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A metaphysical investigation into the discipline of strategic management based on Wittgenstein's later philosophy

Pelayo Omotoso

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of Witwatersrand, in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Johannesburg, 2016

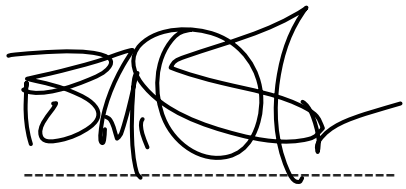
Abstract

Strategic management is a discipline that holds a significant promise for organisations. However, the discipline is fragmented, with a persistent stalemate of incompatible theories. Some researchers are beginning to use philosophical approaches to address these issues by interrogating the foundational questions of the discipline. The arguments in this thesis build on the philosophical approach by applying Wittgenstein's later philosophy to strategic management. Wittgenstein sought to address problems in philosophy by dissolving them, meaning that he sought to show how, when seen in the right perspective, that which were thought to be problems are really misunderstandings of the way language functions. Similarly, this research attempts to dissolve some of the fundamental problems in strategic management using Wittgenstein's later philosophical method.

Keywords: strategic management, performance heterogeneity, philosophy, Wittgenstein, philosophical investigations, language-games, family-resemblance

Statement of original authorship

I, Pelayo Olawale Percy Omotoso, declare that this research report is my own work. It is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.



Name: Pelayo Omotoso

Date:

Dedication

This work is dedicated to the generation that came before us, my mother, Marguerita, and father, Bankole, for providing an even keel, and showing us true north.

And to the generation that comes after us, my son, Itai, and daughter, Paida. May we pass on what wisdom we have acquired with the greatest clarity, and leave the things we do not know to your spirit of adventure.

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It is my hope that this work will serve as a tribute to the following sources of strength, guidance and inspiration:

- My wife, Tembi, for the brightness in my heart.
- Dr. Dominik Heil, my supervisor, for encouraging me to probe new horizons, and leaving me to find the right path.
- My brother, Akin, and sister, Yewande, who are an unending source of inspiration.
- My mother, Marguerita, and father, Bankole, whose love and lives have always been a source of guidance and courage. I hope they always feel that their sacrifices are validated in their children. I love you dearly.
- My mother-in-law, Philothea, for giving me the space in which much of this work was achieved.
- All things, for my guiding strength; and My Guiding Strength for all things.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. The purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to examine the philosophical assumptions underpinning the strategic management discipline, and to show how the most fundamental problems of the discipline can be resolved, or dissolved, through close attention to the philosophical foundations of the discipline. The thesis uses the lens of the later philosophy of Wittgenstein to establish a critique of the prevailing theories and suggests a path towards a foundation, based on his philosophical method as seen in *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein 1953).

1.2. The context of the study

1.2.1. The promise of strategic management

As a species, it can be argued that human beings have made social co-ordination a specialisation, in the same way flight or speed might be a specialisation in other species (Pinker 1994). Over the history of the species, society has entrusted different institutions with disproportionate responsibility and the authority to wield that power in the pursuit of societal betterment. Corporate organisations are the modern institution at the helm of societal co-ordination (Bakan 2004). An example of the acknowledgement of the status of business organisations in the literature is given below.

> Business organisations exert a tremendous cultural influence in modern society. Not only do we have an organisational economy, …but our expectations, preferences and indeed our very sense of identity is shaped by organisational force.
>
> Weeks and Galunic 2003, p. 1309

Modern multinational businesses can boast revenues that are greater than the GDP of countries; more customers than citizens of countries. Their reach spans continents, often further than political institutions. They could be said to represent the embodiment of the value modern society puts on innovation, excellence and market parity. Market parity is a particularly consequential modern concept. Institutions in

the past, such as political dynasties or religious systems, had control, not just over the changes in society, but also the pace of change. They were monopolistic systems that enjoyed periods of complete hegemony. One of the basic tenants of the modern societal construct is that of constant competition. Rivalry is not only condoned, it is propagated. The ideal conception of this competition is market parity, wherein every competing entity has the same conditions of competition regardless of size and resources. Modern businesses make decisions within this environmental context. The choices that they make are constrained by an environment that has the ability to evaluate alternatives and, in so doing, alter the balance of power between rivals.

It is in this environment that strategic management as a discipline has come to prominence. Its promise is significant; it offers the possibility for businesses to systematically make decisions that lead to better performance than its rivals. The promise of the strategic management discipline is succinctly captured by Powell in the following quote:

> The central, brute empirical fact in strategy is that some firms outperform others. Strategy theories explain this fact.
>
> Powell 2003, p. 61

Strategic management makes performance heterogeneity work in favour of organisations that apply its methods. Given this promise, it is no surprise that strategic management has become an integral part of business management across the world. Organisations like McKinsey and A.T. Kearney consult to nations and multinational corporations alike. Strategy consulting firms such as these have been integral to some of the most important business decisions in the last half century (Dobbie 1975; Makridakis 1997).

Strategic management is framed as an outcomes based discipline. Its methods and practices are defined so as to maximise the opportunity for certain desired outcomes. This is quite explicit in the literature, as can be seen from the following statement:

> Strategy is supposed to lead an organisation through changes and shifts to secure its future growth and sustainable success… its talismanic importance can hardly be overstated.
>
> Carter, Clegg and Kornberger 2008, p. 83

To this end, the discipline has built a number of theoretical models, developed tools and defined practices to guide organisations towards success.

1.2.2. The theoretical fragmentation of strategic management

The discipline of strategic management has changed significantly over the past half a century. Its approach is no longer purely based on the plan to implementation model that was dominant after the turn of the twentieth century (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel 1998). However, even at that early phase of the discipline, there were uncomfortable questions for the discipline. Ackoff, one of the pioneers of strategic planning and corporate strategy, wrote the following:

> Recently I asked three corporate executives what decisions they had made in the last year that they would not have made were it not for their corporate plans. All had difficulty in identifying one such decision… Planning is one of the most complex and difficult intellectual activities in which man can engage. Not to do it well is not a sin, but to settle for doing it less than well is. We do not yet understand corporate planning well enough to prepare a handbook on it.
>
> Ackoff 1970, p. 2

Ackoff's anecdotal evidence is not the only voice of concern about the effectiveness of strategic management practice. While the theory has evolved from his planning dominated form of strategic management, some voices of disquiet remain. Questions remain concerning matters from the impact of the discipline (Pekar and Abraham 1995; Dettmer 2003), to the effective way to practice strategic management (Lamb 1983; Yip 1985; Pekar and Abraham 1995; Porter 1996; Franklin 2001; Hambrick and Fredrickson 2001; Grundy 2004). A great number of papers and books are dedicated to improving the theoretical basis for strategy and advising on the most effective ways to practice strategic management in order to minimise performance inconsistencies (Taylor 1967; Porter 1980; Koch 2000; Collins 2001; Dettmer 2003). Corresponding work is being done to resolve differences and integrate seemingly

disparate accounts of strategic management (Barney 1986; Mahoney and Pandian 1992; Amit and Schoemaker 1993).

One of the consequences of this has been an increase in the number of theoretical approaches to strategic management (Carroll 1993; Mintzberg et al. 1998). Many of these are incomplete, narrowly focused on one aspect of the discipline. Some are incompatible, especially the broader theories that aim to create a unified perspective of the discipline. Sachez and Heene (1997) once bemoaned the state of the strategic management discipline as follows:

> Traditional strategy theory has lost much of its power to guide management of contemporary organisations because the traditional theory base has become progressively more fragmented into multiple unconnected streams of research and practice.
>
> Sachez and Heene 1997, p. 304

Fragmentation is an undesirable scientific trait. In his book, *The Elegant Universe* (1999), Greene makes this point in reference to the state of String Theory at the time:

> If someone tells you that they have solved the mystery of Amelia Earhart's fate, you might be sceptical at first, but … you might [come to] be convinced. But what if, in the next breath, they tell you they have a second …, a third, a fourth, and even a fifth explanation – each different from the others and yet equally convincing. No doubt, by the end of the experience you would feel no closer to Amelia Earhart's true fate than you did at the outset. In the arena of fundamental explanations, more is definitely less.
>
> Greene 1999, p. 182

The fragmented nature of the discipline is well framed in the seminal work by Mintzberg et al., *Strategy Safari* (1998). In that work the authors survey the field of the strategic management discipline and derive a categorisation of ten schools of thought of the discipline (see Appendix A for a summary).

> Ten distinct points of view did emerge, most of which are reflected in management practice. Each has a unique perspective that focuses… on one major aspect of the strategy-formation process. Each of these perspectives is, in one sense, narrow and overstated. Yet in another sense, each is also interesting and insightful.

Mintzberg et al. 1998, p. 2

These distinct perspectives are individually incomplete, but collectively irreconcilable creating a stalemate of theoretical positions in the discipline. The industry based view and the resource based view of strategy have fundamentally different approaches to strategy, one looking at it from the outside in, and the other from the inside out (Porter 1979; Wernerfelt 1984; Rumelt 1991; Sanchez and Heene 1997). In the more descriptive theoretical perspectives of strategic management, the learning and culture perspectives are paced and deliberate, while the dynamic capabilities perspective of strategic management frame the organisation as a place of constant instability (Senge 1990; McGrath 2013). No example was found in the literature of a systemic catalogue of the areas of optimal application for each theory. The differences outlined above are not trivial or inconsequential. Not only do they determine the way strategies are formulated and executed, but they impact on the whole style of thought of the strategy practitioners, with wide reaching consequences for organisations and society at large.

The effect of this stalemate is a sub-optimal understanding of the principles of the discipline (Franklin 1998). Hamel's comment on the matter is cited below:

> The strategy industry does not have a theory of strategy creation! It does not know where bold, new value-creating strategies come from. There is a gaping hole in the middle of the strategy discipline. No, let me put it differently: there is no foundation to the strategy discipline.

Hamel 1998, p. 10

A great deal can be accomplished with a partial knowledge of foundational principles, but a great number of tragedies could also result. Such was the situation with the masons who built the great cathedrals of the Middle Ages:

> If you go and look at a cathedral you may well wonder whether you are impressed more deeply by the skill or by the faith of the people who built it. These buildings are not only of very great size and height; some of them seem to transcend the dull and heavy nature of their construction materials and to soar upwards into art and poetry. On the face of it, it would seem obvious that the medieval masons knew a great deal about how to build churches and cathedrals, and of course they were often highly successful and superbly good at it. However, if you had had the chance to ask the

> Master Mason how it was really done and why the thing stood up at all, I think he might have said something like "… when we built it, we duly followed the traditional rules and mysteries of our craft". Naturally, the buildings we see and admire are those which have survived… the medieval masons were by no means always successful… so long as there was no scientific way of predicting the safety of technological structures, attempts to make devices which were new or radically different were only too likely to end in disaster.
>
> Gordon 1978, p. 25-27

Strategic management as a discipline has been at the vanguard of some of the greatest industrial triumphs of modern times. But questions about the foundations of the discipline seed disquiet that manifests itself in the following ways. Firstly, it erodes the ability of the discipline to have practical impact, causing legitimate questions to be asked about the discipline's connectedness to the real world problems it is intended to address (Sanchez and Heene 1997; Jarzabkowski and Whittington 2008). The variety of perspectives also makes it quite likely that divergent sets of recommendations would emerge. It is not obvious that any particular model is better suited to specific organisational contexts and this study could find no research indicating that this is the definitively the case. Organisations are thus left to test the waters, making decisions based on individual preferences and organisational competence. Secondly, it leads to serious questions about the rate of failure and the potential inconsistency of results. In his book, *Strategic Navigation* (2003), Dettmer catalogues a number of different studies that highlight the nature of the problem:

> - One of the earlier studies indicated that while companies engaging in their activities in a "systematic planned" way achieved higher, more predictable performance on average, other companies that did not engage in planning surpassed the performance of the best planners (Ansoff, Avner, Brandenburg, Portner and Radosevish 1970, p. 6).
> - Some studies in the 1970s, by Malik and Karger for example, found favourable results for planning, while others, by Sheehan, Grinyer, and Norburn, didn't. (Mintzberg 1994, p. 21).
>
> Dettmer 2003, p. 3

The problem is not that the practices of the discipline produce erroneous results. Clear negatives or positives are easily managed through adjustment of the theoretical framework. The problem is that the results are inconsistent: Similar practices can yield different outcomes; different practices can yield similar outcomes; lack of any disciplined strategic practice can be married to successful outcomes; well defined and engaged strategic exercises can precede unsuccessful ventures. This study could find no theoretical model that provides either explanation or resolution for this problem in the literature of the discipline. This leads to the third outcome which is a questioning of the discipline itself and an equally fragmented number of approaches to reformulating strategic management. Below, these approaches are categorised into three distinct groups for the purposes of this thesis.

1.2.3. The prevailing approaches to resolving the research problems

1.2.3.1. The development of deterministic theoretical models

Much of the research in strategic management concerns itself with clarifying or proposing generally applicable theoretical models for strategic management. Science often develops in this way, weeding out weaker theories and supplanting them with more comprehensive frameworks (Kuhn 1996). This approach takes the stance that the problems highlighted above are due to deficiencies in the efficacy of the theories and frameworks of the discipline which can be addressed with further refinement. A significant amount of research in the best journals of the discipline such as *Strategic Management Journal*, are dedicated to doing exactly this. One by one, paradigms like the industry based view of strategy (Porter 1979; Rumelt 1991) and the resource based view of strategy (Wernerfelt 1984) have helped define the theory and practices of strategic management by positing a variety of relational functions between critical organisational variables. On the fringe of these grand projects, there are now hundreds, maybe even thousands, of step-by-step guides to doing strategy with slight variations on common themes such as competition, vision, resources, planning, execution etc. Apart from a few exceptions, most of these theories and approaches aim to be generally applicable to the business community at large, and sometimes even extendable to non-profit organisations. Work continues to create more consistently applicable universal theories based on this approach.

The process of uncovering such theories is based commonly on hypothesis testing. Indeed, many articles in the *Strategic Management Journal* introduce their topic by explicitly stating the hypothesis that they intend to investigate. As such, the key process of validating theory is through empirical verification. How do you know the speed at which an object travels? Science requires that you are able to measure it with repeatable consistency, and are able therefore to make predictions based on your results. There must also be an explanation for the findings that is in broad agreement with the existing canon of human knowledge (or render a previously held part of our knowledge redundant). Because scientific knowledge is linked to empirical observation, there is the implication that it enables discovery of fundamental truths about nature. The deterministic theory approach therefore sets a high bar for strategic management, but one which comes with the ultimate reward of predictable outcomes based on initial conditions.

1.2.3.2. The descriptive model of strategic management theory

The high levels of predictability typically found in mechanical systems is not easily replicated by strategic management theory. This study found no strategic management theory that purports to attain anything near the level of predictability of classical science. This has led some to question the applicability of mechanistic models in strategic management (Franklin 1998). Such mechanistic models represent one way of framing relationships within organisational systems. However, other models exist. For example, scientific relationships can include a large range of nonlinear systems (such as probability theory, chaos theory, and adaptive systems). In non-linear systems, the nature of relationships within organisational systems can differ and might not be obvious without observation. Given such observation over time, patterns might emerge which are in themselves tools for strategic endeavours. This is the model on which the more pragmatic descriptive theories of strategic management are built. The learning organisation perspective (Senge 1990) was one of the earliest successful structured approaches to incorporate this form of knowledge, and is allied to the concept of scenario planning (de Geus 1988) which is still widely practiced in modern organisations. However, the learning paradigm has been somewhat eclipsed by the emergence of culture as a strategic factor (Peters

and Waterman 1982; Barney 1986; Franklin 2000). Culture is perhaps so pervasive today because it represents a powerful tool that validates the descriptive, non-mechanistic approach to strategic management theory development. It clearly expresses the counterpoint being made by the body of literature on deterministic theoretical models. Culture is akin to an invisible gravity that exerts itself across multiple aspects of organisational functions. In modern strategy literature, the fast pace of business disruption is often explained in terms of the inability of organisations to adapt because of deeply held beliefs which can manifest themselves as cultural norms (Christensen 1997).

1.2.3.3. The underlying philosophical assumptions of the discipline

The majority of strategic management theory literature is covered by relational models defined either by the deterministic or by the descriptive approach to strategic management. Since the type of theoretical model has such a huge impact on the nature of the strategic management theory, it is only logical that the question arises as to how strategic management theorists should decide which type of theoretical model to engage in study. In other words, is there a right epistemological framework for the discipline (Powell 2001)? This is a metaphysical question and it casts the discipline into the realm of philosophical questioning. While many in the strategic management community might find this an uncomfortable notion, it stems directly from the structure of the discipline. Powell provides this reminder:

> For any empirical discipline, epistemological beliefs have theoretical and methodological consequences, and habitual beliefs can lead to dogmatism, illusion, or despair… Our philosophy of strategy should show us the way, even if it means relinquishing the comforts of well-worn epistemological beliefs.
>
> Powell 2003, p. 286

How can the way we think about knowledge, and philosophy in general, possibly help answer the fundamental problems of the strategic management discipline? To answer the question, consider Russell's insight into the value of philosophy below:

> Philosophy, though unable to tell us with certainty what is the true answer to the doubts which it raises, is able to suggest many possibilities which enlarge our thoughts and free them from the tyranny of custom. Thus, while diminishing our feeling of certainty as to what things are, it greatly increases our knowledge as to what they may be, removes the somewhat arrogant dogmatism of those who have never travelled into the region of liberating doubt, and keeps alive our sense of wonder by showing familiar things in an unfamiliar aspect.
>
> Bertrand Russell 1959, p. 157

As indicated, philosophy can be valuable as a means to help free our minds from the confines of deeply held beliefs and allow for a broader framed perspective. There are multiple ways to think about theoretical models, and all serve a particular social purpose. For example, knowledge could be referential or relativistic; it could be privileged or divine. There are many consistent models for theoretical knowledge which could hold important insights for strategic management. There is an argument for the enrichment of the strategic management discourse with the voice of philosophy:

> The parallel between philosophies and strategic management models (and, at a broader level, organization theories) shows that organization studies have philosophical ancestors. For instance, the debate between Ansoff and Mintzberg (in the Strategic Management Journal 1990 and 1991) recalls the opposition between Descartes and Locke, three centuries before. The creative tensions depicted by Hampden-Turner (1990) recall the metaphor of the Chiasma by Merleau-Ponty (1964). Singer's model of strategy as moral philosophy (1994) is based on Kant's critique of practical reason (1788). It is tempting to conclude that since philosophical approaches preceded organisational studies, the theoretical imagination of organization scholars may be enriched by broad philosophical experience.
>
> Calori 1998, p. 300

A number of works exist in the literature on the philosophical underpinnings of strategic management (Schendel 1994; Nonaka and Konno 1998; Mir and Watson 2000; Powell 2002; Shotter 2008). There are also areas where some aspects of the philosophy of Wittgenstein is highlighted (Shotter 1996; Powell 2003; Shotter 2005).

Considering different philosophical positions and their implications for strategic management allows for radical breaks from normative positions entrenched in

existing strategic management frameworks. This has been suggested as what might be necessary to confront the lingering problems of the discipline:

> Perhaps the reason management and organisation theorists have fallen short is that, for all their willingness to think anew, they have addressed the inadequacies of our governing paradigm without truly replacing it… we need a completely new way of looking at the organisational world.
>
> Yates and Davis 2001, p. 14-15

The philosophical method sketches new canvases for approaches to the discipline of strategic management, not as superseding theories but as complementary aspects of a variegated landscape.

1.3. An introduction to Wittgenstein's grammatical method of philosophy and its relevance to the research

1.3.1. Wittgenstein's grammatical method of philosophy

Wittgenstein counted amongst his most significant influences the renowned physicist Heinrich Hertz. In one of the manuscripts that eventually gave rise to the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein writes:

> In the way I do philosophy, the whole task lies in arranging the expression in such a manner that convincing problems / insecurities disappear (Hertz).
>
> Wittgenstein 2013, p. 271

Hertz is most well-known for his pioneering work on electromagnetic waves. While his influence as a philosopher of science is continuously pointed to by Wittgenstein himself, there is a tendency to understate his impact on Wittgenstein's thinking (Kjaergaard 2002). Consider the following passage from *Principles of Mechanics Presented in a New Form* (hereafter referred to as *Principles of Mechanics*) as a herald of Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy given in the previous quotation:

> When these painful contradictions are removed, the questions of the nature of force will not have been answered, but our minds, no longer vexed, will cease to ask illegitimate questions.
>
> Hertz 1956, p. 8

Hertz and Wittgenstein believed that some questions that seem to cry out for answers are in fact intellectual traps and dead-ends, which when seen in the right light are exposed for what they are. In his later philosophy, Wittgenstein came to believe that most of the fundamental philosophical questions of the time held these traps, and a significant part of his later philosophy is an attempt to break down the edifice these questions pose. Critical to that task was their concept of science and scientific theory. Hertz had sought to show how theories need not correspond to empirical reality. His alternative form of justification relied on the internal consistency of the theoretical construct. By Hertz's account, to be useful, the theory needs to have some consequential conformity with our experience, for example, they need to be useful predictors of certain outcomes. But they need not mirror reality necessarily. In fact, Hertz would argue that there is no way for us to know if such mirroring is possible. Given the potential for uncertainty associated with this picture (it might not be clear at the onset that a theory provides a useful conformity), Hertz proposed that theories need only be justified as potentially valid, based on their internal consistency, that is, that the theory be logically permissible. An example of an internally consistent construct is a language. Hence Wittgenstein was able to link Hertz's concept with Russell's work on the foundations of logic. Language for Wittgenstein was not just the spoken word, but also the gestures and rituals through which human beings convey meaning. Wittgenstein often used the term language-games to denote this link between speech and practice (Addis 2006).

The form of scientific theory is independent of the content of its representation and only corresponds insomuch as it is doing the work for which it was intended, and in that sense, to a greater or lesser degree that any other theoretical form. This was one of the insights that allowed Wittgenstein to develop a unique purpose for philosophy, as distinct from science. Philosophy's role is not theorising but the clarification of the ways in which language functions. It serves as a reminder that scientific theories are bounded and thus set limits for what can meaningfully be asked.

> By attending to the employment of words, he hopes one can overcome the entranced pictures that hold us captive. Such attention produces a description of a language-game and the purpose of such a description is to either return us from the idling pictures of philosophy or change our practices when that is needed.

