. At the same time it is not arbitrary and any guidance in articulating the world and truth of Being in

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<sup>4</sup>This is also a fundamental problem in the way corporate governance is structured. Board members, especially those who are serving in a non-executive capacity, who assume legal responsibility for a company often get merely technical information about the company and have only inadequate first-hand experience of the world set up by the company and therefore ultimately have little idea what they are governing and deciding about.

the company should be welcome. To get some guidance in the articulation of the world as set up by the enterprise it is useful to look at what Heidegger suggests as seemingly foundational interpretations of a world. The following quotes shall serve as sources for establishing a number of fundamental interpretations or domains of interpretations that are foundational for a world:

It is the temple-work that first fits together and at the same time gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for human being. (UdK: 27–28/OWA: 167)

And:

By the opening up of a world, all things gain their lingering and hastening, their remoteness and nearness, their scope and limits. (UdK: 31/OWA: 170 )

And:

As a world opens itself, it passes victory and defeat, blessing and curse, mastery and slavery over into a historical humanity for a verdict. The dawning world brings out what is as yet undecided and measureless, and thus discloses the hidden necessity of measure and decisiveness. (UdK: 50/OWA: 187–188)

From these statements and what has been said about the very nature of a company (be it a corporation or an enterprise) as a work that sets up a world and as such the cultural and political, one can develop guiding questions to contemplate the world of a corporation or enterprise. In each case these questions need to be translated into the vocabulary of the world of the company. In typical business language the characteristics as mentioned in the quotes above can be translated roughly as follows:

- ‘disaster and blessing’ and ‘blessing and curse’: ‘debacle and good fortune’ or simply ‘good and bad’
- ‘victory and disgrace’ and ‘victory and defeat’: success and failure
- ‘endurance and decline’: sustainability and deterioration
- ‘destiny’: official future
- ‘lingering and hastening’: sense of time
- ‘remoteness and nearness’: important and unimportant
- ‘mastery and slavery’: power and powerlessness as well as notions of authority

The terms ‘remoteness and nearness’, ‘scope and limits’ and ‘measure and decisiveness’ seem to be commonly understandable in a business environment and therefore do not seem to require translation. In the following all these characteristics plus some overarching notions about the world, notion of the very nature of humans, ethics and accountability in a company are articulated in a series of suggested questions that can guide the inquiry into some of the fundamental interpretations of the world of a company. These questions are by no means definitive, though they have in numerous strategy workshops proven to be a helpful starting point for guiding a

conversation about the world and truth of Being a particular company sets up. The questions developed from the quotations and notions above are as follows:

- What are the world, culture and style of the company?
- What does it mean to be a human being in the company?
- What is considered ethical or unethical in the company?
- What is considered good or bad in the company?
- What is important and what is unimportant in the company?
- What constitutes success or failure in the company?
- What constitutes power and authority in the company?
- Who do people collectively and individually hold themselves accountable to in the company?
- What are the recognised key issues in sustainability or deterioration in the company?
- What is measured and assessed in the company?
- What are key decisions that lie ahead or need to be continuously made in the company?
- What is the sense of time in the company?
- What is the official future in the company?

These questions can guide the facilitation of a sort of a guided ethnography for people within the world of a company to articulate the world and truth of Being they find themselves in. This kind of assessment or research can only be done by people who are within the world of the company, because a world can never be understood in a detached way. An outsider can, however, act as a facilitator to guide people inside the company through exploring truthful answers to these questions.

In the consideration of these questions some commentary to each question has at times proven helpful:

‘What is the world, culture and style of the company?’ This is a general question that is sometimes also understood as the ‘feel’ of the company. For most people at least one of the terms ‘world’, ‘culture’ and ‘style’ will be an accessible starting point for the inquiry into what in the context of this book is the world as set up by the company.

‘What does it mean to be a human being in the company?’ As mentioned earlier, the way that human beings show up is an insightful indicator about the world and truth of Being in the company. Firstly humans could show up more in terms of being assets or more in the sense of openness-for-Being. Further to this people can play different roles or assume a range of identities in the company. This can then also serve as an indicator regarding issues of success and failure and power and authority.

‘What is considered ethical or unethical in the company?’ and ‘What is considered good or bad in the company?’ These two questions are somewhat overlapping. When we talk about a good business we might talk about an ethical business but also simply depict a business that is successful in purely financial terms. As explained earlier, in a typical corporation terms such as good and ethical or bad and unethical



may become in many ways synonymous. At the same time companies live with a certain more or less articulated notion of ethics that may radically differ from a stated code of ethics or credo, which is to be explored with the help of these two questions.

‘What is important and what is unimportant in the company?’ It is very telling about the world of the company what is always on ‘people’s minds’ in this world and who is foremost concerned in the company with what kinds of issues.

‘What constitutes success or failure in the company?’ In each company there are specific notions of being successful or failing. Another question that might help to clarify this question further is ‘who or what kind of a person serves as a role model in the company’. This may be an actual person who personifies the lived ideals of the company or a fictitious character.

‘What constitutes power and authority in the company?’ The word ‘power’ often has an overwhelmingly negative connotation and is often associated with abuse and domination. It is then necessary to translate the word ‘power’ into a word or vocabulary that depicts in a company that which allows an individual or group to make something happen within the company. This word might be ‘ability to make things happen’, ‘influence’ or ‘having a say’.

‘Who do people collectively and individually hold themselves accountable to in the company?’ In each world there is one or a number of individuals, audiences or stakeholders that people predominantly hold themselves accountable to and play to as they are seen as important in some way. It is telling about the world of a company which stakeholders or stakeholder groups are gaining heightened prominence in the world of the company over others.

‘What are the recognised key issues in sustainability or deterioration in the company?’ This question is about establishing what people in the world of the company see as being core to maintaining the company. While the current discourse on corporate sustainability and notions such as the triple bottom line, which extends issues of corporate sustainability beyond financial sustainability to issues of societal and environmental sustainability have gained popularity in recent years, this inquiry should be informed by but not limited to these issues alone.

‘What is measured and assessed in the company?’ This question is telling in two ways. Firstly it is telling what needs to be continuously measured and assessed as that is presumably what people do not necessarily work towards themselves but constantly need to be reminded of and managed towards. Secondly it relates to a question that will be explored in more detailed below, which is about understanding the set ups in the company that serve to keep a certain world in place.

‘What are key decisions that lie ahead or need to be continuously made in the company?’ As already alluded to earlier, for there to be a need to make a decision there needs to be an uncertainty or something not unambiguously revealed or unresolved in a particular world, otherwise everything would be obvious and no decision would be required. Therefore the question above will allow for exploring where this is the case in the world of a particular company.

‘What is the sense of time in the company?’ This question is about the notion of time and temporality in the company. Aspects of this are whether typically things

are experienced as fast or slow, stressful or boring, dense or thin. Other aspects of this are a long- or short-term orientation and a future or historical outlook in the world of the company.

‘What is the official future in the company?’ The articulation of this question has been borrowed from Burt & van der Heijden (2003) and van der Merwe (2008) and the vocabulary of scenario thinking. In the world of every company there are more or less articulated assumptions about the future that people in this world live in. To articulate this future allows for insights into what is generally taken for granted in the world of the company.

If these questions are to lead to thinking in the sense of letting ‘itself be claimed by Being so that in can say the truth of Being’ and that ‘thinking accomplishes this letting’ (Hum: 5/LoH: 217–218) as already mentioned above, then it is crucial that at first the objective of articulating the world and truth of Being is merely to be truthful rather than immediately evaluating any insight from this inquiry.

From a research perspective this is a form of interpretive research, which can follow various criteria and methodologies.<sup>5</sup> In line with the thinking in this book Prasad’s (2001) hermeneutics as a methodology for understanding institutions seems to be particularly appropriate, as it is based on the notion that the company itself can be read as a text, an approach which is in line with and explicitly draws on Heidegger.

As mentioned at the outset, most people never ask these questions but are merely concerned with coping with entities and situations as they show up for them. To engage in these questions opens up the possibility to participate in the originally ethical discourse of contemplating and articulating the abode of humans within a particular company.

A second critical inquiry here is the question how the world of the company is actually set up and maintained. Companies consist of numerous structures and set ups such as performance management systems, reward structures, office layout and design, reporting structures, rituals and habits around meetings and other conversations, recurring occasions and events, prizes, information and communication systems, logos and other symbols. All of them carry with them and keep in place numerous assumptions and interpretations and by doing so contribute to setting up the world of the company. An example of this would be a performance management system that works along the lines of a set of key performance indicators. The choice of which ones these key performance indicators are already suggests that they assume certain types of performance and results are more important than others. Further to this certain key performance areas or indicators may have a higher weighting than others, which may suggest among others a certain notion of success and failure in the company. Another example of this is the layout and design of the entrance hall and reception area of a company. Everyone who enters such a space immediately gets a sense of the world that is set up by this company. After having articulated the world of the company it is then possible to interrogate which

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<sup>5</sup>See for example Klein and Myers (1999), Madison (1990), Prasad (2001), Sandberg (2005) and Whittaker (2004).

structures and set ups are most prominent in keeping certain aspects of the world of the company in place.

The undertaking to engage in articulating the world of a company allows then also for a more original approach to strategic thought as the engagement in understanding the world of the company and the explorations about how this world needs to altered for the promise of the company to be fulfilled, however this promise is in each case articulated. To do this it is critical to explore how different aspects and set-ups need to be changed so that a new more promising world is set up. To make such an inquiry possible and to keep such an inquiry vibrant it is critical, however, to understand at first that no world ever reveals everything completely and unquestionably and that therefore in each world truth is un-truth.

### ***Truth as Un-Truth: Being Ventured***

As pointed out earlier, truth in the Heideggerian sense is always un-truth, because any human understanding is always finite, limited and historical. The moment we assume that the way things are revealed to us is correct in an ultimate way there no longer is a need or a possibility for creating that which gives truth, because truth is already given. There is also no longer any need to attend to the work, because truth would then no longer be the standing within the unsettling of the truth happening in the work. Truth would be settled and therefore attendance to the work would be meaningless. But standing in the insight that truth is always un-truth keeps us in a state of unsettledness. The standing in the unsettledness of truth as un-truth is what Heidegger calls 'being ventured'. In being ventured we acknowledge the fundamental insecurity and unsettledness of human existence in which everything that is true is always also un-true. To acknowledge the fundamental insecurity does not make us less secure; it makes us more secure. This is similar to being in any dangerous situation, where we will be less endangered by acknowledging the danger than by denying it.

What is so ventured is, of course, unprotected; but because it hangs in the balance, it is retained in the venture. It is upheld. Its ground keeps it safely within it. What is ventured, as something that is, is something that is willed; retained within the will, it itself remains in the mode of will, and ventures itself. What is ventured is thus careless, *sine cura, securum* – secure, safe. What is ventured can follow the venture, follow it into the unprotectedness of the ventured, only if it rests securely in the venture. The unprotectedness of what is ventured not only does not exclude, it necessarily includes, its being secure in its ground. What is ventured goes along with the venture. (WD: 281/WAPP: 103–104)

This being ventured generates an attraction, a gravity, which draws certain entities towards that centre of gravity. One might well describe this centre of gravity as the very nature of genuine authority and leadership. In this sense, being ventured reminds those entities that are drawn to the centre of their own very nature and to that which one might, in theological language, call its 'calling'.

As the venture flings free what is ventured, it holds it at the same time in balance. The venture sets free what is ventured, in such a way indeed that it sets free what is flung

free into nothing other than a drawing toward the centre. Drawing this way, the venture ever and always brings the ventured toward itself in this drawing. To bring something from somewhere, to secure it, make it come – is the original meaning of the word *Bezug*, currently understood as meaning reference or relation. The drawing which, as the venture, draws and touches all beings and keeps them drawing toward itself is the *Bezug*, the draft, pure and simple. (WD: 282–283/WAPP: 105)

Every genuine decision happens in truth as un-truth, otherwise it would not show up as a decision in the first instance, because any decision requires an uncertainty, otherwise everything would be obvious and no decision would be required. All too often the microeconomic and other models of traditional business strategy suggest that, by doing a proper analysis, the final strategic decision would be obvious and therefore no longer really require a decision. But the truth of strategic thinking when understood, for example, as microeconomics, while not being wrong or false, is still un-truth in the sense that there are many different ways of revealing a certain strategic situation and coming to a decision. Authentic decision making can stand in the unsettledness of truth as un-truth and still make a decision. Because unsettledness and being ventured are the region where authentic decisions can actually be made, they become a centre of gravity.

To make this a bit more practical, reference shall once again be made to The Body Shop. Anita Roddick at some stage relinquished her position as the managerial head of the company and took on the role of ‘creative consultant’. This can be seen as a step to remain in charge of entrepreneurial governance rather than being sucked into management as the technological ‘photographic negative’ of entrepreneurial governance. Roddick’s understanding of her new role was telling:

The truth is we flew in the face of accepted business thinking. I hope the company continues to do so – but that means constantly changing.

My role as creative consultant means that I’m licensed to focus on change. So I’m going to be challenging, questioning, encouraging and driving the company crazy with ideas, hoping that it becomes both braver and bolder as years go by.

As you might expect, I’ll also be ready with advice. I’ll be urging them never to waste time holding focus groups about what their brand means. The Body Shop will always mean what it actually is – and that means staying authentic, staying inclusive, and constantly striving to make social responsibility mean something. (Roddick, 2002a)

Anita Roddick understanding the core of her task this way presumably demonstrates her appreciation for ongoing creation and attendance to the enterprise in governing the enterprise. This is possible in being ventured in the unsettledness of truth as un-truth.

### ***Acknowledging Entities in Their Very Nature***

Works succeed in setting up a world of enduring originality to the degree that they set up a world that reveals entities in a way that is in harmony with their very nature. Entrepreneurial governance thus is a knowing of and inquiring into the very nature of entities. For this it is critical to understand their very nature and, derived from this very nature, how they relate to other entities, their epistemological nature, what

the very nature of their actions is and what they are capable of doing. To illustrate this, the notions presented here will draw strongly on the understanding of the very nature of entities laid out in [Chapter 2](#).

As mentioned earlier, physical objects are worldless. This means that they do not in any way ‘relate’ to their environment. Since what makes a human to be human in the first instance is the fact that humans are in-the-world, it is unfathomable for humans to be an entity without *world*. Thus humans cannot empathise with physical objects. Physical objects are either available or unavailable and merely *occur* (SZ: 115/BT: 150). It is therefore perfectly appropriate to use and exploit a machine. Machines cannot be abused. They can merely perform or not perform to a set standard when they are maintained or not maintained properly.

Non-human organisms are fundamentally different from physical objects. They relate to other entities, though in a dazed manner that is not open to the interpretative possibilities that characterise the very nature of human beings. Plants and animals are present, though not in the historical way that humans are present. It therefore makes sense to give animals attention and to empathise with them. While it may be impossible for humans to imagine what it is like to be world-poor, humans can nevertheless appropriately show affection towards animals in a way that the animals can relate to. For example, a cattle farmer can empathise with the cows’ sense of well-being and he or she can create an environment in which the cows can be healthy. This environment does not only have to provide physical input, in the way a machine would need energy in the form of fuel or electricity, but also can be an environment that allows cows to fit into the environment with their dazed way of relating and that stimulates the animals in a way that enhances their wellbeing.

Humans are fundamentally different. Humans are openness-for-Being and their way of being is being-in-the-world. As such, they are world-acquiring. For humans to be human beings they need to be in a world. Humans do not just need food and the appropriate physical environment, but also a world to be in. As pointed out earlier, this is why they are endangered in their very nature in the corporation, since there is merely em-bankment and no world in the corporation.

The way humans relate to other humans is fundamentally different from the way they relate to machines and animals. Unlike physical objects, other humans do not merely occur. Other humans are openness-for-Being-with [Mitdasein] (SZ: 117ff./BT: 153ff.) because they are of the same kind as I am.