Genova 1995, p. 5

Wittgenstein's focus is not to provide a particular theoretical position, but to bring about a new style of thinking that is different from theorising, in that it focuses on the skill of attending to the distinctive patterns of the actual practice of the language in use. There is typically some cognitive resistance in accepting Wittgenstein's recommendation for an approach that eschews theorising and generalised explanations in favour of description. Wittgenstein's style of thinking seems to run up against the very successful scientific method of theorising, and failing to theorise, is to fail to think deeply enough about phenomena under investigation. But this is a chimera. The methods of science are valid in specific types of language-games; they answer specific types of questions, and are silent about other types of questions. This is what Wittgenstein means by the following passage in *Tractatus*:

> 6.52. We feel that even if all possible scientific questions be answered, the problems of life have still not been touched at all.

Wittgenstein 1961, p. 110

For Wittgenstein, the problems referred to can only be addressed through attention to our forms of life and the understanding of societal practices therein. Wittgenstein's later philosophy aims to bring about this change in style of thinking, and evocation of the varied and distinctive practices that are the functions of specific societies (McGinn 1997). His contribution is not in an argument against a particular doctrine or for a specific theory, but in the development of a particular style of thought that once adopted, sweeps away a broad range of philosophical misunderstandings. His approach is to draw on a variety of tools that allow an exploration of the workings of language that has become a source of confusion. McGinn sums up his method as follows:

> Wittgenstein does not challenge outright our desire to follow a particular path, or adopt a particular picture, but allows our inclination free rein. We are encouraged to explore, or to apply… so that we find out for ourselves that… they offer no solution to the problems of understanding which confronts us.

McGinn 1997, p. 20

Wittgenstein is creating an orientation towards a different style of thinking about philosophy, based on an understanding of language. In so doing, he must address

the tendency to ask questions such as “what is meaning?”, “what does understanding consist of?” etc. He does this by asking questions that force attention on the way in which these words are used in language. Such questions include asking under what types of circumstances the words might be used; how the applicability of a word is verified for a specific case; what constitutes certainty in the resolution of disagreements etc. In *Investigations*, this approach is applied to questions of meaning, understanding, sense-data and a variety of other questions that tempt philosophers to search for elucidatory theories where descriptive understanding would, by Wittgenstein’s account, be more enlightening. Wittgenstein’s philosophical approach is thus both therapeutic and pedagogical (Garver 1999). It is therapeutic in the sense that it aims to arrest particular philosophical misconceptions, while its pedagogical value lies in the broad perspective of the language-games which it develops as an alternative style of thought.

1.3.2. The relevance of Wittgenstein’s philosophy

The approach taken by this thesis falls into the last of the three prevailing approaches described above. Because Wittgenstein was concerned with the fundamental nature of the discipline of philosophy and the rigours of metaphysical expression, Wittgenstein’s philosophy is one of the places where the discipline of strategic management might find solutions.

Wittgenstein’s philosophy covers a vast subject area. He made unique contributions to the philosophy of mathematics, on the subject of logic, the philosophy of mind, and the philosophy of language (Addis 2006). His philosophy is typically divided into his earlier and later periods, epitomised by his two principle works *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* (hereafter referred to as *Tractatus*) in terms of his earlier period, and *Philosophical Investigations* (hereafter referred to as *Investigations*) from the later period. Wittgenstein’s philosophy militates against a series of well-worn assumptions about fundamental tenets of philosophy (Kuusela 2008). Conventional thinking on metaphysics either argues in the spirit of Plato for essential ideal features of universal necessities or, following Kant, for an understanding of metaphysics as mind mediated constructs from the raw data of experience (Hacker 1996).

Wittgenstein's later philosophy points to the role of language. His assertion is that metaphysical assumptions are essentially norms of human expression which Wittgenstein calls grammatical rules for the language-games of society. Wittgenstein's definition of language extends beyond the normal spoken word. Wittgenstein embeds language in the human context:

> Human beings live in communities, upon which they depend not only for their specific ambitions and goals, but also for the very language with which to describe and intend them.
>
> Scruton 1996, p. 67

For Wittgenstein, knowledge is socially circumscribed. It is the social community that imbues action with significance (Medina 2005). Instead of being observation led as in the case of both the deterministic and the descriptive theoretical models, Wittgenstein's knowledge is defined by the language of social norms. This is the essence of Wittgenstein's oft quoted saying that '…the meaning of a word is its use in the language' (Wittgenstein 1953, p. 18e).

The rationale for studying Wittgenstein in this context stem from compelling similarities between the problems he engaged and the current nature of the strategic management discipline. Firstly, Wittgenstein's philosophy emerged in a context similar to that of the field of strategy. The importance of the scientific method for resolving questions in the field was of primary significance. In philosophy, it was the work of Russell that was beginning to emphasise the scientific nature of philosophy (Monk 1990), while a similar effect has resulted from the influence of micro-economic theory on strategic management (Weiss 2000). The fragmentation of the field is similar to philosophy at the time of Wittgenstein. Both disciplines, strategic management and early to mid-twentieth century philosophy, required an investigation into what the contribution of the field should be and, consequentially, the method for achieving its purpose.

Secondly, Wittgenstein's philosophy directly tackles the issues here under investigation. He concerned himself with imbuing the field of philosophy with a new picture of knowledge:

> The paradigm of theory construction is science. Theories legitimate hypothetico-deductive prediction and explanation of events … In this sense of "theory" there can be none in philosophy. The task of philosophy is to resolve philosophical problems by clarification.
>
> Hacker 2001, p. 333

This take on philosophy remains a unique perspective of the discipline. It is not Wittgenstein's objective to substitute a rejected theory with his own version. His objective is to bring about a different style of thought in the reader that focuses more on the distinctive patterns of our languages in practice, and avoids questions that are concerned with theory formulation or elucidation.

Finally, and arguably as a result of his view on the purpose of philosophy, Wittgenstein offers a unique methodological approach for investigating and understanding conceptual subjects. This is as applicable to strategy as it was to philosophy in the early and mid-twentieth century. It has the potential to – as Wittgenstein would put it – "dissolve" the problems posed here by being attentive to the contextual practices of organisations.

1.4. The research gap and intended of contribution

1.4.1. The research gap

The application of philosophical inquiry in fundamental aspects of strategic management is still rather limited compared to the body of work focused on theoretical formulation and analysis. Philosophical inquiry has the power to pose critical questions and direct debate with significant implications for the discipline. The richness of philosophical voices is unfortunately not fully mirrored in the strategic management debate. Wittgenstein is quoted by researchers like Powell (2001) and Shotter (2005), but this research has not found a critical application of his philosophical approach to the discipline of strategic management, and this is especially true of his later philosophy. This is unfortunate, not just because there are significant parallels as given in the previous section, but also because Wittgenstein's later philosophy represents a unique philosophical position and perspective (Stroll 2000; Fearn 2005). This perspective represents a style of thought that is arguably

absent from the discourse of strategic management, and is very different from the prevailing style of thinking in the discipline today. The missing voice of Wittgenstein in the strategic management discourse means there are a number of unexplored ideas with significant implications for the discipline.

1.4.1.1. The grammatical style of thought

There is much made in the literature of the intense intellectual capacity of Wittgenstein (The title of Monk's biography (1990) was *The Duty of Genius*). This was partially because Wittgenstein's intense and awkward nature fits the stereotype well. But it was also because Wittgenstein addresses problems in new, innovative ways. In the philosophical stalemates of his day, rather than pick a side, Wittgenstein would question a foundational principle that had been assumed by both sides.

> One keeps forgetting to go down to the foundations. One does not put the question mark deep enough down.
>
> Wittgenstein 1980a, p. 71

At the foundation of Wittgenstein's grammatical method is a question mark about theorising. Wittgenstein believed that some questions are not well answered by theorising. These questions are about the phenomena that give our context meaning (McGinn 1997). A child could look up at a wall clock and ask "What is the time?", and a natural way to answer would be to explain how the motion of the hands of the clock tells the time. When the same child asks "What is time?", Wittgenstein argues that one reads the question in the same way, as if it is a question that calls for an explanation of a phenomena. Now a problem arises because the simple phenomena that is even taken for granted is difficult to explain in the same manner. But the key point to realise is that it seems simple because time has a normative role in the practices of our society. What is required is not an explanation of time but a description of the ways in which time has meaning in the practices of our society. This is the bewitchment of language Wittgenstein warns against (Wittgenstein 1953). It is the contention of this thesis that questions related to the discipline of strategic management are the latter type of question, unsuitable to answering by explanation. One implication would be that it would redirect the focus of the discipline away from

the current preoccupation with performance heterogeneity. A consequence of this reorientation might be the elimination of some of the problems of the discipline described above. These problems would be irrelevant for the change in orientation and would therefore dissolve away.

1.4.1.2. The grammatical method of investigation

The aim of Wittgenstein's philosophy is to bring about a change in style of thought. As such, it differs from a typical philosophical treatise which is aimed at the explanation and evidentiary support of a theoretical position. This makes Wittgenstein's method of argument different. Wittgenstein could not use a theory to argue his positions. Instead, at the base of each of Wittgenstein's arguments is the actual practice of our language-games. The choice is a sublime one. It forces a re-engagement with the actual phenomena under investigation. Abstract concepts are tethered to, and must account to, the language-games of our practices. To use a metaphor, it is Wittgenstein's intent to let the air out of the balloon of abstract concepts that had caused his reader to drift high above the landscape and lose sight of its intricate features. Once back on the now unfamiliar terrain, Wittgenstein seeks to encourage the reader to explore the landscape; first to find the supposed correspondence between the inflated abstractions of their theories and the actual landscape of our practice; but eventually, to get the reader to see that there is no need for the balloon, and that the landscape is easily surveyable from the ground. Wittgenstein's method is therefore like a philosophical meander through a vaguely recognisable terrain. He allows the reader the free reign of their thoughts, and asks questions that remind them to pay attention to the actual landscape. This method delivers an appreciation of the misunderstanding that leads the reader to theorise, and a richer understanding of the phenomena under investigation. It is a deeply subjective exercise that seeks not just an agreement on a point of view, but a personal change in an individual. Isaac Newton once remarked in a letter that he made his achievements by standing on the shoulders of giants, that is, he had the advantage of the achievements of those who came before him. This is a characteristic of scientific achievement. It is baked into the fabric of society and no individual need take the same intellectual path to the discovery of that achievement.

An outcome (perhaps an objective) of the prevailing style of thought in strategic management is that it provides individuals with a set of tools, which are often applied with less intellectual enquiry than is necessary for the situation:

> What they don't seem to teach you in business school is that "the five forces" and "the seven Cs" and every other generic framework for problem solving are heuristics: they can lead you to solutions, but they cannot make you think.
>
> Stewart 2006

Wittgenstein wrote in the preface to *Philosophical Investigations* that he did not wish to spare his readers the trouble of thinking (Wittgenstein 1953). On the contrary, his approach was to apprentice his readers into a style of thinking that would be useful in navigating the landscape in the future. In this way, Wittgenstein's method represents a skill for avoiding false paths of thought and being attentive to the actual practices of the phenomena under investigation. Were strategic management to become less reliant on theorising, such a skill would be useful for future practitioners of the discipline.

That Wittgenstein's philosophy has parallels for strategic management, and could therefore hold lessons for the discipline has already been argued above. Wittgenstein's philosophy and method, it is argued here, also provides a unique perspective that is missing in the canon of the discipline today.

1.4.2. The arguments of the research study

The arguments of this thesis follow Wittgenstein's philosophical insights. The thesis argues that organisations fit Wittgenstein's definition of language-games. By this rationale, organisations can be conceived as internally consistent constructs, with the function of achieving a set of desirable outcomes for society. Rather than being theoretically generalizable, the proposal of this thesis is that organisations be considered as similar but individually distinct sets of practices. The thesis would argue that strategic management mistakenly seeks elucidation of organisational performance, and proposes a different style of thought that focuses on describing the function of organisational language-games and their purpose in society. Like

Wittgenstein's argument, this approach has advantages in that it dissolves a number of persistent problems for the discipline of strategic management.

The main advantage is that the picture derived from the organisation as a language-game is that it arrests the problem of the irreconcilable stalemate of theoretical perspectives in the strategic management discipline. Instead it provides for strategic management to be attentive to the purposefulness of the practice of organisations, and thus influence organisational outcomes. It also ensures that organisational comparisons are descriptive rather than explanatory, eliminating the temptation for generalisation and metaphysical abstraction that leads to asking and attempting to answer ontologically illegitimate questions. This thesis aims to show the implication for the discipline of adopting this philosophical shift. These implications include a unique position for strategic management as the discipline that investigates the limits of organisational purpose and possibility. It also releases strategic management from competing with economic theory to define organisational performance; it does not have to compete with marketing to explain focused execution. It also encourages a style of thought that engenders a sense of belonging in organisational practitioners. Practitioners in this sense are not able to distance themselves from the organisation, but are in themselves defined by the roles they have in the organisation and in society. Such purposefulness brings ethics and morality to the surface of the discipline, not as a proxy for soft aspects of a financial calculus, but as a meaningful form of engagement in itself. It is possible that such a central role could reduce further scandals born of unethical practices.

This thesis therefore has three main objectives. The first is to introduce Wittgenstein's approach to the discipline of strategic management with the aim of developing a different style of thought. That style of thought focuses on the organisational language-games within their societal context. Secondly, the approach needs to demonstrate its ability to dissolve the critical questions of the discipline. This step serves both to critique the existing theorising approach, as well as to demonstrate how a descriptive approach could prove effective. The three objectives of the thesis can therefore be summarised as follows:

- To introduce Wittgenstein's philosophical approach to strategic management. This is done by providing a parallel for Wittgenstein's arguments from philosophy of language, to strategic management of organisations.
- To demonstrate Wittgenstein's therapeutic approach in strategic management by examining the workings of the key practices and concepts of performance heterogeneity.
- To demonstrate the pedagogical value of Wittgenstein's approach by developing a description of strategic management based on Wittgenstein's style of thought.

1.4.3. The significance of the research

The arguments of the research rely on the later philosophy of Wittgenstein to dissolve fundamental problems of the discipline. This approach also opens up new avenues of research with significant implications for the discipline. This section briefly outlines the significance of these outcomes.

1.4.3.1. Resolution of the fundamental challenges of the discipline

Wittgenstein often spoke about dissolving problems rather than solving them. His aim was not to better explain phenomena using new constructs, but to rearrange the information that is already there so that a new perspective is reached wherein the bothersome questions that previously led to disquiet are either seen as chimeras or fade away all together. In *Philosophical Grammar* he writes:

> What releases the questioner from his problem is a particular alteration of his method of expression.
>
> Wittgenstein 1974, p. 193

This also echoes his views in *Investigations.* While some of his philosophical view transitioned between his earlier and later works, this insight is consistently held.

A solution to the fundamental problems of strategic management given above has proven elusive, and has arguably led to deeper fragmentation in the discipline (Sanchez and Heene 1997). By proposing a dissolution to the problem, this thesis aims to release the strategic management discipline from an epistemological

straight-jacket that has artificially constrained the scope of research and questioning. As such, one of the significant consequences of the acceptance of the arguments of this thesis is that while it closes down the potential for illegitimate questioning, it also opens up a new aspect of strategic questioning with significant research and practice implications.

1.4.3.2. Determination of a unique role for strategic management

One of the consequences of the problems with the strategic management discipline is that the term “strategy” is often misused. One way it is misused is as a synonym for hyperbole in business; things that are held to be big, expensive and important are categorised as strategic (Franklin 2001; Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel 2005). Another way in which “strategy” is arguably misused is as an adjective for other business disciplines, meant to call attention to the science of these disciplines. Examples include “strategic marketing” and “information technology strategy” (Franklin 2001).

This type of usage suggests that strategic management is no more than a qualifier for other disciplines. This underpins the problem that the discipline has in claiming a definitive space to call its own. Much of the theoretical advances in strategic management have arisen through the application of economic theory to questions of the discipline. As such, some might conclude that strategic management is a branch of economics. In practice, much of the innovation and creativity in organisations is led by product development and marketing, leading many companies to align their strategy functions to marketing (as opposed to the other popular alternative of subsuming it within the finance unit). Another consequence of this qualifier status, is that it makes strategy optional for organisations. All organisations do some form of financial planning, but could do that without the need for a formal strategy organisation or resorting to the embellishment of the strategy label. The same is true for human resource reviews, customer and product lifecycle management, etc. While some functions can logically be absent from business structures, if strategy is fundamentally about performance, which is common to all businesses, it should be unambiguously present as well.

Each discipline should have a unique and singular claim to its domain, like a planet which earns its status by clearing its orbit of alternative bodies. The conception of strategic management proposed in this thesis provides the discipline with a singular and unique task within the context of the organisation. No other discipline is setup to explore the way in which the organisation as a construct fits the purposes of its societal framework and provides for a robustness of possible outcomes. This makes it impossible to tackle these questions without reference to the methods of the discipline. The upshot of this resolution of ambiguity is greater clarity of the value inherent in the function for the organisation.

1.4.3.3. Focus on neglected aspects of research for strategic management

Hertz believed that our knowledge constructs were tools to aid our decision making and action (Hertz 1956). There are multiple possible theoretically possible constructs applicable to common phenomena but different in purpose (this idea is similar to the Wittgenstein net analogy given above). We have already seen that strategic management as a discipline has accepted at least two different theoretical models for the discipline. It is the contention of this thesis that there are potentially as many theoretical models as there are organisations. However, given the common boundaries in which organisations function, much of their theoretical constructs could prove consistent and endure over time. At the same time, it is possible that some organisational constructs could conceivably be mirror images of others or have language-games of similar forms to those found in different types of organisations. This should lead us to explore deeply and catalogue the cases of organisational language-games, and the normative grammar or constructs from which they are developed. Such cases exploring language-games in organisations would serve to create an understanding of the possibilities associated with different constructs and allow us to compare and contrast the various language-games, their fit with other language-games and their suitability for societal purpose. To combat the illusion associated with the problem of strategic management inconsistency in effectiveness, this approach frames the issue in terms of the coherence of the organisational language-games and their fitness for societal purpose rather than in terms of performance outcomes. Consistency and coherence are given an alternative

framework for scientific investigation within the discipline, thus opening up new areas of investigation which would aid in the development of a rich new perspective of the discipline.

1.5. Research methodology

This thesis is an application of a philosophical perspective (that of Wittgenstein's later philosophy) to a central problem in the field of strategic management. It deals specifically with the conceptual landscape of strategic management and does not include any explicit empirical study. While it would be possible to propose and conduct empirical research resultant from this investigation, it is the argument of the thesis that the conceptual questions posed above must first be sufficiently answered, and that these questions are best answered through direct interrogation of the conceptual subject matter, before the specificity of any empirical context is entertained.

The research study conducted here is necessarily interpretive since it deals with developing an understanding of strategic management by questioning the prevailing methods of the field. It does not make empirical judgements, since this would be contrary to the entire thesis of the study. Instead it develops an argument for a broader epistemological foundation for the discipline of strategic management.

Such interpretive research is less common compared to the more orthodox form of empirical research. This might call into question the rigour of such research. For this reason, this research paper uses an independently defined criteria for interpretive research to assess the rigour of the arguments herein. The criteria used has been synthesised by Whittaker (Whittaker 2004) from a number of research papers on the subject (Madison 1990; Klein and Myers 1999; Prasad 2002). The synthesis is given in the table below:

Klein and Myers	Madison	Prasad	Integrated Principle
Fundamental Principle of the Hermeneutic Circle			The research presents a double hermeneutic
Principle of Contextualization	Contextuality Appropriateness	Contextualisation	The argument should be contextual and appropriate
Principle of Interaction between Researchers and Subjects	Penetration Potential	Text Focus	The argument should be penetrating and capable of being extended
Principle of Abstraction and Generalization	Comprehensiveness Coherence		The argument can be said to generalise if it is comprehensive and coherent in its interpretation of theory
Principle of Dialogical Reasoning	Thoroughness Suggestiveness		The argument must develop in the course of its presentation and raise questions for further interpretation
Principle of Multiple Interpretations	Agreement (1) Agreement (2)	Informing perspectives	The interpretation must deal thoroughly with argument and counter-argument, even whilst normally being in agreement with the author, and traditional interpretations of the author
Principle of Suspicion	Agreement (2)	Self-reflection	The argument, whilst normally in agreement with the traditional interpretations of the text, should not blindly adhere to these

Table 1: Integrated principles for interpretive research (Whittaker 2004, p. 103)

This thesis aims to survey literature on two subjects that have large bodies of associated research. Wittgenstein remains an enigmatic figure, in terms of philosophical style and contribution, to this day in that his thinking spans a continuum between two very distinctive styles of philosophy: the analytical philosophy championed by the *Tractatus* and the linguistic turn adopted by the *Investigations*. As a result, any interpretation of Wittgenstein's work must clearly explain where it positions itself in view of his philosophical transition (if indeed it intends to interpret his work in that way), and explain how it achieves coherence with regard to Wittgenstein's works. This thesis relies on primary and secondary texts to triangulate its interpretations, and has specifically sought to reference authors who are respected in terms of their study of Wittgenstein's philosophy as reflected by their citing, body of work, publishers / academic journals for which they write, and the chairs or positions they hold in academic circles. Such information is public knowledge and open for others to review. This thesis is primarily concerned to explore the methodology contained in Wittgenstein's *Investigations*. However, inasmuch as Wittgenstein's thinking undergoes transformation, there are also consistent themes in his work. The thesis attempts to bring that to bear and show the continuum of Wittgenstein's thinking through broad referencing of his works before

and after *Investigations*. There are many interpretations of Wittgenstein's work and the nuance of the literature dedicated to the arguments of these secondary works is in itself a subject of specialisation. While the thesis gives voice to the main alternative lines of interpretation where necessary, the basis for the reading of Wittgenstein's work comes from the scholarship of P.M.S. Hacker. A debt is also owed to the works of McGinn, Kuusela, Monk, Kenny, Fogelin and Engelmann. The main characteristic that binds these works is a focus on understanding Wittgenstein holistically and on his terms. Many authors have sought to assimilate Wittgenstein's work into categories of philosophical doctrine (Kripke 1982); extract from his work theoretical positions on topical contemporary issues (Zamuner and Levy 2009); cast Wittgenstein within the historical context of the Logical Positivists or the Ordinary Language philosophy; or reshape his arguments to fit a modern narrative (Crary and Read 2000). While there is no doubt that these works have made significant contributions of their own, they invariably make their arguments by ignoring aspects of Wittgenstein's works or lifestyle that do not fit their reading. Instead this thesis shares Fogelin's (2009) view on interpreting Wittgenstein from *Taking Wittgenstein at His Word*:

> The task of interpreting Wittgenstein's later writings is not – as with his *Tractatus* – one of deciphering opaque passages. Sentences in his later writings are usually transparent as they stand. The challenge, where there is one, is to appreciate the philosophical significance that Wittgenstein assigns to them.
>
> Fogelin 2009, p. ii

Consistent with Fogelin, Hacker and the other influences named above, the project of interpretation in this thesis seeks to ground the philosophy of Wittgenstein within the context of his influences and his writings, using secondary research to reinforce the understanding.