By ‘Others’ we do not mean everyone else but me – those over against whom the ‘I’ stands out. They are rather those from whom, for the most part, one does *not* distinguish oneself – those among whom one is too. This also-openness-for-Being [Auch-da-sein] with them does not have the ontological character of an occurring-along-‘with’ them in the world. This ‘with’ is something of the character of openness-for-Being; the ‘also’ means the sameness of Being as circumspectly concerned being-in-the-world. (SZ: 118/BT: 154)

The critical point here is that, while humans encounter physical objects and non-human organisms in the world, what they do with other people is *share* a world and thus it is a *with-world* [Mit-welt]. This is a fundamental break with the Cartesian understanding of human relationships, in which other humans are occurrent in a similar way to physical objects and relating to others is like building a bridge

between two *res cognitans* that are separated and closed off from each other (SZ: 124/BT: 162). Heidegger maintains that humans as being-in-the-world understand themselves within the world that they always already share with others. Within this world there is always already an understanding of what kind of entity humans are and what relating to each other means. Relating and empathising with others does not lead to being-with others; being-with others in the sense of sharing a world allows for and constitutes the possibility of empathy and genuine concern for other humans as humans. As such it is the basis for the authentic concern for the other and others that is fundamental to and constitutes the possibility for any genuine ethics. On the other hand, the relation to others within technology and technological calculation is 'ruthless'; it is an impoverishment of being-with (SZ: 125/BT: 163) and does not constitute a basis for a genuine concern for others in their very nature.

Heidegger calls the always already understanding of what a human being is, what human relations are and what everything else is in a particular shared world the 'dominance of *the anyone*' (SZ: 126ff/BT: 163ff.). The dominance of *the anyone* simply means that there is an inconspicuous and unascertained way in which things are done and understood which is taken for granted to such an extent that even the thought of doing things differently does not occur. This dominance of *the anyone* also takes away any responsibility, since decisions are just made the way that anyone would make them. In this sense, *the anyone* tranquillises people and makes their lives easier. But everyone becomes anyone and the possibility of being oneself remains concealed.

Obviously, if everyone does things the way that anyone does them, no original works would ever be created. Thus the task of entrepreneurial governance is to continuously unconceal the dominance of *the anyone*, a task that is similar to acknowledging truth as un-truth. The dominance of *the anyone* is the constant denial of humans as openness-for-Being. The authentic way of relating to human beings is given by understanding them as openness-for-Being and by listening to them as openness-for-Being:

Listening to . . . is openness-for-Being's existential way of being-open and being-with for others. Indeed, listening constitutes the primary and authentic openness of openness-for-Being for its own-most possibility to be, as the ability to listen to the voice of a friend that each openness-for-Being carries with it. Openness-for-Being listens because it understands. As an understanding being-in-the-world with the other it is 'obedient' to the openness-for-Being-with and to itself and belongs into this obedience. This listening-to-each-other in which the being-with develops has the possible modi of following, joining, and the privative modes of not-hearing, resisting, defying and turning away. (SZ: 163/BT: 206–207)

In listening to others as openness-for-Being we can listen to them as potential artists and entrepreneurs. We can listen to them as entities who, due to their very nature, can create and co-create works, attend to works and also who can be genuinely concerned with others.

The mutual engagement that is given by this kind of listening and a mutual understanding of each other as openness-for-Being is called 'dialogue'. This is to be distinguished from 'chatter', which refers to what 'anyone' says. But chatter and the language of everyday talk are 'a forgotten and therefore used up poem, from

which there hardly resounds a call any longer' (UzS: 31/PLT: 208). In this sense poetry is not the artful application of everyday language, but everyday language is the used-up version of poetry. But poetry is not primarily talk in rhythm and rhyme; it is the kind of saying which is given by a profound understanding of language as that which brings entities into the Open (UdK: 61/OWA: 198). Since it brings entities into the Open, it is in closest kinship to the very nature of openness-for-Being and its hermeneutic nature.

Language, by naming beings for the first time, first brings entities to word and to appearance. Only this naming nominates entities *to* their Being *from out of* their Being. Such saying is a projecting of clearing, in which announcement is made of what it is that entities come to the Open *as*. (UdK: 61/OWA: 198)

Dialogue is the kind of conversation that mutually acknowledges this kinship of human Being and the poetic nature of language. In being poetic, dialogue itself is artistic in the sense of an ongoing and joint creating and attending (UdK: 59/OWA: 197). Because dialogue as the poetic conversation is itself artistic and sets up a world, it is not something that humans can be in control of, since it creates them rather than they create it. In this context, Heidegger notes that 'language speaks' (UzS: 12/PLT: 190). Therefore, to participate in the dialogue means to surrender to language and to the progress of the dialogue itself. Dialogue is the kind of conversation that brings language into co-respondence with itself and, thereby, with the very nature of human beings (UzS: 151–152/OWL: 51–52). Dialogue therefore is the origin of entrepreneurial governance.

Works require a different way of relating to and dealing with when encountered appropriately. Works are attended to, which means that, to appropriately deal with a work, one has to be-in-the-world as set up by the work. Furthermore, one can become a creator or co-creator of the work. These notions have been explained at length in this chapter.

To illustrate the notion of treating entities according to their very nature, it is helpful to return to the example of The Body Shop and to look at the understanding of the very nature of the entities that The Body Shop is involved with as expressed in its so-called 'values'. To start with, what is called 'values' in The Body Shop are actually not values in the Heideggerian sense of placing value upon entities, but seem to be the articulation of the principles and guidelines for the enactment of the ethos that already informs the way The Body Shop does business. Taking this to be so, it will be useful to inquire into the very nature of entities and the truth of Being that is expressed in these 'values' or principles.

The stated 'values' or principles of The Body Shop are:

- Against Animal Testing: We consider testing products or ingredients on animals to be morally and scientifically indefensible.
- Support Community Trade: We support small producer communities around the world who supply us with accessories and natural ingredients.
- Activate Self-Esteem: We know that you are unique, and we'll treat you as an individual. We like you just the way you are.



- Defend Human Rights: We believe that it is the responsibility of every individual to actively support those who have human rights denied to them.
- Protect Our Planet: We believe that a business has the responsibility to protect the environment in which it operates, locally and globally. (The Body Shop, 2003c)

One could merely respond that this is traditional ethics and therefore not relevant to the undertaking of this book. But, as pointed out above, the argument is not anti-ethical but merely moves in a different domain. In this context it would be important to ask two questions: are these just values that are still within em-bankment and that are, so to speak, added on top of em-bankment, or are they an articulation of an ethos, a way and depth of knowing the very nature of the entities that are involved in the business in various forms and ways? (See also: UdK: 30/OWA: 170.) A final judgement on these questions cannot be made here and, for the purpose of this book, it will be assumed that the latter can be shown to be the case.

To illustrate this notion, it will be helpful to discuss each of the five statements and show how they could be an articulation of a knowing of the very nature of entities as laid out earlier in this book and how this leads to a certain concrete ethical concern.

‘Against Animal Testing’ can be regarded as acknowledging animals as the kind of entity that humans can genuinely relate to in a compassionate way. While they are not the same kind of entity as humans, they are also not mere physical objects. Animals understood as animals are never just assets. Therefore, given their very nature, it is inappropriate to merely use them as an input in a development or production process. This is particularly true when this involvement in the production or development process could lead to severe suffering by the animal and hardly contributes to the end product. The statement acknowledges that, in their very nature, animals are actually vulnerable and can suffer, unlike physical objects.

‘Support Community Trade’ can be seen as acknowledging that the communities that the products can come from are actually to be supported as works in their own right. It is also an acknowledgement of the very nature of humans in the sense of their being given their outlook on themselves by their communities, and a sense of justice that says that it is worthwhile to trade with humans as communities, rather than just trading with corporations.