Wittgenstein engaged with a number of contemporary thinkers. For example, Ramsey wrote the original translation of *Tractatus* into English. He was also Wittgenstein's PhD supervisor upon his return to Cambridge (Monk 1990), and served as an intellectual sounding board in the early years of his return. Later on, as part of his engagement with the Vienna Circle, Wittgenstein worked in collaboration with Carnap, although this collaboration did not result in any joint publications.

Wittgenstein's had a dismissive attitude to existing philosophical material. He once wrote '"I see that whenever I read a philosophical book: it doesn't improve my thoughts at all, it makes them worse"' (Monk 1990, p. 496). However, Wittgenstein did read some philosophers such as Schopenhauer and James. For example, Wittgenstein read William James' *The Principles of Psychology* (James 1980), as well as some of his other works, and commented on these in sections of *Philosophical Investigations*. It has been further suggested that James exerted a significant influence on Wittgenstein (Goodman 2002). Wittgenstein's philosophy spans a number of areas of philosophy over a period of significant change in the world of philosophy in which Wittgenstein was engaged. This thesis focuses on those influences that are germane to the aspect of Wittgenstein's philosophy on which the critique of strategic management is based. In this regard it is acknowledged that some important influences in other aspects of his philosophy are not considered in much depth.

With regards to the investigation into the strategic management literature, this thesis clearly states the paradigms under consideration, and prioritises the seminal works of those who developed the view point. For example, the thesis prioritises the works of Porter in discussing the industry based view of the firm, but also brings in other authors to reinforce the understanding or show the development of the theory.

Wittgenstein was himself well aware of the additional burden of rigour placed on his method of philosophy. As such, he accepted additional standards of rigour which he referred to as ineptness / injustice, and emptiness (Wittgenstein 1953). By this, he meant that his method should do justice to the manifold intricacies of the concept under investigation, without abstracting towards a simplistic model (behavioural economics for example, abstracts human agents by limiting the motivations for economic participation, and thus would not meet Wittgenstein's standard of rigour). In so doing, a perspicuous representation of strategic management is provided within a well-defined academic framework.

1.6. Outline of the report

1.6.1. Chapter 1

The first chapter is introductory and deals with such issues as the problem statement, purpose, contribution and methodology of the research. It also provides some clarity as to the use of terms within the thesis. The purpose of this chapter is to set the context within which the research should be evaluated and understood.

1.6.2. Chapter 2

The second chapter introduces Wittgenstein's concept of philosophy and language. The chapter presents Wittgenstein's view of philosophy and the methodology therein. The chapter is not meant to be an exhaustive overview of Wittgenstein's philosophy. It focuses primarily on Wittgenstein's later philosophy, and is mainly preoccupied with his notion of the subject and task of philosophy as well as the nature of concepts such as language. The focus is on setting up the elements of his philosophy that are pertinent to our investigation of strategic management in Chapter 3 and 4.

1.6.3. Chapter 3

In the third chapter, the thesis makes the case for the application of Wittgenstein's method in strategic management. The chapter develops Wittgenstein's approach to the strategic management discipline and also sketches the approach to be taken in utilising Wittgenstein's grammatical method. In so doing, its aim is to present a picture of the grammatical perspective of strategic management. The coherence of the picture provides some force for the validity of the approach, but the arguments (in the sense of the application of Wittgenstein's method) are left to chapters 4 and 5.

1.6.4. Chapter 4

This chapter applies Wittgenstein's philosophy to critique the discipline of strategic management. The critique is based on the picture of Wittgenstein's method

established in Chapter 2. The main objective of the chapter is to demonstrate Wittgenstein's method and to provide a critique based on the argument that the epistemological assumptions of the strategic management discipline lead to mistakes in the conception of the purpose of the discipline.

1.6.5. Chapter 5

The fourth chapter applies Wittgenstein's philosophy to establish a perspective of the discipline based on a grammatical framework. The chapter again builds on the concepts introduced in Chapter 2. The main objective of the chapter is to reorient the discipline of strategy management to a different style of thought, away from a predominant concern with performance towards a focus on the function of the organisational language-games in society; the purpose and possibilities embedded in the grammatical framework of the organisational construct.

1.6.6. Chapter 6

The final chapter concludes the study, pulling together the arguments in the previous chapters and summarising the findings. It examines the intended contribution for completeness and provides a series of potential directions for further research.

1.7. Definitions

Wittgenstein's philosophy introduces a few new terms and adopts some existing ones to his purpose. Since this thesis is primarily intended for an audience more familiar with strategic management than Wittgenstein's philosophy, it is worth providing some clarity in the form of definitions for some of his more significant terms.

1.7.1. Language-games

A significant amount of Wittgenstein's work concerns the philosophy of language and logic. In this sense, he is not concerned with language in the sense in which we normally consider it in everyday speech. For Wittgenstein, language is more than just the words we speak. Wittgenstein embeds language in the human context. Language includes the activities of our social norms and their associated meanings. In fact, Wittgenstein considered the bond between speech and action to be so fundamental that he typically used the term language-game (Medina 2005).

Over time, Wittgenstein uses language-games in very different ways. For example, Wittgenstein often used simple language-games to illustrate his points, but that is not to say that he thought language-games were purely experimental constructs, because he also used the term to refer to practices he wished compared. An examination of this is given in chapter 4.1. Here a brief account of the concept is provided. A language-game exists as a set of shared practices such that the meaning of gestures, words or events is commonly understood, as are the acceptable activities in which each practitioner should be engaged at any particular point in time.

A thread can be drawn through Wittgenstein's influences, from Hertz to Russell. When this is done, a striking resemblance can be drawn between Russell's axiomatic perspective on logic and Hertz's internally consistent theories. Where Wittgenstein departs from Russell, he is in complete agreement with Hertz in that nothing, not even another logical system can be used to explain an internally consistent construct. Instead, it is necessary to look at the use of the language. Every language-game therefore has a purpose or set of purposes. Absent of the purpose, it loses societal function and, like a horse drawn carriage, fades into disuse.

Wittgenstein did not explicitly define language-games, and as such, some questions might linger, even after an initial understanding is gained. One of those questions might be what exactly would constitute a language-game? Could it for example encompass a particular set of activities of an organisation (such as the process of procuring stationery) and the full set of all activities engaged across an organisation? In this thesis, it is used where there is a possible set of purposeful activities that can be considered rule based. In that sense, aspects of entire societal practices can be

viewed as language-games (a simple example would be public festivals) while the frame of a language-game might be less useful for other practices. It is also important to bear in mind the purpose for which the concept of the language-game itself is employed. It provides a means of investigating societal practices, and therefore the net that is cast for the language-game needs to be in accord with or comparable to the practices under investigation.

1.7.2. Grammar

Wittgenstein's notion of grammar does not apply to the rules for signs, but to the structure of our practice of using language (McGinn 1997). If societal practices are normative rule based language-games, then these rules are the grammar of the language. By governing practice, grammar constitutes its meaning and the meaning of its activities and artefacts.

Taking part in a language-game requires an acceptance of the grammatical rules of the language, but that acceptance is very different from a person actively deciding to participate in an activity, nor is a tacit decision being made in the sense that an involuntary cognitive set of activities are in evidence. Instead, Wittgenstein refers to this as agreement in form of life or society:

> 241. It is what human beings *say* that is true or false; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 88e

By this he means that the language is a set of given meaningful relationships for the purposes of societal function, and to speak the language, is to have already accepted these relationships. They are embedded in the practice of the language-game itself. Wittgenstein argued that often, what is considered to be an empirically validated proposition is likely a grammatical rule. Wittgenstein sees grammatical rules in practices such as giving instructions, playing games and even solving mathematical propositions. Concept formation is identical to grammar (Forster 2004). As such, Wittgenstein would argue that most metaphysical concepts are grammatical in that they are part of the toolset of attaining purposeful societal outcomes. It is for Wittgenstein, unimportant that they might turn out to be elements of our real world

since this would a) be a coincidence; b) be irrelevant for the functioning of the practice since such validation is unnecessary in societal practice; and c) arguably impossible to know with certainty. This might leave the impression that anything goes and that stripped of empirical validation, Wittgenstein's grammar becomes completely arbitrary, but this is not the case. Grammar is constrained by the need for correspondence between the practices and its desired outcomes. In other words, the purpose of the language-game constrains what practices are possible. This constraint is not uniformly expressed. There would be aspects of the language-game that are not strictly constrained and are thus arbitrarily or loosely coupled. An analogy would be the shape of protein or DNA molecules. The active site of these molecules must have a particular shape for specific reactions to take place, but the rest of the molecule (often a more significant portion than the active site) is unconstrained by the reaction. Similarly, grammar is thus both arbitrary and non-arbitrary. This is discussed further in chapter 4 which aims to provide a Wittgensteinian picture of strategic management.

1.7.3. Family-resemblances

Wittgenstein's picture of science adopts Hertz's and Boltzmann's antirealist stance. Theories need not lead to explanations about the material world, they simply need to be useful tools for scientific enquiry. Rather than accept that theoretical concepts such as atoms or force point to real entities, Wittgenstein asks that attention be paid to the various features that define the concept. What he is aimed to show is that not all features are in evidence in all cases or instances of the concept and that different features are expressed in the various ways the concepts are used. This is the foundation of Wittgenstein's family-resemblance term. Rather than think about concepts as empirically grounded explanations of real world phenomena, Wittgenstein suggests that they be thought of as family-resemblance concepts which have similar overlapping features:

> Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all, - but that they are related to one another in many different ways. And it is because of these relationships, that we call them all “languages”.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 26e

In chapter 3 below, the Wittgensteinian concept of family-resemblances is used to set up the alternative picture of organisations as a family-resemblance construct rather than a concept which has universally applicable and necessary features.

Chapter 2: An overview of Wittgenstein's philosophy and methodological approaches

2.1. Biography

Because of the deeply personal style of his philosophy, it is impossible to understand Wittgenstein's philosophy without some background of the man and the context which drew him to philosophy. Wittgenstein scholars generally accept this position as evidenced by the comment below:

> Wittgenstein's philosophy was influenced by Wittgenstein, the man. To know Wittgenstein's work, one must attempt to understand the man.
>
> Watson 1997, p. 360

This section links Wittgenstein's philosophical development with the circumstances of the times, giving context to his key philosophical ideas.

2.1.1. Wittgenstein's early years

According to the biography written by Monk (1990), Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein was born in Vienna on the 26th of April, 1889. The Wittgensteins were on of the wealthiest families in Austria. His father, Karl, had built his fortune as an iron and steel industrialist, and was one of the richest men in Europe upon his retirement in 1898. Karl, and his wife Leopoldine Kalmus, had eight children. Three girls: Hermine, Margaret and Helene; and five boys: Johannes, Kurt, Rudolf, Paul, and Ludwig. Ludwig was the youngest child in the family.

The Wittgenstein's were a great patron of the arts. Leopoldine had a great love of music, and all of the Wittgenstein children were exceptionally gifted at various forms of art. Hermine was a gifted painter, Johannes was a musical prodigy, and Paul became a concert pianist despite the loss of his right arm in World War I. The family home hosted musical evening attended by some of the greatest artists of the generation including Brahms, Labor and Mahler. The Wittgensteins were also great patrons of fine art and sculpture. Klimt painted Margaret's wedding portrait.

Karl Wittgenstein had tried to bring up his children to follow in his stead. The regime under which Ludwig's older brothers grew up was highly pressurised. However, with the exception of Kurt, Karl's eldest sons were more interested in careers in the arts. Johannes rebelled and ran away to America where he is thought to have committed suicide when he disappeared off a boat in 1902. Rudolf, also rebelled, and moved to Berlin where he committed suicide in 1904. Kurt would also later commit suicide towards the end of World War I, when the troops under his command refused to obey his orders. The rebellion and early suicides of Karl's older sons brought about a change in parenting style. The younger children were allowed to attend school (the older children had been home schooled), and largely allowed to follow their talents.

Ludwig Wittgenstein inherited the appreciation of the arts from the family, but never expressed the necessary level of proficiency to be considered talented by the Wittgenstein standards. He was sent to a technical school (the Realschule in Linz which infamously counts Adolf Hitler as one of its pupils). After leaving Linz, Wittgenstein considered studying under Ludwig Boltzmann, who was Professor of Physics at the University of Vienna, and whose *Populäre Schriften* (1886) essays had influenced Wittgenstein's development as a teenager. However, Boltzmann committed suicide in 1906, and Wittgenstein instead went first to Berlin, and then to Manchester to work in the developing field of aeronautics.

2.1.2. Wittgenstein's later years

After an introduction to Russell's works, Wittgenstein abandoned engineering and went to Cambridge to work with Russell. By the end of the war in 1918, Wittgenstein had produced his first major work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. The *Tractatus* was an ambitious work in scope. Wittgenstein believed he had solved all outstanding problems related to philosophy, and would briefly abandon philosophy during this period. He also gave away his substantial inheritance, and pursued the function of a grammar school teacher in rural Austria. He was however, lured back to Cambridge to reconcile some inconsistencies in his *Tractatus*. At the time, he thought the issues required simply an expansion or elucidation on the initial points of the *Tractatus*, but as he worked through the 1930's, he abandoned the *Tractatus* project and developed a new, unique method and insight into the role of philosophy. This work

was never published during his lifetime (he was never satisfied with the book, and revised it constantly along with his other writings). When it was published in 1951, The *Philosophical Investigations* developed a new concept of the meaning of language and influenced a branch of philosophy called Ordinary Language Philosophy (although many would argue that the term was too broad for the wide variety of thinkers often tagged with the label). While Wittgenstein remained unpublished, his influence and the influence of his thinking was spread through the notes taken and circulated by the small group of students who attended his lectures.

In 1930, he was awarded a five-year Fellowship at Trinity College (he would remain there until he retired in 1947) for a transcript that would eventually be published posthumously as *Philosophical Remarks* (1975). Wittgenstein's lectures were unconventional, typically attended by a small group of students and colleagues. Here Wittgenstein developed his philosophy, sometimes spending long periods in front of the class saying nothing or rebuking himself under his breath. The lectures also became known for a series of significant philosophical debates with people such as Turing, who went on to develop the modern concept of the computer, and Moore, a leading British philosopher. Wittgenstein's impact on his students was sometimes dramatic. Many of them took to emulating him in every way including dressing in the same manner that he did. Wittgenstein clearly also advocated that his students abandon the discipline of philosophy, which Wittgenstein had become deeply suspicious of, and instead take up a simple life, typically working with their hands. Many of the students Wittgenstein influenced did not enter academia. With one of his students, Frank Sinner, Wittgenstein had investigated immigrating to the Soviet Union to become a manual labourer. Wittgenstein's motivation in these radical pursuits was the longing for a simpler, ascetic life (there is no evidence that Wittgenstein was particularly politically driven). His personal spirituality is a complex one. He was deeply concerned with being authentic and loathed anything he considered as his own vanity. In his later life, he would return to rural Austria where he thought to apologise and seek the forgiveness of those he considered himself to have wronged. The following letter shows the severity of the standard he held himself to:

> Dear Mrs. Stewart
>
> I must apologise for an untruth I told you today in Miss Pate's office. I said that I had seen Mrs. Thompson recently in Birmingham; & only when I came home this evening it occurred to me that this wasn't true at all. I stayed with the Bachtin's a few weeks ago in Birmingham & I tried to see Mrs. Thompson & we had a talk on the phone; but I wasn't able to see her. When I talked to you this afternoon what was in my head was that I had seen Mrs. Thompson at your house before she went to Birmingham. Please forgive my stupidity.
>
> Yours sincerely, L. Wittgenstein.
>
> Monk 1990, p. 412-413

His personal notebooks include entries about his self-doubt or loathing, his sexuality, his Jewish heritage, and notes about or related to influences such as Schopenhauer, Weininger and St. Augustine. Wittgenstein was also fiercely against what he saw as the encroachment of a dangerous form of scientism into all aspects of knowledge endeavours.

> Wittgenstein [would say] that what he was doing was "persuading people to change their style of thinking". He was, he said, "making propaganda" for one style of thinking as opposed to another… The "other" he identified as the worship of science.
>
> Monk 1990, p. 404

Wittgenstein's "propaganda" was concerned with preserving a form of reasoning that clearly distinguishes between theoretical concepts and empirical experiences.

Wittgenstein felt increasingly isolated from the intellectual movements after the Second World War. He is quoted as saying:

> My type of thinking is not wanted in this present age; I have to swim so strongly against the tide. Perhaps in a hundred years' people will really want what I am writing.
>
> Monk 1990, p. 486

In 1947, he retired from his position, although he was still writing and would continue to write comments in his notebook until a few days before his death. Wittgenstein visited the United States in 1949, under invitation from Norman Malcolm, a former student who was lecturing at Cornell University in Ithaca at the time. He was increasingly ill and was diagnosed with prostate cancer upon returning to the United

Kingdom. He spent his last few years living with friends, with whom he continued to be philosophically engaged. The collection of notes that has become *On Certainty* (1969) includes comments written just a couple of days before Wittgenstein's death. He died on the 29th of April, 1951, in Cambridge, at the home of Dr Edward Bevan, with whom he had been staying since February of the same year. His last words to Mrs Bevan were a message for the friends that were coming to visit him: 'Tell them I've had a wonderful life' (Monk 1990, p. 579).

2.2. Wittgenstein's philosophical development and key influences

As an engineering research student, Wittgenstein's experiments drew him deeper into an interest in pure mathematics. He attended lectures on the theory of mathematics. It is here that he was introduced, for the first time, to *The Principles of Mathematics* (1903), Bertrand Russell's seminal work on the logical foundations of mathematics. The impact of this introduction was profound. In *The Principles of Mathematics,* Russell gives a compelling argument for the derivation of pure mathematics from a few logical axioms. In this way, Russell, along with Gottlob Frege (who had made the same findings in his *Grundgesetze der Arithmetik* (1893), which Russell introduced to the English speaking philosophical community) heralded the birth of a new era of philosophy based on logical atomism that shaped the contemporary practice of philosophy. The link between logic and mathematics had been previously systematised by Peano into three based notions and five axioms in *Arithmetices principia, nova methodo exposita* (1889). From these, he showed that the whole of arithmetic could be derived from logic. In summary, his basic notions are: zero (0), number (n), and successor of a number ($S(n) = n+1$). His five axioms are:

1. 0 is a number
2. If n is a number, then $n+1$ is a number
3. $S(n) = 0$ is false (There is no natural number whose successor is 0)
4. If $S(n) = S(m)$, then $n=m$
5. If S is a set containing 0 and $S(n)$ for every natural number in S, then S contains all numbers

The Principles of Mathematics sets out to further reduce the axiomatic set by constructing a theory of classes. Classes are different from sets (mathematical set theory) in that sets are defined by its members (e.g. numbers) while class are defined according to the propositional function they represent. A simple definition of a propositional function would be a proposition with a variable. 'Socrates is mortal' is a proposition with the propositional function 'x is mortal'. The propositional function defines all entities that are mortal. These classes principally could have any variety of members. Russell reduces Peano's axioms to a theory about classes by showing that *'0'* is the class of empty classes, and *'1'* is the class of classes with one member etc. From this basis he goes on to develop the full scope of mathematical principles, from rational and irrational numbers, complex numbers, geometry, differential calculus, to Newton's laws of motion. He believed be had discovered the essence of mathematics as abstract objective truth.

Russell describes the development of *The Principles of Mathematics* as the highest point in his life. An 'intellectual honeymoon such as I have never experienced before or since' (Russell 1959, p. 73). But the honeymoon was short-lived. The problem was that the notion of classes, on which his work was based, held within it a contradiction, now referred to as Russell's paradox (Barrow 1999). In simple terms, the paradox involves classes of classes, such as the class of all classes that are not members of themselves (for example, the class of things that are not computers, is itself also not a computer). The question is if this class is also a member of itself? If it is a member of itself then it no longer possesses the defining characteristic of the class, which is not to be a member of itself. But if it is not a member of itself then it will possess that characteristic and should therefore be a member of the class. Russell proposed the theory of types to try and avoid the contradiction. The theory argued for a hierarchy of members of classes but Russell himself was unsatisfied with this solution and ended the book with the following appeal:

> What the complete solution of the difficulty may be, I have not succeeded in discovering; but as it affects the very foundation of training, I earnestly contend the study of it to the attention of all students of logic.
>
> Russell 1903, p. 538

This invitation proved too tempting for Wittgenstein who became increasingly drawn to the topic over the next few years. In 1911 Wittgenstein visited Frege, who by then was old and retired. He recommended that Wittgenstein go and study under Russell in Cambridge. Wittgenstein attended Russell's lectures later that year. He was still at this time torn between a career in aviation and philosophy. To settle the matter, Russell asked him to commit some of his ideas to a manuscript. The outcome (now lost to history) sufficiently impressed Russell and before long their relationship was that of mentor and protégé.

> Wittgenstein has been a great event in my life... I love him & feel he will solve the problems I am too old to solve - all kinds of problems that are raised by my work, but want a fresh mind and the vigor of youth.
>
> Monk 1990, p. 41

While their relationship would break down years later, initially both men shared a common dedication to philosophy anchored by the logical atomism approach being pioneered by Frege and Russell. One of the few things Wittgenstein published during his lifetime (most of his books were published posthumously from his vast library of notebooks and manuscripts) was a short review of *The Science of Logic* (Coffey 1912). In the review Wittgenstein writes:

> In no branch of learning can an author disregard the results of honest research with so much impunity as he can in Philosophy and Logic. To this circumstance we owe the publication of such a book as Mr Coffey's *Science of Logic*: and only as a typical example of the work of many logicians of to-day does this book deserve consideration. The author's Logic is that of the scholastic philosophers, and he makes all their mistakes—of course with the usual references to Aristotle. (Aristotle, whose name is taken so much in vain by our logicians, would turn in his grave if he knew that so many Logicians know no more about Logic to-day than he did 2,000 years ago). The author has not taken the slightest notice of the great work of the modern mathematical logicians—work which has brought about an advance in Logic comparable only to that which made Astronomy out of Astrology, and Chemistry out of Alchemy.
>
> Wittgenstein 1913, p. 351

It is clear here that Wittgenstein is calling out the author of the book for ignoring the work of Frege and Russell. He would go on to develop their ideas in a new direction, presented in what became *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922).

2.2.1. Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus

By 1913, Wittgenstein had assumed the mantle from Russell concerning the nature of logic. Russell began to defer to Wittgenstein in these matters and criticism from Wittgenstein, on such matters as Russell's Theory of Types, was sufficient to stall the project for Russell. Wittgenstein had sharpened his task to focus on the nature of the proposition (Hacker 1996). He would spend the next several years working on what was to become a short philosophical thesis called *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922). The book, through its impact on the Vienna Circle, was the foundation of logical positivism, which was the dominant focus of analytical philosophy until the 1960's (Schwartz 2012). The years he worked on the *Tractatus* included the period of World War I. Wittgenstein enlisted in the Austrian army, saw fierce fighting on the Russian Front while attached to the Austrian Seventh Army as part of the artillery regiment, and was captured, spending the final year of the war as a prisoner of war.

Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Wittgenstein's first philosophical treatise, and the book that forms the backbone of analytical philosophy is a mix of logic, mysticism, idealism and realism. It has none of the dense logical arguments of *The Principles of Mathematics*, Russell's work upon which it builds through extension and critique. It is simply laid out in seven numbered propositions, with interspersed sub-propositions (labelled x.1, x.01, x.001 and so on, each level being a set of clarifying comments about the level above). The seven propositions of the *Tractatus* are as follows:

1. The world is all that is the case.

2. What is the case - a fact - is the existence of states of affairs.

3. A logical picture of facts is a thought.

4. A thought is a proposition with sense.

5. A proposition is a truth-function of elementary propositions (an elementary proposition is a truth-function of itself).

> 6. The general form of a truth-function is $\overline{[\rho, \bar{\xi}, N(\bar{\xi})]}$. This is the general form of a proposition.
>
> 7. What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.
>
> Wittgenstein 1961, p. 1-111

Proposition 7 is the final sentence of the book. To unpack the meaning within these sentences, it is perhaps instructive to understand what Wittgenstein thought about the significance of the work itself. In the preface to the *Tractatus,* Wittgenstein writes:

> The book deals with the problems of philosophy, and shows, I believe, that the reason why these problems are posed is that the logic of our language is misunderstood. The whole sense of the book can be summed up in the following words: what can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence. Thus the aim of the book is to draw a limit to thought [and thus language and reality] ... It will therefore only be in language that the limit can be drawn… The truth of the thoughts that are here communicated seems to me unassailable and definitive. I therefore believe myself to have found, on all essential points, the final solution of the problems. And if I'm not mistaken in this belief, then the second thing in which the value of the work consists is that it shows how little is achieved when these problems are solved.
>
> Wittgenstein 1961, p. 3-4

The preface thus summarises the key points of the book as Wittgenstein saw it, and it is worth clarifying some of the points he makes therein. Firstly, the problem of philosophy to which Wittgenstein refers is the nature of propositions, which played a central role in the early twentieth century in epistemology. Wittgenstein believed that the key to the problem concerned a set of misunderstandings about how language represented the world. Wittgenstein's Picture Theory of Meaning held that language was able to represent reality because of a common structure, as given in the following extracts:

> 2.022 It is obvious that an imagined world, however different it may be from the real one, must have something - a form - in common with it.
>
> 2.033 Form is the possibility of structure.
>
> 2.1 We picture facts to ourselves.
>
> 2.12 A picture is a model of reality.

> 2.151 Pictorial form is the possibility that things are related to one another in the same way as the elements of the picture.
>
> 2.1511 That is how a picture is attached to reality; it reaches right out to it.
>
> 2.1512 It is laid against reality like a measure.
>
> 2.171 A picture can depict any reality whose form it has.
>
> Wittgenstein 1961, p. 10-12

These sentences provide a window into Wittgenstein's philosophy linking thought, language and reality. Reality is made up of simple objects which, in combination, express different states of affairs. A state of affair is either true or false. Thus thought forms a picture that either has a logical relationship with an actual state of affairs, or does not. There is a logical form that language must have in order to have meaning. Thus a proposition of language has an external meaning, what it says, which can accord to facts or not as the case may be. What a proposition says is contingent on reality. But propositions also have internal structure, the logical forms of the language that are rules of representation. This allows the language to reach out to mirror reality, and denotes what makes sense from what does not. What makes sense is what can be clearly conveyed by the language. One of Wittgenstein's major critiques of Russell and Frege is of their misunderstanding of the difference between what can be said and what can be shown. The difference lies at the heart of the conundrum concerning mathematics. By Wittgenstein's account all necessary propositions are propositions about the internal structure of language and are thus tautologies because they contain no information about reality. Similarly, all impossibilities are logical contradictions. This notion applies to propositions of mathematics, which are always true (necessary) and therefore tautology by Wittgenstein's argument.

> Wittgenstein's guiding idea is that logic does not describe very abstract or fundamental facts of truths about the world of thought of even language, as all previous philosophers, including Frege and Russell, had assumed... It is the framework of scaffolding that makes statements of facts possible.
>
> Schwartz 2012, pg. 68

Wittgenstein's Picture Theory of Meaning also solves Russell's paradox. The solution he summarises as follows:

> 3.262 What signs fail to express, their application shows. What signs slur over, their application says clearly.
>
> 3.31 I call any part of a proposition that characterises its sense an expression (or symbol) … A sign is what can be perceived of a symbol…
>
> 3.33 In logical syntax the meaning of a sign should never play a role. It must be possible to establish logical syntax without mentioning the meaning of a sign: only the description of expressions may be presupposed.
>
> 3.331 From this observation we turn to Russell's 'theory of types'. It can be seen that Russell must be wrong, because he had to mention the meaning of signs when establishing the rules for them.
>
> 3.332 No proposition can make a statement about itself… that is the whole of the "theory of types".
>
> Wittgenstein 1961, p. 19-20

Here Wittgenstein avoids Russell's mistake by pointing out that the formal structure of propositions does not permit the kind of paradox that occurs by Russell and Frege's method. Language does not require validation via set theory, since it already has its own formal structure which stands independent of any external form of validation.

These solutions solve the problem by drawing a line as to the boundaries of language (that which can be said clearly). A lot of what we want to say cannot be said because the structure of our language is unable to do justification to such propositions. This includes propositions of metaphysics, ethics and aesthetics. Thus a significant part of the choices for meaning that human beings find in life are outside the solution to the problems of philosophy. This is why Wittgenstein comments about how little is achieved when the problems are solved. The scope of the *Tractatus* is disproportionately vast for a book of less than a hundred pages. In it, Wittgenstein takes on the very nature of the task of philosophy itself. He argues against the three widely held views of philosophy: Firstly, against the idea of philosophy as a mental science he argues that thoughts are unable to convey any sense without reality as a reference to its validity: '3. A logical picture of facts is a thought' (Wittgenstein 1961, p. 12). Secondly, against the idea of philosophy as the most general of the sciences he argued that philosophy was an activity not a doctrine in itself: '4.112... Philosophy

does not result in "philosophical propositions", but rather in the clarification of propositions' (Wittgenstein 1961, p. 30). Finally, against the idea of philosophy as a metaphysical investigation, Wittgenstein argues for the limits of language as the limit of the world: '5.61... We cannot think what we cannot think; so what we cannot think we cannot say either' (Wittgenstein 1961, p. 68). What remains is a radical new view of philosophy as an activity that analyses propositions to elucidate their meaning.

The *Tractatus* did not find an initially accepting audience. Wittgenstein sent copies of its manuscript to Frege and Russell during his time in captivity as a prisoner of war. Both had their reservations. There is no evidence that Frege, by now very old and frail, ever got past the first few pages of the manuscript. Wittgenstein walked through the manuscript line by line with Russell, but was frustrated by what he saw as Russell's enduring misunderstanding of the central notions of the book. This was further compounded by Wittgenstein's difficulty in finding a publisher for the work which remained unpublished until 1921 and was only published in English in 1922, after Russell offered to write an introduction. Wittgenstein considered the introduction a misinterpretation and mild criticism of some aspects of his work. Their relationship would never return to what it had been before World War I.

The War had a profound impact on Wittgenstein's outlook on life. He gave away his sizable share of his inheritance, partially to charities and the arts, and partially to his other siblings. Having solved all the remaining problems in philosophy by his own account, there remained nothing to be done. He gained employment as a grammar school teacher, and spent the years between 1920 and 1926 teaching in rural Austria. He would not return to full time work on philosophy until 1929.

2.2.2. Logical Positivism

The Vienna Circle was a group of philosophers, mathematicians and physicists gathered around Moritz Schlick in the inter-war years. Noteworthy members of the group included Kurt Gödel, Karl Popper, Friedrich Waismann, Rudolf Carnap, Herbert Feigl, Otto Neurath and Hans Hahn. Schlick was captivated by *Tractatus*. He makes the following comment about the book:

> This book [the *Tractatus*]... in my unshakable conviction is the most significant philosophical work of our time... The scope of these ideas is in truth immeasurable: anyone who reads them with understanding must thereafter be a changed man.
>
> Hacker 1996, p. 40

The Vienna Circle built on the foundation of the *Tractatus*, as well as the inspiration from Russell and Frege. Many of the members of the Circle were physicists and mathematicians, and were therefore also influenced by the significant advances that were taking place in science and the scientific method. Feigl coined the term logical positivism for the doctrines of the Vienna Circle in 1931. Their logicism is part of a broader movement that started with the logical atomism of Russell circa 1918 which initiated what is now collectively known as analytical philosophy. Today the ideas that emerged from the Vienna Circle are seen not as a singular doctrine but as a set of evolving, interlocking philosophical positions. Indeed it can be assumed that the rich tradition of introspective critique within analytical philosophy has some roots in the works of the members of the Vienna Circle. As such, the summary of their ideas given here is a simplification of the intellectual ferment that characterised the Circle. The summary given here is based on Schwartz analysis of A. J. Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic* (1952).

> A. J. Ayer, a British philosopher, is the best known and most famous exponent of logical positivism. Although he was not a member of the Vienna Circle and barely understood German, Ayer's book *Language, Truth and Logic* published in 1936 did more to popularize the ideas of the Vienna Circle in English-speaking lands than any other text. *Language, Truth and Logic* (Ayer 1946/1936) is a summary and somewhat simplified version of the ideas of the *Tractatus* and the Vienna Circle, put in a clear, direct, and often blunt style.. Despite its simple style and dubious argumentation, *Language, Truth and Logic* is a classic of twentieth-century philosophy. It has sold more copies than any other academic work of philosophy.
>
> Schwartz 2012, pg. 78

By this account elimination of metaphysics is the primary aim of the logical positivist. The basis of the attack on metaphysics is Wittgenstein’s account of the nature of philosophy:

> 4.11 The totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science (or the whole corpus of the natural sciences).

> 4.111 Philosophy is not one of the natural sciences
>
> 4.112 Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity. A philosophical work consists entirely of elucidations.
>
> 6.53 The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science... and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a meaning to certain signs in his propositions.
>
> Wittgenstein 1961, p. 29-30, 89

The attack on Metaphysics relates to any propositions that are not part of natural science, and therefore extends to ethics, aesthetics and theology. Metaphysical propositions lack content or meaning in that they are not involved in picturing the world. They can be analysed logically and shown to be either formal tautologies or senseless. The logical positivists reject Kant's notion of synthetic a priori propositions. Synthetic a priori propositions are necessary contingent propositions such as the mediating structure of the mind that forms the framework for our generally accepted notions of meaning. The logical positivists follow the empiricist tradition, now freed by Wittgenstein of its most difficult task of explaining propositions of mathematics empirically by showing that these are just formal tautologies. They were a priori in the sense that they were part of the formal structure of language, but they themselves contained no facts of content about the world. All a priori propositions are necessary and tautological, while all synthetic propositions are contingent. The problems of philosophy thus stem from a misunderstanding of the nature of our propositions. 'The basic problem is the unstated but pervasive assumption that every term must have a referent' (Schwartz 2012, pg. 81). An example of this confusion is the ontological argument for the existence of God. The origins of the ontological argument are typically associated with St. Anselm (1033-1109). His argument is based on *reductio ad absurdum*, and can be summarised in the following steps:

> *Firstly, God can be conceived of as a being that is the greatest type of being, and thus possessing the maximum of all possible traits (assume a positive and negative continuum of traits such that, for example, slow and fast are on the same continuum target than distinct traits). Now if the traits belong to a conceptual being, then it is possible to conceive of a greater being which has all the traits of the conceptual*

being, plus the trait of existence (i.e. real vs. imaginary). Since it is this being that is greatest, this being must be God, therefore God must exist (Schwartz 2012).

Here, existence is given the same surface grammar as empirical properties such as falling, such that the sentence "boys fall" and "boys exist" seem to both be conveying a property to the boy. Only through logical analysis can it be shown that existence is not a property at all but a quantifier. The logical forms of the two sentences are different:

Boys fall = for any x, if x is a boy, then x can fall

Boys exist = there is x, such that x is a boy

Thus it makes no sense to speak of existence as a property of individuals, including God.

Similarly, it is tempting to think of existence as a subject; something like a universal referent in the same vein as love, justice, beauty etc. Logical analysis shows this to be misguided. Such terms are only allowed as predicates. It is thus senseless to ask "What is beauty?" because the limits of our language only allow beauty to be spoken about when picturing a state of affairs e.g. "the beautiful landscapes of the Drakensberg", but not "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder". In this way, the limits of our language elucidates what can be said, and eliminates many of the classical problems of philosophy through logical analysis.

The logical positivists are grounded in a further set of principles concerning the nature of science, the interpretation of sense data, and the nature of ethics. These ideas are not directly derived from Wittgenstein's philosophy and are tangential to the arguments in this thesis. As such they are not analysed here in any further detail.

Wittgenstein's period as a grammar school teacher was as eclectic as the man himself. By 1923, as the *Tractatus* was gaining critical acclaim, Wittgenstein had developed a reputation as a capable, but strict and somewhat eccentric teacher. With gifted pupils, Wittgenstein's methods had exemplary results, but for children who hesitated in grasping key concepts of mathematics and other subjects, his methods were more tyranny than tutoring. Wittgenstein would eventually outstay his welcome in the communities in which he taught. This period of his life, divorced from philosophy though it was, does influence his later work. Wittgenstein taught during

the years of the Austrian School Reform Movement which emphasised activity method and the rooting of education in the environment (Savickey 1999). He was constantly experimenting with his pedagogical method. He produced a wordbook for his students (the only other book he published during his lifetime besides *Tractatus*) and was known to have unusual teaching methods:

> The accepted teaching procedures held no interest for him; he was always experimenting with new methods and devices of instruction. He dissected animal corpses and assembled their skeletons, explained models of steam-engines, set up with his students a potter's wheel on which they fashioned clay pots…If he happened by chance to meet some of his youngsters in the evening, he might give them instruction in astronomy on the spot. In mathematics, he had great success; he took his students well beyond the ordinary requirements for their class, and introduced the older, more gifted ones to advanced problems in algebra.
>
> Cohen and Wartofsky 1974, p. 11

It can be argued that this experience formed part of Wittgenstein's shift in thinking. 'His philosophical practice shifts from the giving of solutions to the teaching of methods; methods which are themselves pedagogically innovative' (Savickey 1999, p. 2).

It was also during this period that Wittgenstein received a visit from Frank Ramsey who had written a review of *Tractatus* in the philosophical journal, *Mind* (1923). Ramsey kept in contact with Wittgenstein over the following years, trying to persuade him to return to Cambridge and take up philosophy again, an enterprise in which Ramsey was aided by Keynes, with whom Wittgenstein was already acquainted. Keynes had invited him into the Cambridge Apostles, an intellectual discussion group, in 1912. Although Wittgenstein left his teaching career in rural Austria in 1926, he did not immediately return to England. He first worked as a gardener, on the outskirts of Vienna. However, by the end of the year he was engaged with Paul Engelmann and his sister, Margaret, in the construction of her new house. The exercise brought Wittgenstein back from his solitude, and provided the opportunity for renewed contact with Viennese society, including Moritz Schlick. The two men met in 1927. Wittgenstein never became a member of the Vienna Circle and never attended their meetings. He did however begin regularly meeting with Schlick as well as a few carefully selected members of the Circle including Waismann, Carnap and

Feigl. In these meetings Wittgenstein took his first tentative steps back into philosophy. His attempts in these forums to further clarify his thinking included the development of the verification principle, which became a central part of the logical positivist philosophical framework. The verification principle states that a sentence is meaningful if the speaker knows how to verify the proposition it expresses. The verification principle is a litmus test for the elimination of metaphysical propositions.

The spirit of the logical positivist project lives on in modern day analytical philosophy, but by the mid 1930's, the movement itself was in decline. Many factors, including the rise of Nazism, led to many of the positivists leaving Austria and Germany, and moving to America. In 1936, Schlick was murdered by a former student, who claimed the murder was motivated by antisemitism. Despite the fact that Schlick was not Jewish, this was enough to rally the politically powerful local Nazi party to his defence. Schlick's murderer served barely two years for his crime. At the same time, the doctrines of the positivists were coming under increasing criticism, firstly, from Popper, and then by Quine, Kuhn and the logical empiricists or American pragmatism. By the end of the 1930's, the logical positivist project was largely over. Its members continued to refine or remodel the original ideas within the spirit of the project. However, these ideas continued to have great influence within and outside of philosophy. For example, verificationism had an influence on the quantum physics revolution. Born, one of the founding fathers of Quantum Physics (he won the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1954 for this work) once wrote:

> Modern physics has achieved its greatest successes by applying the methodological principle that concepts which refer to distinctions beyond possible experience have no physical meaning and ought to be eliminated.
>
> Born 1955, p. 4

2.2.3. Wittgenstein's philosophical turn

While Wittgenstein worked with the Vienna Circle members on the clarification of certain aspects of the philosophy of the *Tractatus*, the development of Wittgenstein's later philosophy is due more to his engagements with Ramsey, and Sraffa, the Italian economist who lectured at the University of Cambridge. In the preface to *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein writes:

> For since beginning to occupy myself with philosophy again, sixteen years ago, I have been forced to recognise grave mistakes in what I wrote in that first book [*Tractatus*]. I was helped to realise these mistakes - to a degree which I myself am hardly able to estimate - by the criticism which my ideas encountered from Frank Ramsey, with whom I discussed them in innumerable conversations during the last two years of his life [Ramsey died at the age of 26, in 1930]. Even more than this - always certain and forcible – criticism, I am indebted to that which a teacher of this university, Mr. P. Sraffa, for many years unceasingly practiced on my thoughts. I am indebted to *this* stimulus for the most consequential ideas of this book.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. x

It was Ramsey's critique that brought Wittgenstein back to philosophy, to effectively answer a challenge which he posed. But it was Sraffa's critique that brought Wittgenstein to his new conception of philosophy as outlined in *Philosophical Investigations*.

Wittgenstein arrived back in England on the 18th of January, 1929. For the next few years, his official status was that of a PhD student with Ramsey as his supervisor. In reality, Ramsey and Wittgenstein worked in a collegial manner. During this time, Wittgenstein was introduced to Sraffa by Keynes. While Ramsey was capable of offering detail critiques and discussion points concerning the nature of logic, the two men differed greatly in temperament, style and scholarly objectives. Wittgenstein was concerned with the philosophical confusions surrounding logic and mathematics, while Ramsey (who was a mathematician) was focused on developing a robust foundation for mathematics. Wittgenstein therefore found Sraffa to be an intellect more capable of critiquing the general framework of his philosophical arguments.

Over the next decade, Wittgenstein's philosophy would go through at least four distinct iterations based on the nature of solutions he proposed to the problem in the *Tractatus* which brought him out of retirement in the first place.

> Wittgenstein's gradual development expresses a constant struggle, as he adapts and overcomes old conceptions by means of newly invented tools and methods… the four main stages that emerge in this struggle [are]: phenomenology, grammar, the genetic method [also known as the therapeutic method], and the anthropological view.
>
> Engelmann 2013, p. 2

Some also use the word "ethnological", to refer to this shift in Wittgenstein's approach (Hacker 2013). Before unpacking the transition outlined by Engelmann above, it is worth understanding the problem that Wittgenstein was wrestling with in some more detail. The problem Wittgenstein was focused on was first highlighted by Ramsey in his review of *Tractatus*:

> We must now turn to one of the most interesting of Mr. Wittgenstein's theories, that there are certain things which cannot be said but only shown… It is a principle of Mr. Wittgenstein's, and, if true, is a very important discovery, that every genuine proposition asserts something possible, but not necessary… so that the only necessity is that of tautology, the only impossibility that of contradiction. There is great difficulty in holding this; for Mr. Wittgenstein admits that a point in the visual field cannot be both red and blue… Hence he says that "This is both red and blue" is a contradiction. This implies that the apparently simple concepts red, blue (supposing us to mean by those words absolutely specific shades) are really complex.
>
> Ramsey 1923, p. 473

The problem Ramsey has identified has to do with how the *Tractatus* deals with propositions that attribute degrees of properties to objects.

> We are dealing with properties which admit of gradation, i.e., properties as the length of an interval, the pitch of a tone, the brightness or redness of a shade of colour, etc. It is a characteristic of these properties that one degree of them excludes any other.
>
> Wittgenstein 1929, p. 166-167

These include propositions concerning distance (all spatial degrees, e.g. height, width etc.), colour, smell, noise etc. (all factors of intensity). So while the text focuses on the degree of colour (the visual space), it is a specific case of a broader type of proposition.

Wittgenstein adopted from Russell the concept of logical atomism and the idea that the surface structure of our ordinary language masks a deeper logical structure which is constituted of atomic and independent propositions.