‘Activate Self-Esteem’ is both an acknowledgement of the very nature of humans as openness-for-Being and of the very nature of beauty that comes with this very nature (UdK: 43, 69/OWA: 181, 206). Animals cannot interpret themselves and therefore, in an animal, beauty can never come out of the way in which the animal interprets itself. In this way their beauty can only come as a physical comparison to other entities, and mostly probably by comparing them to other animals of the same species. Human beauty is of an entirely different kind. Humans can bring themselves forth in a work-like manner and that this is where the very nature of human beauty lies. Humans are able to create an understanding of both themselves and of everyone and everything else by the way that they themselves bring themselves forth. To gain access to this requires self-esteem, not just for an identity, but esteem for one’s own very nature.

The statement of The Body Shop about its understanding of self-esteem reads as follows:

Many of our principles are about showing compassion and understanding for other people, but ‘activate self-esteem’ is all about you! Self-esteem is about self-awareness, self-confidence, self-worth, and self-acceptance. It’s about respecting yourself, looking after your body and soul, and being proud of being who and what you are. (The Body Shop, 2003d)

This is really just another way of saying that humans are something other than a physical object or an *animal rationale* or an asset. It hints towards humans as self-interpreting in their very nature and towards this self-interpretation being fundamental to both the very nature of being human and to the notion of beauty with regard to humans. Heidegger suggests a different understanding of beauty:

Beauty is a manner in which truth is present as unconcealment. (UdK: 43/OWA: 181)

Beauty, therefore, has more to do with telling the truth about oneself and one’s own very nature than with comparative shapes, looks and styles. In this way, The Body Shop demonstrates a profound understanding of the very nature of humans.

‘Defend Human Rights’ could be viewed merely as the defence of a moral code. But the denial of human rights is actually an expression of a profound misunderstanding of the very nature of human beings. It is noteworthy that the statement says ‘*defend* human rights’, since this implies that The Body Shop is not about setting up human rights in the sense of putting human rights into law and implementing the law. It operates from an ethos of human dignity and *defends* that ethos against being denied. It takes that ethos as a given in the very nature of being human, but recognises that there are instances when human beings are being denied their very nature.

‘Protect Our Planet’ is a call to protect the Earth as an earth. Heidegger makes it clear that his understanding of ‘the earth’ is ‘not to be associated with the idea of a mass deposited somewhere, or with the merely astronomical idea of a planet’ (UdK: 28/ OWA: 168). In talking about ‘protecting the environment’ The Body Shop makes it clear that it is not committed to making sure a planet does not cease to exist, but that it is committed to protecting the earth. The concept ‘the Earth’ can then also be understood in the Heideggerian sense. The Body Shop seems to refrain from challenging the Earth in the way that technological revealing would. In this context there seems to be an inherent acknowledgement of the Earth, and the world that is set up by the Body Shop therefore ‘lets the earth be an earth’ (UdK: 32/OWA: 172).

### ***Assessment and Appreciation of Entities***

Quite clearly no enterprise can afford to let everyone just do anything without taking a view of the appropriateness of these actions and the outcomes these actions produce. In governing the enterprise, the issue of the appropriate assessment and

appreciation of entities is crucial. The question is how entities are to be assessed appropriately.

An oft-cited statement of Max Planck reads: 'That is real which can be measured.' (WB: 54/SR: 169)

Max Planck's statement seems to provide the underlying logic for how anything is assessed in the corporation. Quite clearly, by only accepting that which can be measured as real, everything is only real as far as it is a physical object (Hum: 39/LoH: 251). Within em-bankment, where everything is revealed as an asset, which is a physical object, the quantitative assessment is core to keeping em-bankment in place. Only what can be measured is revealed at all. Within this understanding, language is reduced to purely technological language, which is revealed only as unambiguous signals to transmit 'pieces of information'.

All this can hardly mean that the practice of assessment should be abolished altogether. Whoever is tasked with running a company needs methods of assessment and appreciation to obtain an understanding of how things are going in the company. The question is how to assess entities in a way that is in harmony with their very nature.

Firstly, if measurement turns what is measured into a physical object, it clearly means that whatever is merely a physical object is indeed assessed appropriately by being measured. By being measured, physical objects are actually revealed as what they are in their very nature. It needs to be remembered, however, that very few, if any, of the things that we encounter are actually mere physical objects. Heidegger's example of a jug shows that even the most common objects carry a world with them (VA: 157–179/PLT: 165–186). Even money, which one might see in merely quantitative terms, carries a world with it. As Heidegger points out in reference to the poet Rilke, this world has altered over time and, with it, our understanding of money itself has changed over the different historical epochs (WD: 291–292/WAPF: 113–114).

The need to assess and appreciate animals and plants as animals and plants does not seem to be a major issue within companies and Heidegger gives us no hint on how to go about this task. It seems, for example, that to assess a dog in way that is appropriate, the dog is to be immediately assessed for a certain behaviour and then, depending on the assessment, it should immediately be rewarded positively or negatively. The immediate assessment of a specific behaviour followed by immediate feedback seems to be an appropriate way to deal with animals, provided it takes into account the relation of the animal with its surroundings that come with the animal being world-poor.

The appropriate assessment and appreciation of humans is entirely different. If we take 'accomplishment' as the appropriate understanding of the very nature of human action, then the question is how to understand this type of action appropriately and what is the appropriate way to assess and appreciate it in such a way that the very nature of accomplishment is honoured. When looking at this question, it will be useful to go back to a quotation of Heidegger that was partially cited earlier:

We are still far from pondering the very nature of action decisively enough. We know action only as causing an effect. Its actuality is valued according to its utility. But the very nature of action is accomplishment. To accomplish means: to unfold something into the fullness of its very nature, to lead it forth into this fullness – *producere*. Accomplishable is therefore really only that, which already is. But what ‘is’ above all is Being. Thinking accomplishes the relation of Being to the very nature of humans. It does not make or cause the relation. Thinking brings this relation to Being solely as something handed over to it from Being. Such offering consists in the fact that in thinking Being comes to language. Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home. Their guardianship accomplishes the manifestation of Being insofar as they bring the manifestation to language and maintain it in language through their speech. (Hum: 5/LoH: 217)

Heidegger understands the nature of action – accomplishment – to be guardianship of the house of Being by thinking and creating with words. Accomplishment as thinking and creating with words is generally the creating of works and, more prominently, the creating of poetry. Poetry is, as mentioned earlier, not to be understood here as speaking in rhythm and rhyme, but as a way of way of speaking that says a world and thus is inherent to some degree in all art (UdK: 59–60/OWA: 197). However, the question remains how accomplishment as the very nature of human action can appropriately be assessed. Certainly the quality of poetry cannot be measured quantitatively by, for example, counting the number of words or verses. Gadamer has inquired into the way in which to interpret poetry or any other work, for that matter (Gadamer, 1961: 18–24). The appropriate way to assess any work is by attending to it, by being in the world set up by the work. Thus, in order to assess the accomplishment of a human being it is critical to attend to it appropriately. This can never lead to an explanation or a grasping, but more likely to understanding and interpreting (Gadamer, 1961: 19). But the interpreting does not so much show the work or accomplishment itself; it points in a direction or into an openness. As such there is a double interpreting going on. The accomplishment interprets and the interpretation of the accomplishment interprets too. In the reading of poetry, those who interpret and assess the poem can read the entire poem and then interpret it, having had access to the entirety of the work. Unlike with poetry, the assessor of activity within and for the enterprise cannot assume to have encountered the entirety of the accomplishment. The person who is likely to have encountered most of the accomplishments is the person being assessed him or herself. Consequently, the assessment of humans as openness-for-Being must always take the form of a dialogue, which is a sharing of worlds. In this case it is the sharing of a world that was set up through the accomplishment of the person being assessed and the sharing of a world as attended to by the person assessing. Furthermore, these interpretations happen within the world that is set up by the enterprise and are given their validity and measure within this world. As can easily be seen, a host of worlds and a host of interpretations come together, collide, confront and influence each other. For the dialogue between these worlds to succeed, this dialogue needs to become a form of creating itself, since this dialogue only co-responds to human beings as openness-for-Being if it sets up a world itself.