> If we try to analyze any given propositions we shall find in general that they are logical sums, products or other truth functions of simpler propositions. But our analysis, if carried far enough, must come to the point where it reaches propositional forms which are not themselves composed of simpler propositional forms. We must eventually reach the ultimate connection of the terms, the immediate connection which cannot be broken without destroying the propositional form as such. The propositions which represent this ultimate connexion of terms I call, after B. Russell, atomic propositions.
>
> Wittgenstein 1929, p. 162-163

It is these elementary propositions that are the functional basis of language in Wittgenstein's picture theory of meaning, but in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein does not provide a method for identifying elementary propositions. The text assumes that this can be done and is only concerned with the application of elementary propositions in language. But he also calls upon the logic of the *Tractatus*, which is atomistic and therefore applies to elementary propositions, to explain statements of degrees and universals. Ramsey's challenge is that his explanation is incomplete, since there is some sense of dependency between propositions of degrees (e.g. two colours cannot be in the same physical position at the same time, or four points on a ruler A, B, C, D can be expressed as distances between each other). Wittgenstein's initial response was to investigate the potential for such propositions to be logically analysed in the form of a function and argument ($F(x)$), where the visual field is the function and the various colour combinations are arguments thereof. This way colour could be incorporated into the truth function analysis of the *Tractatus*. There are however a number of problems with utilising this method to solve the problem. The analysis of the *Tractatus* is purely atomistic and logical (Wittgenstein remarked that it was colourless), and is therefore unable to handle comparisons of intensities. Secondly, it is unable to handle mixing compatibility and incompatibility (is reddish-green physically possible?). Thus these statements cannot be logically analysed, therefore Wittgenstein is forced to accept that these types of propositions require further analysis.

> Ramsey's remarks thus presented Wittgenstein with a challenge: he must either show how the properties of space, time and matter can appear as logical necessities, or provide an alternative account of colour-exclusion.
>
> Monk 1990, p. 274

While Wittgenstein did not publish anything during this period, he kept a large number of notes and was constantly reviewing a number of manuscripts. These documents are invaluable for shedding light on his philosophical development process during this period, as well as throughout his life. Much of the material is now part of Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*, approximately 20,000 pages catalogued by Von Wright into the various notes and manuscripts now available from the University of Bergen. Some of these have now been published in different editions. For the purposes of this section, we are concerned with Wittgenstein's writing leading up to *Philosophical Investigations*. These works would be used as approximate markers for the changing nature of Wittgenstein's ideas. These include *Some Remarks on Logical Form* (1929), *Philosophical Remarks* (1930), *The Big Typescript* (1932), *The Blue and Brown Books* (1934), and *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (1937).

In 1929, Wittgenstein submitted a paper called *Some Remarks on Logical Form* to be delivered at the Annual Joint Session of the Aristotelian Society and the Mind Association, one of the most important philosophical conferences on the British calendar at the time. It is a testament to how fast his ideas were changing in that period, that he never delivered the paper, thinking the ideas contained in it completely incorrect before the date of the conference. At the time, Wittgenstein is still convinced about the premise of the philosophy of the *Tractatus* in that there are some things that can be said and others that can only be shown. This philosophy of the limits of language is what the colour exclusion problem challenges, since it must be logically necessary for the colour exclusion to hold, otherwise Wittgenstein would have to accept non-logical necessities, which would no longer necessarily be tautologies.

> What is at risk is [not simply the issue of atomic propositions, but] also the explanation given in the *Tractatus* for the *a priori* nature of logic and inference.
>
> Engelmann 2013, p. 13

In *Some Remarks on Logical Form*, Wittgenstein proposes that elementary propositions no longer need to be logically independent, and instead can be subject to the incompatibility based on the structure of the proposition itself.

> I maintain that the statement which attributes a degree to a quality cannot further be analyzed, and, moreover, that the relation of difference of degree is an internal relation and that it is therefore represented by an internal relation between the statements which attribute the different degrees. That is to say, the atomic statement must have the same multiplicity as the degree which it attributes, whence it follows that numbers must enter the forms of atomic propositions. The mutual exclusion of unanalyzable statements of degree contradicts an opinion which was published by me several years ago and which necessitated that atomic propositions could not exclude one another. I here deliberately say "exclude" and not "contradict", for there is a difference between these two notions, and atomic propositions, although they cannot contradict, may exclude one another.
>
> Wittgenstein 1929, p. 168

A new complementary analysis to the one in *Tractatus* is needed. *Some Remarks on Logical Form* ends by setting the stage for this to be done. Wittgenstein referred to this analysis as the ultimate analysis of the phenomena (Wittgenstein, 1929). This analysis shows what is possible and impossible given the nature of the phenomenon. Wittgenstein gave the example of a chair on which only one person can sit at a time, hence “Jill is sitting on the chair” excludes the proposition “John is sitting on the chair”. This might be differentiated from a proposition such as “Jill is watching television”, for which there is no exclusion. By including this new notation, Wittgenstein has already retreated a few paces from the absolute character of the language in *Tractatus*. While it is possible to intuitively understand that the investigation of the phenomena is a fundamental part of our language, it is not *a priori* in the strict sense of *Tractatus*, whose tenets held independent of the state of affairs in the world. He holds only that there is a language governing structure in the ‘…actual language of the phenomena’ (Wittgenstein 1929, p. 164). In this sense, it is still an *a priori* investigation. It is also still connected to the conditions of sense, regardless of the actual state of affairs in the world. Wittgenstein sums the shift up in one of his manuscripts:

> Physics strives for truth, i.e. right predictions of events while the phenomenology doesn't do this – it strives for sense not truth.
>
> Wittgenstein 1994, p. 3

Wittgenstein's verification principle (which is closely linked with the logical positivists) was developed as a determinant of sense in Wittgenstein's phenomenological language. Wittgenstein's *Picture Theory of Meaning* is premised on the comparison of the proposition with the state of affairs in the world. Wittgenstein holds onto this idea, but after 1929, uses the verification principle to define the specific way in which a proposition makes sense, since different propositions need to be verified in different ways (Engelmann 2013).

However, by 1930, Wittgenstein has already given up on the idea of a phenomenological language as the solution to his colour exclusion problem. This is because the sense data that presents us with phenomena, e.g. the visual field, is resistant to precise measurement. Wittgenstein tries to use a numeric notation to represent the visual field, but this is problematic. Wittgenstein required the phenomenological language to be a language of unanalysed sense data, since such an interpretation would definitely void the *a priori* nature of the investigation. Wittgenstein is therefore forced to accept the inexact nature of the sense data, but has no way of representing that in terms of his conceptual notation based on numbers. Any computation of this ambiguity would require a specific truth condition to finally resolve the sense of the phenomena in question. In abandoning the idea of a phenomenological language Wittgenstein transfers the role of the guardian of the sense of the proposition from the symbols of our language to its grammar:

> 1. A proposition is completely logically analysed if its grammar is made clear… I do not now have phenomenological language, or 'primary language' as I used to call it in mind as my goal. I no longer hold it to be necessary. All that is possible and necessary is to separate what is essential from what is inessential in our language… our grammar lacks, above all, perspicuity.
>
> Wittgenstein 1975, p. 51

An important property of Wittgenstein's grammar is that it is arbitrary in the sense that it cannot be justified by propositions (since the sense of these propositions are given by the grammar itself), and are instead to be thought of as conventions.

> 54. What belongs to the essence of the world cannot be expressed by language… the essence of language is a picture of the essence of the world; and philosophy as custodian of grammar can in fact grasp the essence of the world, only not in the propositions of language, but in rules for this language which exclude nonsensical combinations of signs.
>
> Wittgenstein 1975, p. 84-85

Despite the above, Wittgenstein does not mean to have grammar completely unconstrained. The conventions are curated by their application, i.e. the purpose which the grammar serves.

Through the above changes, the tools that Wittgenstein has employed to explain how words express sense and have meaning have been evolving. In *Tractatus*, signs had meaning because they stood for something, and thus had the same logical form as the objects they stood for. As Wittgenstein developed his phenomenological language, he endeavoured to complement the logic of the *Tractatus* with the rules bounded in the immediate sense data for concepts expressing degrees. This ultimately was not successful and Wittgenstein gave up the idea of language expressing sense through analysis of propositions, in favour of rules for systems of propositions or the grammar of language. Here Wittgenstein introduces a calculus concept of language, wherein meaning is fixed within the rules of language. This can be likened to the difference between two games e.g. soccer and tennis. Both have specific but different rules that govern the expression of meaning within each context.

> The answer to the question “what do you mean” should be the explanation of the system of signs to which the given sign belongs… [A] language is only understandable because we know it, its system. For all explanation can do nothing except teaching us the language.
>
> Wittgenstein 1998, p. 294

The calculus of grammar goes some way to restoring order to Wittgenstein’s philosophical system. Wittgenstein’s rules of grammar replace the flawed phenomenological analysis. Such rules, Wittgenstein thinks are determinate, since they express the immediate criteria for the sense of the expression. Wittgenstein

calls grammar a “theory of logical types” meaning that grammar determines the type of logic represented by a system of propositions.

> According to Wittgenstein’s “grammar”, the analysis of propositions of degree shows that they form systems of propositions, and each system is compared to reality as a whole. In the same way that we use a ruler to measure the length of an object (and see that a given measure excludes all others), all propositions of degree implicitly have such systems of exclusion.
>
> Engelmann 2013, p. 50

In this sense, there are different rules of grammar for mathematics (or numbers), colour, sound, etc.

> What we call "understanding a language" is often like the understanding we get of a calculus when we learn its history or its practical application… I want to say the place of a word in grammar is its meaning… I can ostensively define a word for a colour or a shape or a number, etc. etc…The same ostension might define a numeral, or the name of a shape or the name of a colour. But in the grammar of each different part of speech the ostensive definition has a different role; and in each case it is only one rule.
>
> Wittgenstein 1974, p. 40

Wittgenstein imagines a “book of grammar” with different chapters for types, such that the book provides for a complete perspicuous representation of our language, and prescribes the bounds of sense as defined in the *Tractatus*. This is the structure Wittgenstein would employ in the development of the *Big Typescript*, written between 1929 and 1932. The *Big Typescript* is the most complete picture of Wittgenstein’s calculus concept of grammar. In the *Big Typescript* Wittgenstein uses the mistakes in his earlier works, especially *Tractatus*, as an exemplar to showcase the types of confusion that philosophy can easily lead to and that needs to be overcome through the perspicuity of language. He is still accepting of the task of the *Tractatus* (i.e. to set the limits of language) but is critical of the overall approach, now preferring the metaphysical neutrality (his term for this is “trivial”) of grammar:

> In my old book the solution of the problems is still presented in a far too little homespun (*hausbacken*) way; it has still too much the appearance as if discoveries

> were needed to solve our problems and everything is still too little brought in the form of grammatical trivialities in ordinary language.
>
> Engelmann 2013, p. 119

During this time, Wittgenstein is also working with Waismann on their first collaboration (they would attempt two joint projects but neither of them were completed). This collaboration was meant to provide an update to the *Tractatus* and was to be published in the Vienna Circle series, the *Schrifen zur wissenschaftlichen Weltauffassung*. Much of it centred on the notion of grammar as a system of rules that replace the propositional analysis. However, Wittgenstein's thinking was still evolving and he was aware of a weakness in the concept of grammar as a system of rules which can be expressed in terms of the potential for infinite regress. The problem is that the explanation of the grammar itself is left unexpressed, since the language to express this would already assume the nature of the grammar it expresses. However, the arbitrariness of grammar would create some circumstances in which the sense of the rule is not clear, and any attempt at explanation might itself require further clarification, and so on. Wittgenstein begins to develop a method that identifies the source of the problem, not within the general structure of language, but in the mode of thinking that calls for a general structure of language in the first place. He sees the need to confront the misconceptions in our thinking which led to such problems in the first place. This is the genesis of his genetic method, which is also called his negative or therapeutic method by various authors (Hacker 1997; Kuusela 2008; Engelmann 2013):

> In order to convince someone of the truth, it is not sufficient to establish the truth, but one has to find out the road from the misconception to the truth… one has to expose the source of the misconception; otherwise hearing the truth is not helpful… it cannot penetrate as long as something else takes its place.
>
> I don't need another model that shows me how the depiction goes and therefore [how] the first model has to be used, for otherwise I would need a model to show me the use application of the second and so on ad infinitum. That is, another model is of no use for me. I have to act at some point without a model.
>
> All difficulties of philosophy can only be based on misunderstandings. A discovery is never needed, is not necessary to solve them. It is a misunderstanding and can only

> be solved as such… For the door gets open and everything in it is all right; you only have to understand the lock.
>
> Engelmann 2013, p. 103

Wittgenstein's point is that we do act in reality, and are not paralysed by the suggested infinite regress. Therefore, there must be something wrong with the mental process that leads us down the path of infinite regress in the first place. There are mistakes caused by false grammatical analogies. Wittgenstein's new method is to expose the road which leads to the misunderstanding.

> One of the most important tasks is to express all false trains of thought in such a characteristic way that the reader says "yes, I meant it in exactly this way". To portray the physiognomy of each error.
>
> Problems are literally dissolved – like a lump of sugar in water.
>
> Wittgenstein 2013, p. 410, 421

When a reader is confronted with the process that leads to the problem, they see the landscape anew, and the visage of the problem vanishes from view. This is Wittgenstein's objective.

The combination of this therapeutic method and Wittgenstein's willingness to critically review his earlier works and revise his ideas is now often referred to as the *Wiederaufnahme*, and this review process is evident in Wittgenstein's manuscripts, including the manuscripts that are incorporated into the *Big Typescript*. It is here that the therapeutic method and the calculus concept of grammar are employed to provide a revised version of the arguments of the *Tractatus*. The goal of perspicuous representation of language is achieved by the elucidation of grammar.

There is some difficulty in Wittgenstein's use of the word grammar compared to the use of the word in everyday speech. Moore, a contemporary of Russell and Wittgenstein's who attended a few of his lectures (It was Moore and Russell who examined the *Tractatus*, which was put forward as the basis of the awarding of a PhD to Wittgenstein) argued that in the normal use of the term, grammatically incorrect sentences such as "I are walking" are still understandable while some grammatically correct sentences such as "Three tops clever fences in infinite gravitational mice" are senseless. This is a challenge to the notion that Wittgenstein

has indeed succeeded in defining a metaphysically neutral concept of grammar. Sraffa was also highly critical of the notion of grammar as calculus, but from a different direction, and it was ultimately Sraffa's criticism that broke Wittgenstein's Tractatarian objective to his philosophy.

> The most famous anecdote concerning Wittgenstein and Sraffa is the latter's Neapolitan gesture "of brushing the underneath of his chin with an outward sweep of the finger-tips of one hand"… The question at issue, according to Wittgenstein, was whether every proposition must have a "grammar", and Sraffa asked Wittgenstein what the "grammar" of that gesture was.
>
> Engelmann 2013, p. 151

Wittgenstein's calculus concept of grammar has grammar determining the sense of propositions. It is the sentence, not the signs that convey meaning, according to the *Big Typescript*. But Wittgenstein's calculus concept does not account for how learning takes place, in that it does not allow for learning from unarticulated context (as opposed to specific explanation). In the handwritten, annotated version of the *Big Typescript*, Wittgenstein writes the following in the margin, in relation to Sraffa's gesture:

> For how do we learn the language of foreign gestures? They can be explained to us in words… Or, on the other hand, we learn to understand these gestures the way we learned as children to understand the gestures and facial expressions of grown-ups – without explanation. And in this sense learning to understand does not mean learning to explain, and so we can understand the facial expression, but can't explain it by any other means.
>
> Wittgenstein 2013, p. 10

Wittgenstein's insight, derived from Sraffa's gesture, is that there are cases where language does not function simply as a set of fixed rules. If it did, learning of the sort described above would be impossible. What children do is learn based on contextual cues. The environment, not the rules of the language, help them understand the meaning of the facial expressions. So the way language is learnt is also important. Furthermore, where language is learnt without the appeal to sentences (such as is possible with young children who are able to understand gestures but do not yet have the command of language) the requirement that a calculus concept of grammar (i.e. rules for meaning of sentences) seems unnecessary. Indeed, there is no

necessity for sentences at all within such a system of understanding. Primitive or simple language can convey meaning through gestures and signs alone. This breaks with Wittgenstein's basic idea that language is the totality of propositions from *Tractatus*. Sraffa's gesture shows that understanding language does not necessarily require propositions, especially in the case of primitive language.

> The question "how is the general concept of proposition bounded?" must be countered with another: "Well, do we have a single concept of proposition?"… Imagine a language in which all sentences are commands to go in a particular direction…Well, we would still call the commands "come here", "go there", "sentences". But suppose now the language consisted only in pointing the finger in one direction or the other. Would this sign still be a proposition? …The word "proposition" does not signify a sharply bounded concept.
>
> Wittgenstein 1974, p. 112-113

Wittgenstein finally breaks with the general form of the proposition and with it the broader project of the *Tractatus*. In Wittgenstein's lectures and notes from about 1933 onwards, he begins to move away from the concept of grammar as calculus and the need to define sharp boundaries for propositions, instead accepting that language is not sharply bounded. Wittgenstein uses the concept of "family resemblances" to provide an alternative way of referring to related constructs without needing to subject them to a generalised definition. This concept highlights the specific aspect or respect in which similarities express themselves and prevents the temptation to think of similarities as an absolute notion.

> I shall in the future again and again draw your attention to what I shall call language games. These are ways of using signs simpler than those in which we use the signs of our highly complicated everyday language… The study of language games is the study of primitive forms of language…If we want to study the problems of truth and falsehood, of the agreement and disagreement of propositions with reality, of the nature of assertion, assumption and question, we shall with great advantage look at primitive forms of language in which these forms of thinking appear without the confusing background of highly complicated processes of thought…We recognise in these simple processes forms of language not separated by a break from our more complicated ones. We see that we can build up the complicated forms from the primitive ones… Now what makes it difficult for us to take this line of investigation is our craving for generality. This craving for generality is the resultant of a number of

> tendencies connected with particular philosophical confusion. There is (a) the tendency to look for something in common to all the entities which we commonly subsume under a general term – We are inclined to think that there must be something in common to all games, say, and that this common property is the justification for applying the general term “game” to various games; whereas games form a *family* the members of which have family likenesses. Some have the same nose, others the same eyebrows and others again the same way of walking; and these likenesses overlap. The idea of a general concept being a common property of its particular instances connects up with other primitive, too simple, ideas of the structure of language.
>
> Wittgenstein 1958, p. 17

Freed from his calculus notion by his new family resemblance understanding of language, Wittgenstein begins to employ his therapeutic method to the context within which the language is set. In *The Blue and Brown Books* (1958), which are compiled from the notes of his students between 1933 and 1935, Wittgenstein introduces the concept of language games. Wittgenstein’s earlier philosophy largely ignored the will of the communicator and the understanding of language in general, but going forward this would be central to his philosophy.

> Imagine that someone were to explain "Language is whatever one can use to communicate"…To invent a language could mean to invent an instrument for a particular purpose on the basis of the laws of nature (or consistently with them)… Where does language get its significance? Can we say "Without language we couldn't communicate with one another"? No… the concept of language is contained in the concept of communication.
>
> Wittgenstein 1974, p. 191-193

The above passage shows an early example of Wittgenstein beginning to bring all his tools together. Here there is an anthropological context of communication, infused with his therapeutic method of philosophy. Wittgenstein is now less concerned with the rules of language and more concerned with its use. Post his anthropological view, Wittgenstein’s notion of grammar changes from a calculus concept to a description of particular uses of language, or the description of practices related to a particular language.

> The philosophical activity or investigation is, thus, grammatical in a new sense because a philosopher, in Wittgenstein's sense, describes the uses of words in their environments (the form of life) in order to avoid philosophical theorising right from the beginning.
>
> Engelmann 2013, p. 170

Wittgenstein wants philosophers to see the actual practices of living, and not be tempted to systematise or reach for foundational, *a priori* concepts. The practices of the anthropological human being are to be accepted as facts of our social nature. Wittgenstein makes the following point in an unpublished manuscript:

> The goal is a comparative perspicuous representation of all the applications, illustrations, conceptions, of the calculus. A general illumination (For each one-sided illumination also sheds shadows). The complete perspicuous view about everything that can create a lack of clarity. And this perspicuous view must cover a broad area, for the roots of our ideas reach very far.
>
> Engelmann 2013, p. 170

Here Wittgenstein is advocating a different type of perspective, one which is derived from seeing connections, and being able to trace these connections back through our practices, and thus appreciating the roots of our practices from whence certain applications of language are derived.

> What warrants using the epithets "ethnological approach" or "anthropological approach" in describing Wittgenstein's later philosophy is the perspective from which he views conceptual matters… Concepts are human creations, made not found. They are comparable to instruments made for human purposes, and their acquisition is comparable to the mastery of the technique of using an instrument. They are rule-governed techniques of word use. They are given by explanation of word meaning, and their techniques of application are exhibited in the use of words in practice. The use of words is integrated into the activities of human beings in the stream of life.
>
> Hacker 2013, p. 114

Sraffa's main, and significant contribution to Wittgenstein's philosophy, was in being the catalyst for the development of Wittgenstein's anthropological view. This is made clear in Wittgenstein's autobiography:

> Wittgenstein once remarked to Rush Rhees that the most important thing he gained from talking to Sraffa was an "anthropological" way of looking at philosophical problems… whereas *Tractatus* deals with language in isolation from the circumstances in which it is used, the Investigations repeatedly emphasizes the importance of the "stream of life" which gives linguistic utterances their meaning: a "language-game" cannot be described without mentioning their activities and the way of life of the "tribe" that plays it.
>
> Monk 1990, p. 261

This way of thinking sets the stage for Wittgenstein's method in *Philosophical Investigations* and Wittgenstein's philosophy thereafter, which is typically referred to as his Later Philosophy.

2.2.4. Wittgenstein's juxtaposition of philosophy and science

One of Wittgenstein's fundamental claims is that philosophy is not a science in that it contributes to understanding rather than knowledge.

> 4.111. Philosophy is not one of the natural sciences… A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations.
>
> Wittgenstein 1961, p. 40

In his perspective on science, Wittgenstein was significantly influenced by Ludwig Boltzmann and Heinrich Hertz (Barker 1980; Kjaergaard 2002; Preston 2008). This has been acknowledged by many prominent Wittgenstein scholars. Wittgenstein explicitly states who the greatest influences on his thinking were:

> …That is how Boltzmann, Hertz, Schopenhauer, Frege, Russell, Kraus, Loos, Weininger, Spengler, Sraffa have influenced me.
>
> Wittgenstein 1980a, p. 16

It has been suggested by McGuinness (2002), one of Wittgenstein's biographers, that this order is chronological. If that is the case, then what is striking is the names of the two prominent scientists that are the first enduring influences on Wittgenstein's thinking: Boltzmann and Hertz. These were men who contributed to the rise of two new theories of physical science, rivalling Newtonian mechanics, at the end of the nineteenth century: electromagnetic theory and thermodynamics or statistical

mechanics (Barker 1980). Boltzmann developed the statistical mechanics formulation of thermodynamics, while Hertz had done pioneering experimentation on Maxwell's theories. Both of these theories posited empirically verifiable laws and conditions of nature that were absent in Newton's equations, painting a different picture of the universe. Both men characterised scientific theory as a description or mode of representation of experience rather than explanations. Hertz makes the further claim that the only respect in which our thoughts correspond with reality is in terms of conformity between the mental pictures that we use to make inferences of the world and the experience of the validity of these inferences.

In his work on the philosophy of science entitled *Principles of Mechanics Presented in a New Form* (1894), Hertz says the following:

> In endeavouring thus to draw inferences as to the future from the past, we always adopt the following process. We form for ourselves images or symbols of external objects; and the form which we give them is such that the necessary consequents of the images in thought are always the images of the necessary consequents in nature of the things pictured. In order that this requirement may be satisfied, there must be a certain conformity between nature and our thought… For our purpose it is not necessary that they should be in conformity with the things in any other respect. As a matter of fact, we do not know, nor have any means of knowing, whether our concepts of things are in conformity with them in any other than this one fundamental respect.
>
> Hertz 1956, p. 1-2

From this perspective it is clear that the ideas we have are tools for our use in coping with the world. This is the way Hertz depicts the fundamental nature of knowledge (Kjaergaard 2002). Boltzmann's statistical mechanics relied on the picture of large collections of atoms at a time when the existence of atoms itself was not conclusively given by observation or experimentation. His epistemology was pragmatic and favoured pluralism. Boltzmann put definitive knowledge of nature beyond the realm of human understanding. To argue otherwise, he believed, was to engage in a form of ideology or dogmatism. It was meaningless to argue definitively about the existence or non-existence of atoms, for example. Instead, a theory should be seen as a representation for the purposes of understanding, and be engaged with in that spirit. A summary of Boltzmann's theoretical pluralism is given below:

> Theoretical pluralism says that a scientific theory is nothing more than a representation of nature… The laws of nature are the original laws which natural phenomena obey and cannot be discovered by humans. But, the laws of physics are those invented by humans to explain the natural phenomena. Thus a theory is not discoverable, but should be invented by the human mind… A scientific theory will not be complete or definitively true… Even an apparently successful theory may be replaced by a better one. On the other hand, different theories, with contradictions in respect to each other, can successfully explain a single natural phenomenon… In Boltzmann's opinion all theories are to some extent free creations of the theorist. It is not possible to find a theory formulated from the mere observation of natural phenomena.
>
> Eftekhari 2006, p. 13-14

Because Wittgenstein was an engineer before he was a philosopher, he was familiar with the works of both Boltzmann and Hertz from a young age. Wittgenstein had initially intended to study under Boltzmann. However, Boltzmann's death in 1906 negated such a possibility (Hertz had also died suddenly in 1894 at the age of thirty-seven). It is therefore not likely that Wittgenstein was anti-science as it is sometimes espoused (McGuiness 2002). Instead, Wittgenstein's views on science are put in their proper context when the influence of Boltzmann and Hertz is understood. He adopts the view that a theory stands by virtue of its internal consistency, and it is its application that provides the content according to its intended use. A theory can only be judged on the basis of its intended use and it is illegitimate to attempt to impose any alternative criteria. In this regard, the following quote from Hertz no doubt had an impact on Wittgenstein:

> We have accumulated around the term “force” more relations than can be completely reconciled amongst themselves. We have an obscure feeling about this and want to have things cleared up. Our confused wish finds expression in the confused question as to the nature of force and electricity. But the answer which we want is not really an answer to this question. It is not by finding out more and fresh relations and connections that it can be answered; but by removing the contradictions existing between those already known, and thus perhaps reducing their number. When these painful contradictions are removed, the question as to the nature of force will not have been answered; but our minds, no longer vexed, will cease to ask illegitimate questions.
>
> Hertz 1956, p. 7-8

Since Hertz’ theories would not be judged on the basis of an empirical criterion, he provides an alternative set of criteria. Firstly, that the theory should be permissible and thus not contradict our broader frame of reality; Secondly, that the theory should be correct for the purpose it is intended, having a distinct relational mapping, and as simple a form of relationship compared to alternatives; Lastly, that it be perspicuous, providing a clear landscape of its permissibility (Hertz 1956). One of the important consequences of Boltzmann’s and Hertz’s philosophy of science was the criteria for consistency:

> To the Newtonians consistency was a matter of whether the relations between theory and nature where coherent… To Hertz, consistency was related to the internal relations between symbolic entities of a formal system. This made Hertz’s conception of consistency look like that of formal logic.
>
> Kjaergaard 2002, p. 133

That Hertz’s system resembles formal logic is significant, since that is the form of language which is guided by an internally consistent grammar. Wittgenstein seizes on the power of this idea in bringing together language and logic in *Tractatus*. For Wittgenstein, this separated knowledge into two distinct domains, the domain of science where theories are formulated in accordance with the needs of society, and the domain of philosophy where theories are clarified through accurate description of their structure and intended landscape of applicability.

The Hertz-Boltzmann philosophy of science had advantages over its chief rivals at the time which must have made it attractive to Wittgenstein. Firstly, the model served

to achieve Boltzmann's aim of preserving the possibility of multiple forms of theoretical frameworks. He believed this ideal was critical for the development of science, as it necessitated the ingenuity of the theorist. Secondly, the approach explained the emergence of alternative successful theories that would encourage the need for new discoveries and lead to the demise of the conceptual quest for a unifying philosophy of science. Finally, the approach neatly resolved the philosophical problem that the success of electromagnetism and thermodynamics had created. It should also be noted that the modern concept of science, including quantum theory, the Copenhagen Interpretation, the standard model of particle physics, the big bang theory, all owe a debt to Hertz and especially Boltzmann's defence of the philosophical style of science within which such theories have emerged. These advantages strip science of the disquiet that comes from having to give ontological status to theoretical constructs. Instead, theory is but a way of representing the world for a particular purpose. What serves as theoretical knowledge is given by the logical consistency and simplicity of the picture. There are no external criteria for the form of the theory; not the evidence of experience nor the mental models of our thinking. For Hertz, a theory is allowed to stand, provided it explains its conceptual foundation, the relationships between its basic concepts and the way in which the theory relates to human experience (Hertz 1956). The form of the theory thus explicitly provides a standard of correctness for its application, and the theory is only applicable within the bounds of the experiences given by the form of the theory. This has the advantage of clarifying the ontological status of the concepts defined in the theory and preventing conceptual questions that are illegitimate. Hertz then makes the following observation:

> Mature knowledge regards logical clearness as of prime importance: only logically clear images does it test as to correctness; only correct images does it compare as to appropriateness. By pressure of circumstances the process is often reversed. Images are found to be suitable for a certain purpose; are next tested as to their correctness; and only in the last place purged of implied contradictions.
>
> Hertz 1956, p. 10

It falls to philosophy, such as that developed in Hertz's *Principles of Mechanics*, to ensure that, in the event of circumstances in reverse as outlined above, the theoretical constructs are purged of unnecessary metaphysical constructs, leaving

the scientific theory to function as is its intended purpose. Hertz thus provides scientific theory with a basis for theoretical clarity. Philosophy does not create more theories but instead interrogates theories to ensure that they maintain theoretical consistency. Wittgenstein's notion of philosophy stems from the influence of these types of ideas, clearly visible in the works of Hertz on the subject. Consider the following passage:

> As to the details I have nothing to bring forward which is new or which could not have been gleaned from many books. What I hope is new, and to this alone I attach value, is the arrangement and collocation of the whole – the logical or philosophical aspect of the matter.
>
> Hertz 1956, p. xxiv

This reinforces the Wittgensteinian notion of philosophy as a quest for understanding rather than knowledge. Wittgenstein often insisted that philosophy adds nothing new but simply arranges what is already in view such that a new perspective is achieved (Wittgenstein 1953).

Understanding of the shaping of Wittgenstein's conception of theory based on Boltzmann and Hertz, it is clear that Wittgenstein is not anti-science or a-theoretical in a broad sense. Wittgenstein's conceptualisation of the task of philosophy is to survey the grammar of our language. He favours description over explanation as the method of philosophy. He favours theory clarification over theory construction as the goal of philosophy. His notion of grammar provides a form of representation, which is the foundation for the content of our practices.

2.2.5. Wittgenstein's ethics

Wittgenstein's philosophy can be seen as an ethical undertaking, not because he wrote extensively on the subject of ethics, but because he believed that it was intricately linked to everything else he did. One of the few lines directly citing ethics in *Investigations* makes the point about the integrated nature of ethics:

> Won't you then have to say: "Here I might just as well draw a circle or heart as a rectangle… Anything – and nothing – is right" – And this is the position you are in if you look for definitions corresponding to our concepts in aesthetics or ethics.

> In such a difficulty always ask yourself: How did we learn the meaning of this word ("good" for instance)? From what sort of examples? In what language-games? Then it will be easier for you to see that the word must have a family of meanings.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 36e

Wittgenstein controversially listed Weininger as one of his most significant influences (along with the likes of Sraffa, Russel, Frege and Boltzmann). Wittgenstein read Weininger as an adolescent and was captivated by his struggle with himself. He made the following comment to Anscombe:

> "Weininger", he said, "whatever his faults, was a man who really did write about his troubles."
>
> Monk 1990, p. 498

Indeed, Monk's choice for the title of his biography, *The Duty of Genius* (1990), is based on his belief that Wittgenstein internalised Weininger's charge of either commitment to the duty of genius or capitulation and death. Weininger himself committed suicide shortly after writing *Sex and Character* (1903). Monk also chose as the epigraph for the biography, the following passage from *Sex and Character* (note that the epigraph itself contains only the first sentence):

> Logic and ethics are fundamentally the same, they are no more than duty to oneself… All ethics are possible only by the laws of logic, and logic is no more than the ethical side of the law… Through the union of these alone comes perfection.
>
> Weininger 1906, p. 159

It is likely Wittgenstein read Weininger the way he would like to have been read. He wrote:

> I believe it might interest a philosopher, one who can think for himself, to read my notes. For even if I have hit the mark only rarely, he would recognise what target I had been ceaselessly aiming at.
>
> Wittgenstein 1969, p. 50

The target of Weininger's writings is what Wittgenstein inherits rather than the validity of the arguments themselves (Wittgenstein as much as wrote that he viewed Weininger's arguments as incorrect on more than one occasion). That target is the relationship between life and philosophy:

> What is of utmost importance, McGuinness maintains, for understanding why Weininger mattered to Wittgenstein, is the personal dimension. It was because "Weininger's thought about character, superficial and half-baked at times, came from a deep concern with ethical problems of his own life" that Wittgenstein later spoke of *Sex and Character* as an important book – for the questions it raised, not for its answers.
>
> Stern and Szabados 2004, p. 13-14

So we know that these questions were important to Wittgenstein (Carvell 1962), and that he saw them as two sides of the same coin. Work on philosophy requires work on oneself.

> The nature of self-knowledge – and therewith the nature of the self – is one of the great subjects of the Investigations as a whole… That exploration of self-knowledge and of the self comes out in the appeal to ordinary language, which is not an appeal to the empirical facts of language use. Instead [it is] asked of someone who has mastered the language [as a request] for the person to say something about himself, describe what he does… The Investigations contains, therefore, "what serious confession must: the full acknowledgement of temptation"
>
> Thompson 2000, p. 2

Wittgenstein's philosophy increasingly gave primacy to action. And the acts of individuals are their practices as masters of the language-games of society. Each individual's strengths and experiences creates a tendency towards one style of thought or another. A person carries their experience with them into new areas of reasoning. One might therefore begin employing grammatical tools away from their context; seeking a common underlying grammatical structure for practices that are not in need of such conceptual unity, etc. Wittgenstein's remark that 'every philosophical error is the mark of a character failing' (Hacker 1996, p. 112) is meant to highlight the nature of the origin of the confusion, and to explain the link between the self and the metaphysical misstep.

Becoming aware of a certain predilection for a particular style of thought is what Cavell (1962) and Thompson (2000) refer to as "confession". "Confession" is about the commitments individuals harbour towards specific grammatical concepts. Wittgenstein said (in the same passage as that quoted above by Hacker):

> It leads one to abandon certain combinations of words as senseless, and involves a kind of resignation, not of intellect but of feeling.
>
> Hacker 1996, p. 112

A person in this way learns not to succumb to the pull of their own prejudices or successes, and to apply their knowledge strictly in fulfilment of the function of the language-game. In *Philosophy as Therapy* (1992), Peterman suggests the same practice as a case for a therapeutic practice of ethical philosophy:

> Consider the following case. Imagine someone who thinks that the culture is ill and needs to be made healthy. She views the culture as sexist and is willing and able to present a clear, well-justified account of the problem. She thinks there is no obvious way to cure the culture wholesale, so she opts for a therapeutic practice of consciousness-raising in small groups. The practice of the groups is to clarify what the participants believe and subject those beliefs to critical scrutiny. When successful, the therapeutic practice results in changes of belief and over the course of time, changes in the behaviour of the participants… Therapeutic practices of the sort I discuss here are primarily therapies aimed at curing the individual… It is reasonable, nonetheless, to admit that individuals are the bearers of their cultures. Many of our beliefs and attitudes result from having grown up and become responsible, normal members of society.
>
> Peterman 1992, p. 6

Wittgenstein's ethics is that it is digitally purposeful: the choices are, qua Weininger, between the duty to the purpose of the language-game or societal irrelevance.

2.2.6. Wittgenstein's philosophical legacy

Wittgenstein is said to have had a profound impact on the study of philosophy. Philosophers like Plato and Kant revolutionised the discipline through their approach to reasoning and the unique answers to fundamental philosophical questions. Wittgenstein arguably also fits in this small group of philosophers. Much of the literature confirms this, and the following sentence is an example of the assessment of his standing:

> Ludwig Wittgenstein created a fifth revolution [in philosophical ideas] by proposing that the boundaries of thought were delineated by the limits of the language in which it was conducted. The standard for assessing truth resided neither in the heavens nor in the confines of the mind, but in the grammar of public practice.
>
> Fearn 2005, p. xiii-xiv

In his review of the developments of analytical philosophy, *Twentieth-Century Analytical Philosophy* (2000), Stroll examines the great analytical philosophers asking the question 'Are any of the figures [i.e. preeminent analytical philosophers] discussed of first-rate importance – comparable to Descartes, Hume or Kant, for example?' (Stroll 2000, p. 246). He gives a summary of his assessment as follows:

> How shall we assess the chances of "immortality" for the analytical philosophers we have dealt with in this study – Frege, Russell, Moore, Carnap, Wittgenstein, Ryle, Austin and Quine? Will any of these turn out to be the Descartes or the Kant of the twenty-first century or twenty-second century? My own guess is that only Wittgenstein is a plausible candidate for this status. Here is why I think so: I believe that there are four or five criteria for greatness: the philosopher must have contributed to all or nearly all the main fields of the discipline, be original, leave a legacy whose content and size engender a scholarly corpus of community, and is such that if she or he had not lived, the field would be wholly different. Clearly Plato, Aristotle, Hume and Kant satisfy all these conditions. Descartes did not contribute to all fields yet he satisfies the other criteria…In my opinion Wittgenstein is the strongest of all the [analytical philosopher] candidates. More than any other analytical philosopher, he has changed the thinking of a whole generation. Like Plato, Aristotle and Kant, he is the product of an enormous subliterature of commentaries…The quantity of his work… is enormous and comparable in size to that of Plato and Aristotle. Moreover, it covers the entire gamut of philosophy, from logic through philosophical psychology to considerations of culture and value. It has also had a profound effect on the non-philosophical disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Most importantly… the later Wittgenstein is genuinely original, virtually without antecedents…The later Wittgenstein, in my view, has no ancestors in the history of thought. His work signals a radical departure from previous existing paths of philosophy.
>
> Stroll 2000, p. 250-253

Wittgenstein is not universally revered. Many shared Russell's view that Wittgenstein stopped doing serious philosophy in his later period:

> The earlier Wittgenstein was a man addicted to passionately intense thinking, profoundly aware of difficult problems of which I, like him, felt the importance, and possessed (or at least I thought) of true philosophical genius... The later Wittgenstein, on the contrary, seems to have grown tired of serious thinking and to have invented a doctrine which would make such an activity unnecessary.
>
> Russell, quoted in Monk 1990, p. 472

Most philosophers reject the notion that no thesis can be advanced in philosophy, and considered his approach to philosophy unduly restrictive. Indeed, it is true that Quine's more scientific form of analytical philosophy is more instructive in the movement today (Stroll 2000). The shared success of science in the modern age and its influence on the contemporary thinking can seem at odds with Wittgenstein's philosophical outlook. Some of the important themes in philosophy today are jointly studied as scientific enterprises. This is especially true in the case of the Philosophy of Mind, where significant new philosophical thinking stands side by side with neurology and artificial intelligence endeavours.

This makes it hard to assess Wittgenstein. Most would agree that he was a philosopher of significant intellect and originality. Less clear is the arc of Wittgenstein's influence. In almost all areas, including those where Wittgenstein's arguments are accepted, they have not become the mainstream view. In the philosophy of language, the work of Chomsky has been more influential. Quine's scientism is the foundation of modern analytical philosophy. Some argue that the problem is two-fold. Firstly, that Wittgenstein's arguments are often misunderstood or tangentially discussed. Secondly, Wittgenstein's method of philosophy resists assimilation into the general canon of philosophical works because of its uniqueness. Wittgenstein's work is at odds with our science and technology dominated culture. His contention that there are significant conceptual questions that cannot be tamed by the methods of natural science is alien to modern thinking and difficult to assimilate. Wittgenstein's ideas have drifted from the mainstream of philosophical thinking. However, this is not due to a repudiation of his ideas or the inadequacies of his methods. Rather, much of his thoughts have yet to be critically considered in areas such as philosophy of mathematics, arguably due to misunderstanding of the nature of his arguments (Shanker 1987). The publication of his *Nachlass* (full volume of notes and manuscripts) has also helped clarify some of the more laconic

passages of his books. There are also possibilities for putting his methods to use in further disciplines in tackling conceptual problems, such as psychology, economics and socio-biology (Hacker 2013). For instance, Wittgenstein's influence on the Strong Program (SP) of the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge (SSK) is strongly argued by Bloor (1983). SP itself has been especially influential in the study of science and technology, and serves to give a picture of the scope of the influence of Wittgenstein's thinking. His arguments continue to be studied, and clarified. Given the volume of his works, such scholarship seems set to continue.

2.3. Philosophical Investigations

In 1936, Wittgenstein starts working on a new manuscript that would form the initial structure of the first part of *Philosophical Investigations*. Writing to Moore he comments:

> I don't know if I wrote to you that when I came here I began translating into and rewrite in German, the stuff I had dictated to Skinner and Miss Ambrose [which would become known as the Brown Books]… I read through what I had done so far [and] found it all, or nearly all, boring and artificial… I therefore decided to start all over again… and so I'm writing a new version and I hope I am not wrong in saying that it is somewhat better than the last.
>
> Wittgenstein, personal communication 20 November 1936

The arguments of this thesis are based on Wittgenstein's method of philosophy from *Philosophical Investigations* onward, and the insights this approach provides concerning the practices of human nature or, to use Wittgenstein's terminology, the language-games of our forms of life. The chapter is not a summary of Wittgenstein's philosophical arguments in *Investigations* themselves. The chapter will instead broadly characterise his philosophical objectives and illustrate his method with a few examples from the text. This is in keeping with the focus of this thesis.

2.3.1. The form of Philosophical Investigations

The book that would become the *Philosophical Investigations* has two parts. Part I (sections 1 through to 693) was written between 1936 and 1946, and was intended for publication as a single manuscript to be read in contrast to *Tractatus*. This first part is focused on the philosophy of language, while Part II is more focused on the philosophy of psychology. It is not clear that Part II was considered complete by Wittgenstein (he was relatively satisfied with Part I by the time of his death, or at least felt comfortable enough to have stopped revising it). Part II was written between 1945 and 1949, during the period when the philosophy of psychology, and the nature of mental concepts in general, play a large role in his writings, which include *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, and *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*. Part II is also numbered differently (Roman numerals) and the numbered remarks are considerably longer than those of Part I typically (there are only 14 sections). The differences in the sections have been the cause of some debate as to the wisdom of publishing such contrasted material as a single book. The 4th edition (most recent edition to date) of *Philosophical Investigations* now refers to Part II as a separate work called *Philosophy of Psychology – A Fragment*. The following comment captures some of the rationale for this change:

> In a way its title "Part II" is somewhat misleading: certainly there is no reason to think that Wittgenstein intended it to follow Part I in its present form. "Part II", then, is not a sequel to Part I: it is simply a collection of material that might have been, but never was, integrated into the final 170-odd sections of the latter.
>
> Ahmed 2010, p. 2

The distinction between the two parts is topical in terms of the subject of this study. The study focuses on Wittgenstein's method with respect to the investigation of language and related concepts of metaphysics, logic and understanding (when Wittgenstein deals with psychological concepts, such as the mind, in Part I, he is doing it as context for investigations related to the philosophy of language). As such the core focus of this study is Part I of *Philosophical Investigations*. His writing post-*Philosophical Investigation* would be discussed as a whole with specific textual references as necessary. Hereafter *Philosophical Investigation* and *Investigations* refers specifically to Part I of the book.

Philosophical Investigations has a unique style. Rather than write free flowing prose, Wittgenstein wrote paragraphs and sentences which were always numbered. This gives a staccato like rhythm to his work. Wittgenstein also was not in the habit of putting headings or markers in his text to denote the beginnings and ends of specific arguments or to highlight the specific target of his arguments. A good example of this is Wittgenstein's private language argument which is dispersed over more than 100 sections of the book rather than presented in a single chronological argument (Scruton 1996).