## How Does the Notion of the Enterprise Stand Up to the Requirements of Financial Sustainability?

One might conclude that the above thoughts are merely idealistic thoughts about the management of corporations and that to implement them would ultimately lead to higher costs in monetary terms and subsequently to reduced returns. Unlike the situation in other works, the sustainability of the enterprise depends on its ability to generate above-average returns. Thus, while financial returns tell us nothing about the work as a work, the generation of sufficient returns is not something that is optional in governing the enterprise. Paintings do not need to be profitable to be paintings; states are not entities set up for profit; symphonies do not cease to be when they become unprofitable (although they probably will be performed more often if people are prepared to pay for listening to them). That there is a condition in the form of a requirement for a sufficient level of financial profitability is a hallmark of the enterprise as compared to other works. Enterprises eventually cease to exist when the promise of profits is broken. Profitability is a condition that is critical but insufficient for it to be an original work. The profitability of the enterprise is similar to the structural stability of the Eiffel Tower. Quite clearly the Eiffel Tower would collapse without structural stability and it would thereby cease to be the kind of work that it is. On the other hand, not everything that has structural stability is a work. For the Eiffel Tower to be the work that it is it needs to be structurally stable, but it needs to be setting up a world too, otherwise it would not be a work.

The example of The Body Shop suggests that a company can be an original work and be profitable at the same time. As a listed company, The Body Shop is regularly assessed in financial terms. This does not say that The Body Shop might be significantly more or significantly less profitable if it was run strictly according to corporate logic. Clearly, for any company to be sustainable it has to be profitable and produce a return on investment that matches the going return from other investments at the investor's disposal.

The question now is whether a company *has* to be an original work to be extraordinarily successful, or whether a company merely *can* be an original work and still be successful. In other words, are those companies that are successful all original works, or, possibly due to the financial resources at their disposal, do those companies that are successful have a choice whether they are an enterprise or a corporation?

For guidance to answer this question it will be useful to consult the well-known research undertaken by Collins, who determined the characteristics of companies that have achieved a financial performance that is significantly above average for at least fifteen years (Collins, 2001: 3). For his research, Collins chose 11 companies in different industries that had attained a cumulative stock return of at least 3.42 times and, in some cases, more than 18 times that of the general market in 15 years. This would be a remarkable financial achievement by most standards. Companies were chosen that had been around for much longer than 15 years and that had produced only average returns before the 15-year period in question. For this reason he called

them ‘Good-to-great’ companies. Collins and his research team found a number of characteristics that distinguished these companies from companies that were similarly prominent but only produced average returns in the same markets. The task will be to ascertain to what degree the characteristics of the superior performers are that of enterprises or corporations and to what degree the characteristics of the average performers are more reminiscent of either the enterprise or the corporation.

All the companies that performed in this extraordinary way had extraordinary leadership, which was both modest and wilful, humble and fearless, and which Collins came to call ‘Level 5 Leadership’:

We were surprised, shocked really, to discover the type of leadership required for turning a good company into a great one. Compared to high-profile leaders with big personalities who make headlines and become celebrities, the good-to-great leaders seem to have come from Mars. Self-effacing, quiet, reserved, even shy – these are a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will. They are more like Lincoln and Socrates than Patton or Caesar. (Collins, 2001: 13)

As pointed out earlier those involved in entrepreneurial governance must be humble enough to let the enterprise give them who they are, rather than the other way around. They must also be committed ‘– *but their ambition is first and foremost to the institution, not themselves*’ (Collins, 2001: 21). Collins’ Level-5 leaders were all described as modest. This is in line with them understanding themselves as an artist who ‘remains indifferent as compared to the work, almost like a passageway that destroys itself in the creative process for the work to emerge’ (UdK: 26/OWA: 166). At the same time, the Level-5 leaders are totally dedicated. As Collins says, Level-5 Leadership ‘is equally about ferocious resolve, an almost stoic determination to do whatever needs to be done to make the company great’ and very high and ‘inspired standards’ (Collins, 2001: 30–31). This resonates with Heidegger’s statement on resolvedness:

As *authentic being a self*, resolvedness does not detach openness-for Being from its world, nor does it isolate it as free floating ‘I’. How should it, if resolvedness as authentic disclosedness is, after all, nothing but authentically being-in-the-world? Resolvedness brings the self right into the involved Being with things at hand and pushes it toward caring being-with the others. (SZ: 298/BT: 344)

In comparison, the companies with average performance tend to have leaders who are ‘concerned more with their own reputation for personal greatness’ and ‘often failed to set the company up for success in the next generation. After all, what better testament to your own personal greatness than that the place falls apart after you leave?’ (Collins, 2001: 26). One could evaluate such behaviour as selfish or plain ‘bad’. But the point is that this kind of behaviour is the perfect correlate to the Cartesian perspective. The manager is detached from the company and the company is merely an instrument that is to be used, which is once again perfectly justified in the Cartesian tradition, because oneself is the only person about whose existence one has indubitable evidence in the first place. From there it is only a small step to using the company for one’s personal ends. Someone who would see the company as a work would probably never behave that way, because the company would not

be an instrument but that which gives the executive who he or she is in the first instance. Collins quotes a Level-5 leader saying: 'I want to look out from my porch at one of the great companies in the world someday and be able to say, "I used to work there".' (Collins, 2001: 26).

It is also the Cartesian understanding of business leadership that makes it difficult for Level 5 leaders to make it to the top of companies:

The great irony is that the animus and personal ambition that often drive people to positions of power stands at odds with the humility required for Level 5 leadership. When you combine the irony with the fact that boards of directors frequently operate under the false belief that they need to hire a larger-than-life, egocentric leader to make an organisation great, you can quickly see why Level 5 leaders rarely appear at the top of our institutions. (Collins, 2001: 36–37)

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that almost all of the Level-5 leaders came from inside the company, while more of the average companies were led by people who were brought in. This suggests that a good understanding of the world that the company sets up is important for governing an enterprise successfully.

Another finding of Collins was that the superior performers did not start out with a smartly crafted strategy. They started by finding the 'right' kind of people. In the language of this book, the right people are the ones who are able and committed to attend to the enterprise. To speak in a metaphor, not everyone will immediately be able to attend to a modern jazz concert and many of those who are not able also have no ambition to ever learn to do so. Subsequently, it would be really inappropriate to take such a person to a modern jazz concert. Similarly, there are people who are the right kind of people to be on the staff of an enterprise. Collins suggests that whether someone is the 'right' person does not have much to do with specific knowledge, background or skill (Collins, 2001: 64). While he does not use the same vocabulary as is used in this book, remaining largely in the Cartesian tradition, Collins comes closest to the understanding of people being appropriate for attending to the enterprise when he suggests that they are people who love what they do and have a great life in what they are doing, both in their jobs and in their private lives (Collins, 2001: 61). Just like assessing people's performance as human beings, it seems to be an artistic endeavour to choose the appropriate people for an enterprise. The clearest indication that they are the 'right' people therefore seems to be their affinity to the world that is set up by the enterprise.

Collins makes another finding that is completely in line with the argument of this book. He finds that it is not primarily the compensation in terms of mere quantity that is key to people's performance.

We found no systematic patterns linking executive compensation to the process of going from good to great. The evidence simply does not support the idea that the specific structure of executive compensation acts as a key lever in taking a company from good to great. (Collins 2001: 49)

This does not mean that the compensation structure is irrelevant. Every compensation structure carries with it an inherent statement about the very nature of the tasks that need to be performed and their relevance and estimation. Needless to say,



the statement that the compensation structure makes must be in harmony with the world that the enterprise is setting up for people so that is easy to attend to the work integrally.