> When [Wittgenstein] offers a new way of looking at a problem it is not his practice to try to persuade us with a single self-contained argument. He has many different ways of inducing us to get rid of the point of view that he is rejecting and to replace it with something better. He uses realistic sketches of our actual linguistic practices, diagnoses of our misunderstandings of them, illustrations of viable alternatives, and a host of other devices. Of course, there are arguments in his text, but he seldom rests his case on a single one.
>
> Pears 1996, p. 49

Yet the book is not randomly put together. Wittgenstein states in the preface:

> The thoughts which I publish in what follows are the precipitate of philosophical investigations which have occupied me for the last sixteen years… I have written down all these thoughts as remarks, short paragraphs, of which there is sometimes a fairly long chain about the same subject, while I sometimes make a sudden change, jumping from one topic to another… the essential thing was that the thoughts should proceed from one subject to another in a natural order and without breaks. After several unsuccessful attempts to weld my results together into such a whole, I realise that I should never succeed… my thoughts were soon crippled if I tried to force them on in any single direction against their natural inclination – And this was, of course, connected to the very nature of the investigation. For this compels us to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction – The philosophical remarks in this book are, as it were, a number of sketches of the landscape which were made in the course of these long and involved journeyings… I make them [his ideas in the book, *Philosophical Investigations*] public with doubtful feelings… I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But, if possible, to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. vii-viii

Philosophical Investigations can be characterised as a critique of not simply specific philosophical concepts, but of a whole tradition of philosophy, including Wittgenstein's own *Tractatus* (Glock 2001). Instead of attempting to convince the reader to adopt a new theory to resolve the critical problems of philosophy, Wittgenstein develops a method that is aimed at clarifying the misunderstanding that has occurred by making the reader attentive to the way language functions in different contexts (McGinn 1997). There is a rationale for the approach Wittgenstein has chosen, as can be seen from the following quote:

> The argumentative strategy of the book is an exemplary manifestation of the "indirect approach", informed by the well-grounded belief that the received direct approaches have so muddied the tracks as to be impassable, and that a direct approach will inevitably encounter deeply rooted preconceptions and prejudices which cannot be directly assailed but only indirectly undermined.
>
> Hacker 1996, p. 130

The roots of certain style of thinking are so deeply ingrained that they not only form our perspectives, but are also the basis by which we judge other arguments. It is therefore futile to attempt a direct assault on such a mind-set. Instead, Wittgenstein aims to undermine the roots themselves, exposing them to surface examination and starving them of their surrounding support structures. As the edifice collapses, the reader is not provided an alternative theoretical framework. Indeed, it is, from Wittgenstein's perspective, the need for theoretical elucidation that has created the confusions in the first place. Wittgenstein equates such thinking with a type of metaphysical theorising which asserts necessary conditions or essential features for phenomena. This produces non-empirical theories in a manner that seems scientific. This type of theorising approach to Philosophy was the target of much of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, not because the explanations in existing theories were wrong, but because the entire enterprise was misplaced (Hacker 1996; Kuusela 2008). Wittgenstein wrote in one of his notebooks:

> The greatest danger that threatens the mind in philosophising comes from the metaphysical tendency that takes over it and completely topples the grammatical.
>
> Kuusela 2008, p. 96

Such metaphysical tendencies in thinking, leads to a philosophical stalemate of positions which are simultaneously incompatible, incomplete and irreconcilable. The problem is that each position has merit over the other in certain aspects such that neither are completely valid general theories. Hacker summed up the state of some arguments of the discipline at the time:

> In the philosophy of language… the idealists (from Locke onwards) argued that words are connected to the world by the mediation of ideas derived from experience… and behaviourists held that they are connected to reality by causal links between stimulus and verbal response… In the philosophy of logic… Frege held that the propositions of logic are descriptions of relations between abstract entities, whereas Russell argued that they are descriptions of the most general structural features of the universe, and the psycho-logicians held that they are descriptions of the laws of human thinking.
>
> Hacker 1996, p. 100-101

Such intractable stalemates occur in many aspects of the discipline addressed by Wittgenstein. He believed the stalemate had occurred because all disputants accepted a theorising style of thought, aimed at developing new insights.

> We think that the fault lies in our explanations and we need to construct ever more subtle and surprising accounts… The real fault, Wittgenstein believes, is not in our explanations, but in the very idea that the puzzlement we feel can be removed by means of discovery. What we really need to do is turn our whole enquiry round and concern ourselves, not with explanation or theory construction, but with description.
>
> McGinn 1997, p. 18-19

Wittgenstein's method is to eradicate the confusion by gaining the proper perspective on the phenomena with the information already at hand. A re-orientation is advised whereby the phenomena is seen in such a manner that vexing questions fall away, and a greater understanding of the actual subject matter is gained. As such, Wittgenstein leaves the reader exactly where they have always been, but now with a new appreciation of the grammar of our language and the misunderstanding of language that had led to the confusion in the first place. The reader has changed in two aspects; firstly, they are no longer troubled by the philosophical problem that plagued them, and are instead able to appreciate the way that the language-games function. Rather than look for general features, they are attentive to the context and therefore the similarities and differences between uses of language. Secondly, they

have a new skill: an appreciation of the way in which such misunderstandings can cause them to see philosophical problems where there are none. This new perspective produces a domino-effect of clarity, dissolving philosophical problems and making clear the way language functions. This is a task for which only an "indirect approach" is suitable. It clears away, in one stroke, a tide of misconceptions, allowing the landscape to be seen anew. This is what Wittgenstein calls a grammatical investigation.

> Our investigation is therefore a grammatical one. Such an investigation sheds light on our problems by clearing misunderstandings away. Misunderstandings concerning the use of words.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 43e

It has been argued that this method of grammatical investigation is the hallmark of Wittgenstein's later philosophy. It is his unique contribution to the discipline of philosophy. McGinn makes the case as follows:

> The lessons that emerge from the work [*Philosophical Investigations*] are not, I believe, unique to Wittgenstein. The idea that language can be only understood from the perspective of language-in-use… the appeal to a pre-epistemic relation to other human subjects which is rooted in our immediate responsiveness to them: all these ideas are familiar in the phenomenological tradition of Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. It is Wittgenstein's sense that these insights must not be made the ground of a positive philosophy, and thus his whole approach to persuading us of their truth, that is unique, and which constitutes his original contribution to philosophy.
>
> McGinn 1997, p. 8

It is this approach that the thesis utilises in its investigation of the discipline of strategic management. As such it is necessary to outline the methodological steps Wittgenstein takes in *Philosophical Investigations*. Here the intention is not to definitively analyse Wittgenstein's work, but to lay the foundation for a critique of strategic management by surfacing the methodology by which such a Wittgensteinian critique could be conducted. Wittgenstein's investigation is one in which we clarify misunderstandings by reminding ourselves of our practice of using language, and the distinct patterns that characterise our use of language in different settings. Hacker provides a summary of the ways in which Wittgenstein's concept of philosophy is expressed in his later works:

> There are two primary aspects to Wittgenstein's later concept of philosophy. On the one hand, philosophy is characterised as a quest for a surveyable representation of the grammar of a given problematic domain, which will enable us to find our way around when we encounter philosophical difficulties. On the other hand, philosophy is characterised as a cure for diseases of the understanding.
>
> Hacker 1996, p. 111

The "indirect method" can therefore be said to have two outcomes. The first outcome is a critical or negative one, wherein the therapeutic nature of the method seeks to unseat the prevailing understanding. In this sense, Wittgenstein's method aims at the destruction of the illusion of philosophy as a paragon of science. Each critique is purposefully tailored to the problem at hand. This is the sense in which Wittgenstein compares philosophy to therapy:

> 133. There are different philosophical methods, like different therapies.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 44e

The second can be referred to as the constructive or positive outcome. It is pedagogical in nature and provides a more perspicuous representation of the phenomena under investigation. The net result is a richer understanding of the grammar of our phenomena, which precludes the misunderstandings from which one has been rescued as well as other misleading paths.

2.3.2. Wittgenstein's grammatical approach

In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein's objective is not to offer a theory of meaning or language, or any other philosophical topic. His purpose is to bring about a different style of thinking, but, in order to do this, he must combat the prevailing style of thinking in all its variants. The form of the text is therefore necessarily unique. Instead of a refutation and counter theory, Wittgenstein leads a discussion that encourages his interlocutors to engage in the particular style of thinking which he seeks to counter. He is then able to use a variety of techniques to surface the misunderstanding at the root of the prevailing account. Each grammatical investigation starts with a reference to a text, the pronouncements by an interlocutor, or the thought of a potential extension or variation of an argument. Often, the

numbered sections of the text denote a new or change in the grammatical investigation. The very start of the book is a quotation from St. Augustine's *Confessions*. Many of the subsequent sections start with phrases that are meant to frame the investigation or bring about new philosophical problems that require a new investigative approach to quell the newly surfaced disquiet. It is often stated that *Investigations* lacks a coherence because it does not have the typical style of a philosophical argument. However, it can be argued that once one stops looking for a specific theory developing argument, it is clear that there is a pattern of discussion throughout the text. One example of this is the consistency with which Wittgenstein's discussions are built around a direct quote by the interlocutor, or by Wittgenstein paraphrasing a coming line of argument or a persistent confusion. This style goes right through the text as can be seen from the selected first sentences of sections of *Investigations*:

> 14. Imagine someone saying…
>
> […]
>
> 117. You say to me…
>
> […]
>
> 494. I want to say…
>
> […]
>
> 619. And one might say…
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 7e-170e

Besides these sections, which represent only a subset of the ones in the text that start in this manner, Wittgenstein also starts many sections with the interlocutor's questions or assertions directly. The persistence of this approach suggests that it is central to Wittgenstein's later method of investigation. That method involves getting hold of the root idea behind particular trains of thought as they happen. Wittgenstein wants the interlocutor to be clear on how the actual practice or language functions:

> 140. What is the effect of my argument? It called our attention to (reminded us of) the fact that there are other processes besides the one we originally thought of.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 55e

Wittgenstein's concept of a grammatical investigation is one in which we remind ourselves of the kind of statement we make about phenomena (Wittgenstein 1953); the distinctive ways in which different words and practices convey meaning in different contexts. Wittgenstein's approach is therefore not an explanation of a theory, but instead an assessment of phenomena and the misunderstandings that may surround them. Therefore, inasmuch as there might be different types of misunderstandings, there need not be a single approach. Wittgenstein deploys a number of different tactics aimed at different types of misunderstandings surrounding the same phenomena:

> We must do away with all explanation and description alone must take its place. And this description gets its light, that is to say, its purpose, from the philosophical problems. These are, of course, not empirical problems; they are solved, rather, by looking into the workings of our language, and that in such a way as to make us recognise those workings in despite of an urge to misunderstand them. The problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known.
>
> Wittgenstein, 1952, p. 47e

McGinn describes the types of questions Wittgenstein employs to achieve the objective of his grammatical investigation (McGinn 1997). These questions draw attention to different aspects of the phenomena. Some examples include:

- Imagining a variety of circumstances under which the expression or concept is used.
- Asking how the concept would be taught to a child.
- Discussing how to verify that the concept is applicable for use in specific cases.
- Looking at how the resolution of disagreement on the matter might take place, i.e. how is certainty achieved.
- Trying to ascertain under what circumstances the concept would fail to be useful or what are the boundary conditions for its continued use.
- Creating or employing alternative uses for comparison with the specific use under investigation.
- Identifying the context in which the specific use originates

Wittgenstein used these questions in two ways. First, to expose the emptiness of the explanations given, through the prevailing theorising approach. Wittgenstein brings the interlocutors to see that their positions are indefensible under close examination. Wittgenstein does not attack the theory itself, but its ability to function as the interlocutor intends it. He seeks to undermine the position in that it fails to connect with the actual practice of the phenomena under investigation; the account provides a vast oversimplification of the phenomena; or the account on closer examination seems to have no explanatory power. An explanation of the latter from the literature is given below:

> Metaphysical propositions [such as the ones Wittgenstein opposes] seem to be assertions of the greatest moment, formulating the very essence of things. At the same time, the impossibility of things being otherwise opens the way to the recurrent criticism that metaphysical statements make application of the key terms redundant and the assertions themselves empty.
>
> Baker and Morris 2006, p. 98

By this argument, a statement that makes a necessary claim about phenomena, e.g. “I must know I have pain” or “structure must follow strategy”, develops a redundancy in one of the terms, e.g. in the terms “know” and “structure” in the above examples. Since it is impossible that things be otherwise, the terms do not contribute what they appear to. An analogous empirical statement might be “only earth can be found in earth’s orbit around the sun”. The language assimilates the earlier part of the sentence in the latter such that “earth’s orbit around the sun” is as sufficiently complete. Similarly, “I have pain” or “strategy” in the above example sentences would be sufficient in the language to convey the meaning. Wittgenstein aims to show that our language functions in particular ways for particular cases. Attempts at abstractions to ideal cases, or generalisations from a handful of examples run the risk of disconnection with the phenomena or caricaturing the subject matter. The process by which Wittgenstein brings about this realisation is the therapeutic aspect of his grammatical investigation. It diagnoses a misunderstanding; frames the root idea of the misunderstanding; and examines how that root idea relates to the phenomena under investigation.

The second way in which Wittgenstein uses the types of questions as stated above is in the process of doing “justice” to the phenomena under investigation. By “justice”

Wittgenstein means a perspicuous representation of the manifold aspects of the phenomena is gained. He wants the interlocutor to become attentive to typically neglected aspects of the phenomena; to undertake an actual description of the actual practice of the language; and to begin to appreciate differences and similarities for the way in which the language is used in different contexts. This is the realisation of the pedagogical aspect of Wittgenstein's grammatical investigation. It aims at getting the reader to engage with the language-in-use, to see the value in the descriptive exercise of understanding the language as it is practiced.

It is important to grasp that Wittgenstein can ask the same types of questions in different circumstances, towards either achieving the therapeutic objective or the pedagogical one. As such, Wittgenstein's method does not represent a mechanistic prescription. It is an engaged practice that brings about a new style of thinking; a new appreciation for the language. It is still possible that the interlocutor might speak about "my pain", but such a person would now understand that they are not explaining an inner psychological state, but engaging in a language practice wherein the sentence has a specific function. The interlocutor is no longer moved to defend any of the different philosophical positions that represented ideological stalemates for the discipline. Such a person now understands that there would be language-games for which a particular type of philosophical position might have currency (for example, it might be useful to be pragmatic in determining some government policies) not because they are definitive models for any real account of the world, but because they have a function in the language.

A high-level representative schematic is given in the diagram below.

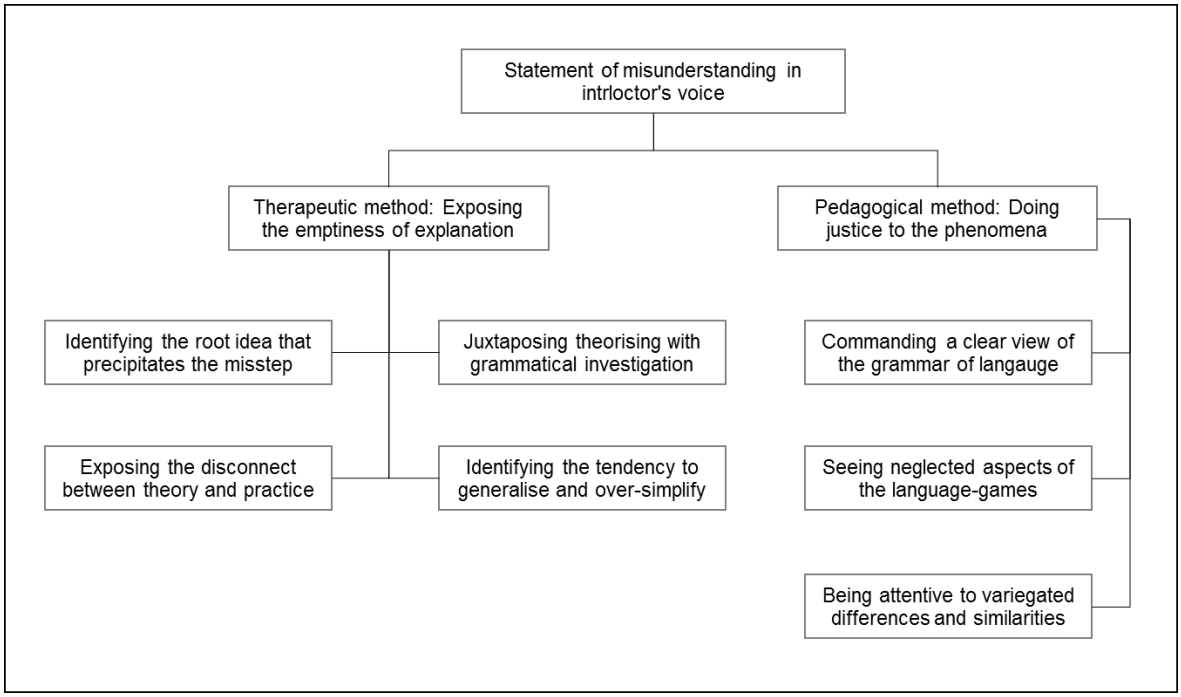


Figure 1: Schematic high level overview of Wittgenstein's method from Philosophical Investigation

The value of Wittgenstein's method is that it allows for a method of incorporating metaphysical plurality into practices of social inquiry such as strategic management. The intent of Wittgenstein's philosophy is not to offer an alternative theory, but to allow for the appropriate use of conceptual comparisons. Wittgenstein's goal is conceptual clarity based on a more nuanced exploration of our experiences. He ensures rigour by insisting that appropriate objects of comparison should capture the important details and intricacies of phenomena they seek to describe, not misleadingly simplify concepts that require clarification through abstraction to idealised concepts. The necessity of metaphysics is thus a dangerous illusion because it provides for the extension of conceptual generalisations far beyond their justified applicability. Wittgenstein's solution is a method of investigation that attributes any understanding or theoretical framework not to the world at large, but to the social context in which the framework is embedded. It is of context itself that a perspicuous understanding is gained. It is this understanding that is required to determine how effective different approaches would be in different circumstances. Human beings are prone to metaphysical biases and reach for the same conceptual tools in making sense of the world around us. In this way, the philosopher takes the first step from whence there is no easy retreat. Wittgenstein wants to arrest the

temptation of asking certain types of questions that lead down these paths. It is for this task that his method is well suited. Rather than specific theoretical frameworks, Wittgenstein's method makes us attune to multiple objects of comparison: different perspectives, each of which provides different insights and accounts of the phenomena. Once this is understood, certain questions dissolve into irrelevance. Wittgenstein's method differs fundamentally in form from a method of theoretical construction in that it aims at clarification by drawing attention to the purpose of the theoretical constructs that we develop to manage our experiences.

The following section provides an explanation of Wittgenstein's use of his method in both the therapeutic and pedagogical aspects. In doing so, the section aims to explain why Wittgenstein employs the approaches he does; highlights Wittgenstein's objectives in using these arguments and illustrates with examples from *Philosophical Investigations*. Since none of these arguments are used in isolation, the section also showcases how he expands his arguments, blending the various approaches towards getting the reader to examine how the misunderstandings have occurred, thus getting a clear picture of the pitfalls in the mode of thinking exercised; and secondly, shows how a clearer understanding, such as the one the reader seeks, can be obtained through careful attention to the actual practices under investigation.

2.3.3. The application of Wittgenstein's method in *Philosophical Investigations*

Wittgenstein's entire method runs contrary to what is expected of a philosophical argument. The reason is that he perceives the root of the problem to lie with the approach of theorising in philosophy and has developed an alternative method based on attention to the way language functions in practice which he calls his grammatical investigation and it is this method he applies in *Investigations*.

> We must do away with all explanation, and description alone must take its place. And this description gets its light, that is to say its purpose, from the philosophical problems. These are, of course, not empirical problems; they are solved, rather, by looking into the workings of our language, and that in such a way as to make us recognise those workings; in despite of an urge to misunderstand them. The problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known.

Wittgenstein 1953, p. 45e

The application of the method in *Investigations* serves two functions. The first is that it contrasts with philosophical theories allowing Wittgenstein to showcase the benefits of the method in eliminating philosophical confusions. The second function is that it apprentices the reader in the new method. *Philosophical Investigations* in this regard can be viewed as a book of case studies for the application of a grammatical investigation. It is a series of examples in which some of the most intractable problems in philosophy are addressed by Wittgenstein using his method of grammatical investigation.

It is also not immediately obvious why Wittgenstein selects the specific arguments he makes in *Philosophical Investigations*. One explanation is that Wittgenstein is militating against the doctrines of philosophy that run contrary to the style of philosophy that he wishes for the reader to become attentive to, and against the style of philosophy that supports theorising. It is Wittgenstein's task to discredit the deeply held assumptions working against a reader focusing on the actual functioning of the language. These would include any theoretical foundations that ascribe meaning based on an alternative framework. The most frequent alternatives in philosophy are in the areas of epistemology, logic and psychology (the aspect related to mental processes). Wittgenstein's later philosophical arguments differ from the types of arguments that preceded them in that they seek to attack, not a particular theory, but a whole style of thinking. Wittgenstein was not seeking to contribute to the critical arguments in philosophy, but to question the commonly agreed premise within which the theoretical arguments were constructed. In the philosophy of language, Wittgenstein rejects the commonly held assumption that words are able to represent the world by virtue of their connection to reality (The Picture Theory in *Tractatus* is based on this assumption). Instead he proposes that words are able to represent by virtue of their use in language-games within communities. In the philosophy of logic, a key question is related to what propositions of logic actually describe? Frege's logic extended the basic propositions of Aristotelian logic wherein a proposition described relationships between abstract entities. In Wittgenstein's later philosophy, propositions of logic are not descriptions of anything. They are necessary truths that form part of the internal structure of our language-games. In metaphysics, Wittgenstein questioned the notion that metaphysical propositions were descriptions

of anything, instead arguing that they are norms of representation and rules for the grammar of our language-games. In epistemology, a key argument concerned how our subjective experiences were grounds for knowledge. Wittgenstein questioned the notion that our subjective experiences were assertions of knowledge, instead ascribing them to conditions for action within the language-games of communities.

Wittgenstein's attack is deliberately foundational, as he explains below:

> Getting hold of the difficulty deep down is what is hard. Because if it is grasped near the surface it simply remains the difficulty it was. It has to be pulled out by the roots; and that involves our beginning to think about these things in a new way… once the new way of thinking has been established, the old problems vanish.
>
> Wittgenstein 1980a, p. 48

The application of his method is a co-ordinated application of the various approaches towards overthrowing established ways of thinking. It should be clear that the approaches listed here are not used in isolation. Wittgenstein does not first discuss the root idea and then go on to highlight generalisations or disconnects between theory and phenomena. Instead, he integrates the various approaches, questions and expositions depending on the nature of the problem he is investigating. Two of Wittgenstein's arguments from *Investigations* are used to demonstrate the application of his grammatical style of philosophical investigation.