One of the characteristics of the good-to-great companies is that they cultivate honesty, both with regard to economic realities and with regard to allowing people to state their truth, and they ensure that both the economic facts and the truth of the peoples are heard:

Yes, leadership is about vision. But leadership is equally about creating a climate where the truth is heard and the brutal facts confronted. There's a huge difference between the opportunity to 'have your say' and the opportunity to be *heard*. The good-to-great leaders understood this distinction, creating a culture wherein people had a tremendous opportunity to be heard and, ultimately, for the truth to be heard. (Collins 2001: 74)

Collins suggests four basic practices to cultivate a climate in which truth is heard. These are:

1. Lead with questions, not answers.
  2. Engage in dialogue and debate, not coercion.
  3. Conduct autopsies, without blame.
  4. Build red flag mechanisms that turn information into information that cannot be ignored.
- (Collins, 2001: 88)

This is clearly in line with the notion of entrepreneurial governance set out above.

A capacity of the good-to-great companies is that they are capable of articulating and distilling the world that they are setting up into a simple organising idea, which Collins calls the 'Hedgehog Concept'. If a company is unable to do this, it is left scattered, diffused and inconsistent (Collins, 2001: 93). The strategic thinking that leads to the Hedgehog Concept is based on a profound understanding of the intersection of passion, superior capability and economic realities. In other words, it is something one likes to do, is good at doing and that pays. At best, most strategic frameworks consider only two of these three dimensions. Cartesian approaches would probably focus on capabilities and economic realities. This would leave out passion. And the question is not about what one could get passionate about, but about what one already is passionate about:

It may seem odd to talk about something as soft and fuzzy as 'passion' as an integral part of a strategic framework. But throughout the good-to-great companies, passion became a key part of the Hedgehog Concept. You can't manufacture passion or 'motivate' people to feel passionate. You can only *discover* what ignites passion and the passions of those around you. (Collins, 2001: 109)

The other aspect of the Hedgehog Concept is to distil it into a single economic measure that expresses an understanding of the Hedgehog Concept. As Collins points out, this concept is not a goal, strategy or intention. It is an *understanding* (Collins, 2001: 118). What is critical about this principle and its key measure is that they generate consistency in the company. The Hedgehog Concept expresses and defines integrity in the company.

The finding that is probably the closest to the argument in this book is what Collins calls ‘a culture of discipline’. This is in many ways an unfortunate choice of words for what is being described. The term discipline tends to be associated with either an external force that ensures discipline or the stoic determination to stick to certain rules. This is clearly the opposite of what Collins means. What Collins means is a profound understanding of the enterprise, which makes it transparently obvious what is to be done and what is not to be done. In the vocabulary of this book, what he describes is a world that people attend to. In Collins’ good-to-great companies, this more often means *not* doing something or *not* taking advantage of an opportunity than doing something or realising an opportunity, when this action or opportunity is not in harmony with the world that the enterprise is setting up. Thus, in the vocabulary of this book, what Collins calls ‘disciplined people’ would be ‘people in attendance’.

All companies have a culture, some companies have discipline, but few companies have a *culture of discipline*. When you have disciplined people, you don’t need hierarchy. When you have disciplined thought, you don’t need bureaucracy. When you have disciplined action, you don’t need excessive controls. When you combine a culture of discipline with an ethic of entrepreneurship, you get the magical alchemy of great performance. (Collins 2001: 13)

If one listens to what Collins is saying rather than to what he writes (or speaks), what he calls a ‘culture’ is strictly speaking not a ‘culture’ but a world, and what he calls an ‘ethic of entrepreneurship’ is strictly speaking an ‘ethos of entrepreneurship’.

In good-to-great companies, the relationship to technology in the sense of technological instruments and gadgets is also in line with the argument of this book. Good-to-great companies do not worship technology as the great transformational force, but see it as an instrument. In other words, they are not caught in em-bankment in which everything is an instrument and new instruments are therefore the important changing force. They see technology as mere instruments that are to be employed for something higher purpose in order to justify being given any prominence. Because they are levelheaded about technology, they can use technology in a way that suits the setting up of a world rather than have em-bankment reveal what it is.

Good-to-great companies *think* differently about the role of technology. They never use technology as the primary means of igniting a transformation. Yet, paradoxically, they are pioneers in the application of *carefully selected* technologies. We learned that technology by itself is never a primary, root cause of either greatness or decline. (Collins, 2001: 13–14)

All the good-to-great companies studied by Collins did not engage in quick-fix programmes or dramatic moments of transformation that turned the company around. Rather, they consistently built, in the vocabulary of this book, the enterprise in such a way that it would integrally and consistently set up the world that makes them successful.

Those who launch revolutions, dramatic change programs, and wrenching restructurings will almost certainly fail to make the leap from good to great. No matter how dramatic the end result, the good-to-great transformations never happened in one fell swoop. There

was no single defining action, no grand program, no one killer innovation, no solitary lucky break, no miracle moment. Rather, the process resembled relentlessly pushing a giant heavy flywheel in one direction, turn upon turn, building momentum until a point of breakthrough, and beyond. (Collins, 2001: 14)

Collins concludes that extraordinary success does not stem from one crucial insight that gives the executive an idea of what changes are needed and then implementing them successfully. The notion of the revolutionary idea or moment is a myth that is cultivated by the popular press (Collins, 2001: 164ff.). It is a myth that is a perfect expression of the Cartesian tradition in assuming that success comes from a breakthrough in the *res cognitans* in understanding the *res extensa*. What financially successful companies actually do is to, despite short-term pressures, engage in relentless and consistent thinking and enactment of the world that they understand as leading them to fulfilment.

The good-to-great companies were subject to the same short-term pressures from Wall Street as the comparison companies. Yet, unlike the comparison companies, they had the practice and discipline to follow the build-up-breakthrough flywheel model despite these pressures. And in the end, they attained extraordinary results by Wall Street's *own* measure of success. (Collins, 2001: 173)

What does all of this tell us? The overlap between Collins's findings about the characteristics of those companies that showed superior performance in the stock market and the notion of the enterprise as an original work as laid out in this book seem staggering. This does not tell us that any company that is run as an enterprise in the way the term is understood here is necessarily going to be a top performer in financial terms. It does, however, suggest that companies that are governed in a way that acknowledges them as works and that have a regard for the very nature of humans and physical objects (Collins does not talk about organisms in the researched companies) can be top performers and that enterprises are capable of outperforming those companies that in the context of this book are called corporations even in financial terms. Thus, even according to financial criteria, the technological way of running corporations for the sole objective of maximising financial returns and focus on the requirements of one stakeholder group, namely the shareholders, exclusively does not seem to have the potential to produce financial returns to the same extent as enterprises, which focus on setting up a particular world and understand sufficient financial returns only as a necessary condition rather than an overarching and exclusive objective of running a company.

It's about the bottom lines we live by. Of course businesses have to make a profit, but if that is our only bottom line, we will shrivel and die.

The future lies in finding a broader bottom line to live by. If The Body Shop can stay true to a bottom line that is breathtakingly exciting, empowering and inclusive – not just an Enron-style sleight-of-hand, where all the goodies are for the top managers – then it will stay at the forefront of retailing and business ideas. (Roddick, 2002a)

As said at the outset of this chapter, the task here is to bring something on its way, rather than to give a final or ultimate description of both the enterprise and the appropriate activities of bringing forth, realising and maintaining the enterprise.

This would in any case be an inherently impossible endeavour. The task here is to bring ourselves on the way of being more and more profoundly in co-respondence with the enterprise and all the entities involved in the enterprise. Lastly, it has been shown that this is not an endeavour that necessarily runs contrary to or is inherently in conflict with the condition of financial sustainability. The indications are rather the opposite; namely that, in order to produce superior returns, it seems critical that the leadership of a company be guided by an understanding of the company as a work and that appropriate leadership to embody this understanding is provided.

## Chapter 6

# Conclusion

The purpose of this book was to develop a fundamental ontological understanding of corporations and corporate management to guide an inquiry into Being in the corporation as the abode of humans in the corporate world. As pointed out at the outset, this inquiry is itself originally ethical. To accomplish this task has been a hermeneutic undertaking. The nature of hermeneutic undertakings is that they transform our understanding of an entity or issue rather than try to prove something that implicitly would already be understood in a certain way. The task of this conclusion is to work out how the initial understanding of the very nature of the corporation and its management has been transformed along the path that this book has taken. It will also show how this transformation fulfils the mandate that was set out at the beginning of this book. Finally, the task of this conclusion is to indicate some of the challenges and opportunities that so far were only touched on by the ascertainment of the company as a work.

### **The End of Corporate Strategy and the Task of Thinking**

The path followed by this book was to bring the inquiry into the corporation and its management into a more primordial domain, the domain of inquiring into the very nature of the corporation and the very nature of management. This inquiry is a contemplation that remains in the question that originated the inquiry. If this inquiry succeeds, this success will lie in a transformation of understanding and thinking rather than in a propositional statement about an issue or entity (EPAD: 61/EPTT: 431).

The entity of concern in this book is the corporation and its management. The realm of working on or with the corporation has been defined in the introductory chapter as that which we call the ‘strategic’. Consequently, ‘corporate strategy’ was derived as the field that deals with the entity called the corporation itself. The existing schools of thought on corporate strategy as distinguished by Mintzberg et al. (1998) are all based on specific metaphysical accounts of the very nature of the corporation, which are more or less explicit in the way that Mintzberg et al. (1998) have described them. Metaphysics says what entities are as entities. ‘Metaphysics thinks entities as entities in the manner of a representational thinking

that explains' (EPAD: 62/EPTT: 432). This explanation draws from what is present. In other words, metaphysics never asks what remains concealed in the way something is unconcealed; by its questioning, metaphysics remains in the unconcealed (WiM/WiMe). Because the explaining that metaphysics is engaged in draws from that which is present, it tends to objectify, since what is most obviously present is that which is physical.

The suggestion made here is that metaphysical accounts of the corporation, which are expressed in the numerous 'schools of strategic thought', have come to an end. This does not mean that they are finished and would not be worth further pursuit. To say that these accounts of strategy and the very nature of the corporation have come to an end means that they have reached a certain stage and have come to their own fulfilment (EPAD: 62/EPTT: 432).

The old meaning of the word 'end' means the same as place: 'from one end to the other' means from one place to the other. (EPAD: 63/EPTT: 433)

This, however, does not mean that strategising has reached a stage of perfection. It rather means that corporate strategy is established as a possibility. This does not say that the possibility has been completely realised and that everything that was possible has now been done and achieved. Rather, it means that the possibility of corporate strategy as a possibility is fully established. Corporate strategy as a possibility is perfectly clear. Fundamentally, as in other academic fields, strategy as a metaphysical approach to understanding and dealing with corporations has fulfilled itself in terms of a science as economics, sociology, anthropology, cultural anthropology, logistics etc., and is fundamentally empirical, technological and finds its culmination in the application of cybernetics (EPAD: 63–64/EPTT: 434). Within the field of corporate strategy, the rising prominence of techniques such as causal loop diagrams (Senge, 1990), which are based on cybernetics, shows the underlying desire to plan and control that which stems from em-bankment. Within cybernetics, language is constructed in order to transmit information (ÜSTS: 20ff.). Ontological questioning and the question of Being are forgotten and scientific questioning is the only questioning that remains legitimate.

The interest of the sciences is directed toward the theory of the necessary structural concepts of the coordinated areas of investigation. 'Theory' now means supposition of the categories, which are allowed only a cybernetic function, but denied any ontological meaning. The operational and model-based character of representational-calculative thinking becomes dominant. (EPAD: 65/EPTT: 435)

Nevertheless, the sciences in general and cybernetics in particular still promote an understanding of Being and of the very nature of entities without explicitly articulating this understanding. Because it is neither the project of the sciences nor of cybernetics to articulate the ontological assumptions inherent in their approaches, limiting ourselves to them cuts us off from a critical inquiry and developmental potential at the most fundamental ontological level.

The path followed by this book was neither metaphysical nor scientific. The notion of the corporation as a work does not understand corporations in their very

nature as physical objects that are present or as something that is primarily encountered, but rather as the kind of entity that gives the background that allows of any kind of understanding in the first instance. Therefore, the notion of the corporation as a work falls outside of metaphysical thought but remains within the fundamental ontological project of exploring the relation of entities to Being. It consequently also does not fall into the domain of corporate strategy.

But what was the task of this book then, if it was neither metaphysical, strategic, scientific nor technological? The kind of thinking that was attempted here is *less* than metaphysics, corporate strategy or science, because it is not applicable with an immediate effect.

But above all, the thinking in question remains unassuming, because its task is only of a preparatory, not of a founding character. It is content with awakening a readiness in people for a possibility whose contours remains obscure, whose coming remains uncertain. (EPAD: 66/EPTT: 436)

What this book tried to undertake was to prepare those participating in corporations in one way or another to come to terms with the corporation and em-bankment and to bring themselves into co-respondence with the very nature of entities and Being itself. The project to bring participants into co-respondence with the very nature of entities and the truth of Being itself on the one hand demonstrates that within em-bankment as set up by corporations there is no possibility for ethics in the first instance. On the other hand this very inquiry is itself already originally ethical and open up the possibility for ethical leadership. This does not mean that this book is prophetic or is attempting to be an exercise to predict the future.

The approach used here was hermeneutic phenomenology. It goes beyond the observation of mere phenomena and explores the always already interpretations of the very nature of entities and Being that remain unthought within metaphysics and current strategic thought. Within the unconcealing of these interpretations, the 'clearing' within which things show up the way they show up comes forth. Metaphysics does not know anything about the clearing itself; it can speak only about that which shows up in the clearing (EPAD: 73/EPTT: 443). Metaphysics and strategic thought speak of the light of reason, but they do not pay attention to the clearing of Being (EPAD: 73/EPTT: 443). What is said here does not indicate shortcomings in metaphysics and strategy. It rather shows up the nature of the strategic endeavour and thereby opens the possibility for thinking that moves beyond corporate strategy into the domain of original ethics.

By ascertaining that the corporation is an unoriginal work, the notion of the enterprise as an original work became possible. The Body Shop served as an example to illustrate some of the notions of an enterprise. The example was not chosen because The Body Shop has completely realised the possibility of the enterprise, but because it presumably shows signs of a beginning:

It's the modern paradox of business. Sustainable profit does not come from an obsession with profit. Neither does change come from an explicit effort to make change, and it absolutely never comes about at the urging of outside consultants or as the result of a bloodless strategic plan.



It comes from the generosity of your ideals, and it will be accepted in The Body Shop if it is expressed in terms that staff and customers can relate to, both personally and professionally.

Whether The Body Shop remains radical will depend on its support system of NGOs, other progressive businesses and visionary business academics who can give it the confidence to challenge the status quo. They know that the last thing the world needs is another dime-a-dozen cosmetics company. It *does* need examples of truly creative thinking about the role and nature of business. (Roddick, 2002a)

Considering the very nature of a company as being a work and exploring the notion of the enterprise as an original work was meant to unconceal and to begin to open up a possibility that is yet far from its own end. Given the nature of the task, this book is a thesis in the original sense of the Greek word: a setting up in the unconcealed (UdK: 48/OWA: 185–186).

## Review

The task set out at the beginning of this book was to establish the ground for managerial ethics and ethical management in its most primordial domain. To accomplish this, it explored a fundamental ontological understanding of the very nature of the entity called ‘the corporation’ and the very nature of corporate management. The notion of the corporation as a work was developed from Heidegger’s thinking. Works are the kinds of entities that set up a world. In the case of the corporation, this world, strictly speaking, is no longer a world but em-bankment. Within em-bankment, everything shows up in purely instrumental terms. Corporate management enacts the continuous repetition of em-bankment. As has been explained, humans are endangered in their very nature in em-bankment, since they are in their very nature world-acquiring. This very nature can no longer show up within em-bankment. This danger for the very nature of humans cannot be overcome by endorsement, resistance or neutrality towards em-bankment, the corporation and corporate management. According to Heidegger, we can only come to terms with it by acknowledging it as *the* danger to the very nature of what it means to be human. This acknowledgement leads us back to the very nature of humans in the first instance. It furthermore opens up the possibility entrepreneurial governance as a way of leading businesses so that they acknowledge entities, and particularly humans, in their very nature. This type of company is then no longer called a ‘corporation’, but is rather called an ‘enterprise’.

The notion of a work in the Heideggerian sense is not a metaphysical one. Works set up a world that allows for a metaphysical understanding in the first instance. As little as the notion of a world is metaphysical, that which sets up a world, namely a work, is not a metaphysical notion either. Works cannot be understood in metaphysical terms. As has been demonstrated, the existing literature does not seem to overcome the metaphysical understanding of the corporation and its management. This, however, was the task of this book.

Any work sets up a world and, by doing so, defines what is presumed useful and what is useless. Since the corporation sets up em-bankment, in which anything

only shows up in instrumental terms, and only instrumental arguments are viewed as legitimate, the 'corporate world' has cut itself off from the legitimacy and possibility of the philosophical and ontological discourse, because these types of discourse are by definition beyond the domain of the instrumental. By doing so, corporate strategy provides no access to original ethics and indeed no access to any kind of ethics, since within the domain of the instrumental there is no possibility for the genuine concern for others in their very nature. The introduction of the notion of the corporation as a work, an opening is established that allows for the philosophical and fundamental ontological discourse to emerge in the corporation. However, once this discourse emerges and establishes itself in the company, it becomes ever more appropriate to speak of it as an enterprise.

By understanding the very nature of the corporation and the enterprise as being works, a whole new possibility for innovation, creativity, entrepreneurship and ethical governance and leadership is opened up. Given the very nature of the corporation and the enterprise as works, the nature of everyone involved in the world set up by these entities inherently bears the possibility of innovation, creativity, entrepreneurial involvement and genuine ethical governance. This is not meant to make existing lines of thought in innovation, entrepreneurship and ethics obsolete, but rather to create a possibility for them to be authentic and genuine and to give grounding and guidance to existing approaches and lines of thinking in those fields of inquiry.

In the introductory chapter, the application of hermeneutics as a method was laid out and Madison's principles of coherence, comprehensiveness, penetration, thoroughness, appropriateness, contextuality, agreement, suggestiveness and potential (Madison, 1990) were chosen as the criteria to measure the success of this book. In compliance with Madison's principles, a coherent understanding of the corporation as a work has been presented. A wide selection from the prominent primary literature by Heidegger and secondary sources on Heidegger has been used to present a comprehensive notion of the corporation as a work in the way that Heidegger understands the term. As a comparison with existing prominent literature shows, this understanding of corporations significantly expands the current understanding of the phenomenon called 'the corporation'. A significant attempt was made to confront the notion of the corporation as a work with hitherto existing ways of understanding this phenomenon and to respond to these appropriately, given that the main focus was on making the notion of the corporation as a work intelligible rather than dedicating this book to confronting Heidegger's philosophy with philosophies that have previously been applied to corporate issues. The project of this book was first and foremost to understand the corporation and its management in terms of Heidegger's thinking, rather than to merely introduce snippets of his thought on corporate issues. Consequently, a wide variety of texts were consulted that can be considered representative of his entire opus. This has been done in harmony with what prominent interpreters say about Heidegger's thought in general, and with the literature that they consider being representational and prominent within Heidegger's thinking. As said earlier in this chapter, this was first and foremost meant to open up a new domain of possibility, rather than to present a finite and definitive understanding of the phenomenon called 'the corporation'.

Some of the presumably more obvious avenues for further inquiry and exploration will be mentioned in the remainder of this chapter. It remains within the spirit of Heidegger's thought that there was nothing here that can be proven, but a lot that can be shown. This book has therefore attempted to be of a persuasive nature and to extend an invitation to the readers by confronting them with situations and challenges in the corporate world, rather than by trying to prove something and verifying a theoretical understanding of the corporation and its management in the scientific sense.

## Outlook

As stated at the beginning, this book has attempted to apply Heidegger's thought to understanding the very nature of corporations and corporate management. To think with a thinker is always either an attempt to think something from out of a way of thinking, or to go against a certain way of thinking. In this case, the path was to think from out of Heidegger's thinking and to see how we would encounter the corporation and its management. As mentioned at the outset, Heidegger's thinking was even followed in choosing this approach:

One thing is necessary, though, for a face-to-face converse with the thinkers: clarity about the manner in which we encounter them. Basically, there are only two possibilities: either to go to their encounter, or to go counter to them. If we want to go to the encounter of a thinker's thought, we must magnify still further what is great in him. Then we will enter into what is unthought in his thought. If we wish only to go counter to a thinker's thought, this wish must have minimised beforehand what is great in him. We then shift his thought into the commonplaces of our know-it-all presumption. It makes no difference if we assert in passing that Kant was nonetheless a very significant thinker. Such praises from below are always an insult. (WhD: 72/WCT: 77)

This leaves us with a number of paths of thought that we can follow from where this book left off. Firstly, one can continue on the path within and from out of Heidegger's thought. His contemplations, particularly on the issue of time, seem to provide a rich field for further inquiry. Secondly, one could continue this journey by thinking further about corporate issues with thinkers who have built on Heidegger's thinking, such as Arendt, Gadamer, Foucault, Levinas and others. Among the issues that would be prominent in this endeavour would be the political dimension of companies, issues of communication, power and indeed ethics. Thirdly, one could make a similar attempt with other thinkers and philosophers such as Wittgenstein, who have made significant contributions to current thought. This would also offer opportunities to take the discourse between different philosophical schools into the field of corporate management and to confront the understanding of the very nature of the corporation in those schools of thought with each other.

As pointed out in the introductory paragraphs, current legal thought and practice is mostly built on the notion of the company as a legal person. To understand the company as a work provides a basis from which to investigate the appropriateness

of current legal theory and practice and built new avenues for legal reasoning on what is presumably a more tenable ontological foundation.

There are significant implications for a number of areas of research, both within and outside of the existing field of business administration, that are raised by this book. The fields of research that are particularly touched by the work of this book are the areas that deal with non-human organisms, humans and works. Among these are the areas of personnel management, organisational development, marketing, public relations and, as noted above, the field of strategy. Most prominent among these fields of research outside of business administration is economics, both as microeconomics and macroeconomics. The shortcomings of these fields have been touched on in this book, although without working out an appropriate philosophical foundation for these fields and corresponding approaches within these fields to appreciate the entities that they are dealing with in their very nature.

The thinking in this book calls for educational approaches to build capability in entrepreneurial creating, entrepreneurial governance and being ethical in the original sense. Heidegger's lectures provide numerous hints on the very nature of these approaches in education that can be drawn on in the development of practical avenues for such education.

Finally, the ontological groundwork laid here can provide a reference point from which to investigate the appropriateness of existing prescriptive doctrines, approaches and frameworks for the theory of managerial ethics and the practice of ethical management derived and developed from sources of ethical thought such as for example eudaimonism, utilitarianism, hedonism or Kantianism and bring them into a more original domain of ethics.

This 'thesis', in the original sense of the Greek word as 'a setting up in the unconcealed' (UdK: 48/OWA: 185–186), cannot end with a final closure. It cannot claim this for even a small part or an aspect of the human endeavour to gain certainty about an issue at hand. 'Setting up in the unconcealed' always means something akin to a new starting point for the human endeavour to open up the possibilities of human life, rather than an arriving at any kind of closure, final understanding, all-explaining world formula or an ethics in the form of a final theory, doctrine, ultimate set of guidelines, rules, maxims or a static morality. Indeed, if being originally ethical means being in the inquiry and pondering the truth of Being as the abode of the human being (Hum: 47/LoH: 258), then any kind of closure would be inherently and primordially not ethical.

The ones who will ultimately earn the right to pass judgement on the success of this book will be those who are bold enough to confront the managerial challenges in practice and theory and who venture to think the truth of Being in companies while being guided by the understanding that was unconcealed in this book and by doing so 'enter into what remains unthought' (WhD: 72/WCT: 77) here.

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