The picture theory is one of the achievements of *Tractatus*. It demonstrates how language represents the state of affairs of our reality. This correspondence between reality and propositions gives language its meaning. Wittgenstein's theory is not the only one that uses the idea of correspondence to explain meaning in language. Many examples exist, including the works of Frege and Russell, of the development of a theory of language from the specific case of naming or ostensive definition (using an exemplar to explain a word). In making these arguments, it would be futile for Wittgenstein to pick at every theoretical detail, one philosopher at a time. He had initially considered publishing *Philosophical Investigations* side by side with his earlier work, *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*. His aim was to juxtapose and contrast the mistakes of his earlier works with his new method. However, he saw that his argument had a broader target and needed a different method. This is part of

Wittgenstein's rationale for starting the book with a quote from St. Augustine. Wittgenstein follows the quote with the following comment:

> These words it seems to me, give us a particular picture of the essence of human language. It is this: the individual words in language name objects – sentences are combinations of such names. In this picture of language, we find the roots of the following idea: Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 2e

It can be seen from this comment that Wittgenstein's target is the theoretical approach that explains words by virtue of their standing for something. The Augustine passage gives him the ability to trace back to an initial state of thinking or theorizing about language in a particular way, and show the broad appeal of the style of philosophy he aims to combat (McGinn 1997):

> The beauty of the passage from Augustine is that it presents us with the first, primitive impulse to theorise about language, to try and explain or model how it functions. It therefore allows Wittgenstein to focus that much more clearly both on its origins in the forms of our language and on the contrast between this move towards abstraction and explanation, and his own attempt to get us to look at language when it is functioning within the everyday, practical lives of speakers.
>
> McGinn 1997, p. 37

Using Augustine, Wittgenstein attempts to surface the original misconceptions and liberate the thinker from the grasp of that particular philosophical paradox. By tacking the root of the idea, Wittgenstein avoids the specific association with one set of philosophers, and can focus more clearly on the language in use. Another benefit is that it loosens the notion in the mind of the reader that Wittgenstein is himself putting forward an alternative theory of language or meaning. Wittgenstein is very explicit about not aiming to do this, yet he realised that the way of thinking was so dominant in philosophy that his readers (and indeed his students) would want to formulate his arguments into a theory. By engaging a primitive conceptualisation of an idea, Wittgenstein pulls the reader out of the contemporary context of theoretical positions momentarily, forcing an investigation into the way in which theoretical explanations develop, and the various ways in which they stray from a description of the actual language in use. In the shopkeeper language-game in section 1 of *Investigations*,

Wittgenstein imagines a language that functions purely on the basis of signs. In this way Wittgenstein's language-game is similar to Augustine's picture of language. However, what Wittgenstein is able to show is the full context of the language as its practitioners use it. In Wittgenstein's language-game the signs prompt a series of actions on the part of the shopkeeper. The language functions to elicit actions. There is no internal language of the practitioners, and there is no inclination to ponder the meaning of words like "red" or "apple". By eliminating these aspects, Wittgenstein is beginning to call into question their necessity or fundamental status within the explanatory theory. Wittgenstein also critiques Augustine's tendency towards generalisation. This is evident from the beginning where, immediately after identifying the root idea in Augustine's passage he writes the following:

> Augustine does not speak of there being any differences between kinds of words. If you describe the learning of language in this way you are, I believe, thinking primarily of nouns like "table", "chair", "bread", and of people's names, and only secondarily of the names of certain actions and properties; and of the remaining kinds of words as something that will take care of itself.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 2e

Wittgenstein wants to get the reader to see that there is nothing in the nature of the phenomenon itself that leads to the tendency to generalise. Instead, the tendency comes from a preoccupation with the methods of science:

> Our craving for generality has another main source: our preoccupation with the method of science… philosophers constantly see the method of science before their eyes, and are irresistibly tempted to ask and answer questions in the way science does. This tendency is the real source of metaphysics, and leads the philosopher into complete darkness.
>
> Wittgenstein 1958, p. 17-18

The methods of science are very well suited to the questions science asks and answers, but ill-suited to philosophy. This is because the problems of philosophy are resolved through description rather than explanation. The cure for philosophical problems is understanding:

> It is, rather, of the essence of our investigation that we do not seek to learn anything new by it. We want to understand something that is already in plain sight.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 36e

Wittgenstein's method of exposing generalisation is thus aimed at getting the reader to end one type of questioning, the search for explanations, in order to embark successfully on a different type of questioning, the search for understanding, which is rooted in a detailed examination of the phenomena under investigation, a greater attention to the functions of language. Wittgenstein's methods and arguments are mutually reinforcing. In order to get his readers to be attentive to the detailed description of phenomena, he needs to highlight the shortcomings of the generalisations that are necessary in the process of abstracting towards a theoretical explanation. The therapeutic function of his method is therefore allied to his pedagogical method in which he brings his reader around to a grammatical method of investigation. This is evident in the way Wittgenstein uses examples as a key feature of his philosophical method. Within the first 10 sections of *Investigations*, Wittgenstein deploys two different language-games to highlight different modes of functioning languages. Examples are a very powerful tool in argumentation and are used as such by philosophers in their development of theories. Indeed, the quote Wittgenstein uses from St. Augustine is such an example. But Wittgenstein uses examples differently. His aim is not to abstract to a general rule from a specific example. Instead, he uses examples to test assumptions, and showcase different aspects of language under investigation. This was important to Wittgenstein's concept of therapy as part of the purpose of philosophy. His method used examples specifically targeted at a misunderstanding to bring about a change in a person. The change was to put them at peace with the way in which the phenomenon that troubled them actually functions. His new method is explained in *Investigations* between sections 89 and 133. Section 133 sums up the key aspects of the method as follows:

> 133. It is not our aim to refine or complete the system of rules for the use of our words in unheard-of ways.
>
> For the clarity that we are aiming at is indeed complete clarity. But this simply means that the philosophical problems should completely disappear.

> The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to.—The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring itself in question.—Instead, we now demonstrate a method, by examples; and the series of examples can be broken off.—Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), not a single problem.
>
> There is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 51e

Section 133 contains, in neat summary, the most critical aspects of the method he was now advocating. In the case of the discussion on Augustine's picture of language, but also throughout *Investigations*, Wittgenstein engages the interlocutor and the reader with examples of different degrees of intricacy and detail, to draw attention to the contrast between various functions of language, and often to show up the narrow way in which the theoretical explanation has framed the concept, neglecting important details in the process.

The above analysis gives an account of Wittgenstein's broad, multifaceted attack on Augustine's picture of the way language functions. This style of argument is evident throughout *Investigations* and Wittgenstein even returns to similar ideas in other arguments. He is also able to use the Augustine example to launch arguments in other areas of philosophy such as in the philosophy of mind. The arguments in Augustine's example, like those of many other theories of prominent philosophers, is based on the notion of a psychological language. The notion of a psychological language has two critical features. The first is that it assumes an innate mental language capability. Human beings with a psychological language already possess a linguistic capability, like a universal template for any language to be based off. The second feature is that the psychological language human beings possess, is a fully functional inner private language. This inner language is the language of their thoughts which they can translate into common language for the purpose of communicating those thoughts. In Augustine's *Confessions*, the young Augustine seems to possess an inner language capability and inner thoughts which he learns to convey via communicative language. The idea of a psychological language is incompatible with Wittgenstein's grammatical language, but is present in some of the most influential contemporary theories of the day such as Descartes philosophy,

James in *The Principles of Psychology*, phenomenalism and classical empiricism (McGinn 1997; Kenny 2007). As Descartes demonstrates, a private language would allow a single individual to command language independent of any social function, which run contrary to Wittgenstein's account of the way language acquires meaning. The private language argument (roughly sections 243 to 351 of *Investigations*) is Wittgenstein's refutation of the notion of a psychological language.

In the private language argument, Wittgenstein is again deploying a variety of grammatical approaches to unseat the idea of a psychological language and bring the interlocutor around to being attentive to the grammar of language and of psychology. Wittgenstein directs the reader to carefully study phrases like "He is in pain". When examined, we find there is no criteria for validation of an inner language:

> 353. Asking whether and how a proposition can be verified is only a particular way of asking "How d'you mean?" The answer is a contribution to the grammar of the proposition.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 112e

If the reader were to use introspection to communicate, there would be no way of connecting the inner thing with an external language (assuming the external language had a use for the word). A Cartesian argument requires that the thinker identifies an inner sensation or concept, provides signs for these inner sensations or concepts such that a receiver may process the signs which will then trigger the right sensations or concepts in the mind of the receiver. Wittgenstein's objection is that the thinker cannot take the first step.

> 293… Suppose everyone had a box with something in it: we call it a "beetle". No one can look into anyone else's box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by looking at his beetle. Here it would be quite possible for everyone to have something different in his box. One might even imagine such a thing constantly changing. But suppose the word "beetle" had a use in these people's language? – If so it would not be used as the name of a thing. The thing in the box has no place in the language-game at all… That is to say: if we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of "object and designation" the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 100e

Wittgenstein juxtaposes the ritual of carrying around a private beetle, and the public language-game which “cancels out” whatever is in the box. Introspection cannot create or contribute to public language. The practice of our language-games is sufficient to explain the meaning of words. Inner realms are both irrelevant and unnecessary.

Wittgenstein uses a number of other arguments including the careful examination of phrases such as “I’m in pain” and the investigation of a language-game in which an individual attempts to give a sign, “S”, sense in a private language. Wittgenstein’s arguments urge an understanding of human beings as socially contextual. Where we search for the meaning of our language outside of the social practices of our language-games, we invite a host of potential missteps. For Wittgenstein, Descartes, and others who ascribe to a psychological language, missteps happen before the argument is even begun, in the selection of the unit of significance as the individual. Once this is clarified, further engagement with the argument is unnecessary. Wittgenstein’s method is to expose the problems the private language has in fixing and conveying meaning, and juxtapose that with the way in which the grammar of language, once well understood, eliminates the problems that prompted the need to theorise about private languages.

2.4. The third Wittgenstein

Wittgenstein’s work post *Philosophical Investigations* covers a broad range of topics from the philosophy of psychology to ontology. All these works are posthumous and are extracts from his notes and journals. They include *Zettel* (1967); *On Certainty* (1969); *Remarks on Color* (1977); *Culture and Value* (1980a); *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology Vol I & II* (1980b); *Philosophical Occasions 1912-1951* (1993). This list excludes his notebooks as well as his posthumously published works that were written before *Philosophical Investigations* such as *Philosophical Grammar* (1969).

It is the opinion of some that the writings of Wittgenstein after *Philosophical Investigations* (from about 1946 up to his death in 1951) constitute a third phase; a

distinct period in his writing, style and subject matter. Most of the ammunition for this point of view is derived from *On Certainty*:

> This notebook, which was only published in 1969, is now considered to be one of Wittgenstein's most profound creations. It was Wittgenstein's last work; he wrote the final seven entries only two days before his death on April 29th, 1951. Though clearly unfinished, it represents a new stage in his thinking. In opposition to the Cartesian form of foundationalism, Wittgenstein develops a unique alternative, different from anything explicitly argued for in the *Investigations*… Wittgenstein describes a form of foundationalism that is non-psychological. It is also non-propositional
>
> Stroll 2000, p. 139

Wittgenstein's transition in *On Certainty* is not as abrupt as from *Tractatus* to *Philosophical Investigations*. Instead, he is extending the reach of his method to ontology:

> 61. …A meaning of a word is a kind of employment of it. For it is what we learn when the word is incorporated into our language
>
> […]
>
> 82. What counts as an adequate test of a statement belongs to logic. It belongs to the description of the language-game.
>
> 83. The truth of certain empirical propositions belongs to our frame of reference
>
> […]
>
> 105. All testing, all confirmation and disconfirmation of a hypothesis takes place already within a system… The system is not so much a point of departure, as the element in which arguments have their life
>
> […]
>
> 141. When we first begin to believe anything, what we believe is not a single proposition, it is a whole system of propositions
>
> […]
>
> 196. Sure evidence is what we *accept* as sure, it is evidence that we go by in acting surely, acting without doubt
>
> […]

> 204. The end is not certain propositions' striking us immediately as true, i.e. it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our *acting*, which lies at the bottom of the language-game.
>
> Wittgenstein 1969, p. 10e-28e

Wittgenstein's argument is that in order to act, we have to wrap some proposition, which might not satisfy the crystalline certainty of a true proposition, into the fabric of our societal construct. These would include propositions like "all human beings die". Our language-games depend on empirical realities and societal norms, bound together to enable the activities that are associated with the language-game.

> 341. The *questions* that we raise and our *doubts* depend on the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which those turn
>
> […]
>
> 343. We *can't* investigate everything, and for that reason we are forced to rest content with assumption. If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put.
>
> Wittgenstein 1969, p. 44e

Such hinges – propositional assumptions embedded in daily life – provide the certainty for continued action. They imbue the world with a degree of certainty (Wittgenstein uses the term "stand fast").

The value of Wittgenstein's argument is that it prevents sceptical questioning: 'The community provides a background whose existence one cannot reject, revise or sensible doubt. Yet this is just what the sceptic is trying to do. But even the [linguistic] form of the sceptic's challenge… presupposes the existence of the community and its linguistic practices' (Stroll 2000, p. 141). This unique solution, which is widely accepted, puts ontology on a firm foundation.

The other works are unique collections of Wittgenstein's notes: *Zettel* is a collection of fragments of comments. *Culture and Value* is a collection of personal notes on various topics including religion and ethics. *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology* is the final stage of the development of Wittgenstein's writings on the philosophy of psychology. *Philosophical Occasions* is a collection of letters, lectures and notes. While their topics are not of significance for this study, they contain unique contributions to their various subject matters.

2.5. Summary and conclusion

This section has served to develop an overview of Wittgenstein's philosophy, especially his later philosophy as outlined in *Philosophical Investigations*. For this task it was necessary to trace Wittgenstein's philosophical development and put his philosophy into the right historical context. This provides a backdrop for the development of *Philosophical Investigations*.

The purpose of the section was to introduce the aspects of Wittgenstein's later philosophy and grammatical approach that would be instrumental in the investigation into strategic management as a discipline in the following chapters. It is helpful to understand Wittgenstein's background in order to gain an appreciation of the experiences and influences that motivated his unique approach to philosophy. This chapter gave a brief biography, a summary of his philosophical contemporaries, and an overview of the key influencers that shaped his view of philosophy.

Wittgenstein's attitude to science (more specifically to theorising) and ethics are important to the arguments of this thesis. They represent unique perspectives on both subjects. Wittgenstein was an aeronautics doctorate student at the University of Manchester before turning to philosophy. As such, his reputation for being anti-science needs some attention. In this section, it has been argued that Wittgenstein's position on science is a result of the key influences of Hertz and Boltzmann. Both scientists had very pragmatic approaches to what should count as a theory in science. Hertz was especially explicit in his *Principles of Mechanics*, showing how a philosophy of science can serve to clarify the theories of science. Wittgenstein broadens these influences into a clear distinction between the task of science and that of philosophy. In doing this, Wittgenstein is not driven by an irrational bias against scientific inquiry. Instead, he is responding to the prevailing stalemate of positions in philosophy at the time. Wittgenstein believed that the problem had occurred because of the tendency to theorise in philosophy. In a sense he saw himself as duty bound to attempt to resolve the problem. Wittgenstein's ethics were influenced by Weininger, and required each person to do battle with their biases and commit themselves to the contribution that they make to society.

The method Wittgenstein uses in *Philosophical Investigations* is crucial to the method of this thesis, since one of the key objectives of the thesis is to replicate a similar critique towards the prevailing theories of the strategic management discipline. This chapter outlined Wittgenstein's task in *Philosophical Investigations*, explained the nature of Wittgenstein's grammatical investigation and analysed his approach in deploying the method in *Investigations*. The chapter is not meant to be a summary of the arguments of *Philosophical Investigations* themselves since it is Wittgenstein's method that is most important for this thesis. For completeness, the chapter briefly considered Wittgenstein's works after *Investigations* and his lasting impact on philosophy.

By explaining Wittgenstein's philosophical method, this section sets up the rest of the thesis, which focuses on applying these investigative methods towards delivering on the arguments of the thesis as stated in the previous chapter.

Chapter 3: The applicability of Wittgenstein's grammatical approach to the strategic management discipline

This thesis makes arguments based on the later philosophy of Wittgenstein, specifically based on his philosophy of language as given in *Philosophical Investigations*. Since Wittgenstein's target in his writings was a critique of certain aspects of the discipline of philosophy, it is necessary to provide the rationale for the applicability of his concept of language to organisations and to point to the aspects of organisations and the strategic management discipline that are compatible with Wittgenstein's approach to philosophical inquiry. This section attends to this task in three stages. Firstly, it investigates the state of strategic management theories in terms of their applicability for Wittgenstein's grammatical method. The question here is if the type of problems faced by the discipline, fit the type of method employed by Wittgenstein. That fit can be established in this case by showing that a similar sort of theoretical stalemate, comparable to the situation of philosophy Wittgenstein was addressing, exists in strategic management. Secondly, since Wittgenstein's philosophy is concerned with the phenomena of language and language-games, it would be necessary to show that organisations can be thought of as language-games, following the same rule based functionality that describes language. Finally, the section would need to make the case that the application of Wittgenstein's grammatical perspective in strategic management would provide a resolution to the problems of the discipline.

3.1. The state of theorising in strategic management

3.1.1. The theoretical perspectives of strategic management

Wittgenstein's approach to philosophy was developed to address the stalemate of incompatible positions that existed in philosophy: Multiple perspectives, each with their own merit, but incomplete and mutually irreconcilable. One clear rationale for the application of Wittgenstein's philosophical method to strategic management would be the presence of a similar situation with regard to the state of theorising in strategic management. A survey of the theories of strategic management

immediately runs headlong into the question of how to structure the categorisation. There are a number of approaches in the literature (Ansoff 1987; Farjoun 2002; Prince 2004), but one of the most comprehensive surveys is Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel's *Strategy Safari* (1998). In the study they conduct what they call a "field review" which is meant to classify not just contemporary approaches but also account for more traditional (even if less popular) approaches. The result is a classification of strategic management into ten schools (see Appendix A). These are not fully formed theories as such, and it is quite clear from the authors that the schools are each narrow and limited in their perspective. There is also no suggestion that the schools demarcate theoretical positions of academics or practitioners in the field. However, these schools are important in that they represent core ideas that are present in the theories of the discipline of strategic management. As such, during the course of this work, the ten schools of strategic management from *Strategy Safari* are drawn on to illustrate aspects of the theories under investigation.

In a similar manner to *Strategy Safari*, the theories of strategic management have been classified into two broad theory types: the deterministic and descriptive theories, which align with Prince (2004). A broad examination of the major perspectives in each of the theories is given in Appendix B. Prince's classification is based on the scientific paradigm within which the theory operates, and is therefore more aligned to the arguments of this thesis. Other categorisations of the field exist, such as Morgan's metaphors of management (Morgan 1999), Farjoun's mechanistic and organic perspectives (Farjoun 2002), etc. However, these types of categorisations tend to be broadly aligned in that they are founded on the same distinction of scientific rationales. This can be seen from the comparison below.

Prince 2004, p. 7	Farjoun 2002, p. 567	Morgan 1999, p. 8
Determinsitic modern paradigm - Cause and effect - Predictability - Control of environment - Mechanistc view of universe - Objective rationality	Mechanistic perspective - Stable and predictable environment - Synchronic, discrete time - Linear, deterministic and sequential view of causality - Newtonian mechanics logic	- Organisation as machine - Organisation as instrument of domination
Descriptive post modern paradigm - Probability - Interdeterminancy - Holism - Spontaneity and creativity - Complex adaptive systems	Organic perspective - Dynamic and uncertain environment - Diachoric, incessant time - Reciprocal causation, interaction and feedback	- Organisation as organism - Organisation as brain - Organisation as culture - Organisation as a political system - Organisation as psychic prison - Organisation as system of change and flux

Table 2: Comparison of Prince (2004), Farjoun (2002) and Morgan (1999)'s categorisations of strategic management

It is therefore possible to propose that theorising in strategic management follows two broad perspectives of science. The first is the more traditional deterministic paradigm that is characterised by a rational and objective world view, while the descriptive paradigm has a more adaptive, probabilistic characterisation. Prince summarises the differences in the following paragraph:

> The organisation instead of being viewed as a machine, is viewed as an organism. Therefore, rather than standing detached from its environment it is seen to be constantly interacting with it, jointly creating and influencing the future. Control of the organisation, rather than centralised and hierarchical with one clear vision, becomes instead, a self-managing entity.
>
> Prince 2004, p. 7

It should be clear that both perspectives are based on a scientific epistemology and both are applied in strategic management towards resolving the performance heterogeneity question. It is sometimes not clear that this is the case with the descriptive perspective, however, the following statement is an explicit indication of this character:

> Some years ago, the planning group at Shell surveyed 30 companies that had been in business for more than 75 years… Outcomes like these don't happen automatically. On the contrary, they depend on the ability of a company's senior managers to absorb what is going on in the business environment and to act on that

> information with appropriate business moves. In other words, they depend on learning. Or, more precisely, on institutional learning.
>
> De Geus 1988, p. 70

Whatever the differences between these perspectives, it can be seen that they agree on the ultimate objective of strategic management as it pertains to organisational results.

The below section gives a brief overview of these perspectives. The purpose of this is not to conduct a thorough survey of the discipline (see Appendix B for a broader discussion of the strategic management discipline). Here the task is to sketch the critical conceptual commitments that are the driving forces behind the fragmentation of strategic management theory.

3.1.1.1. The deterministic perspectives

In the deterministic perspective, the influence of economic theory has yielded three different theories of strategic management (Teece, Pisano and Shuen 1997): the industry based view, the resource based view, and dynamic strategic management based respectively on Industrial Organisation (IO) economics, Chamberlinian economics and Schumpeterian economics. Industrial Organisation economics was developed for policy making and government regulations. 'By focusing on the structural characteristics of industries, policy makers could anticipate those industries where firm returns will be greater than a social optimal fully competitive level' (Barney 1986, p. 792). Porter's generic strategies and five forces are based on IO by effectively reversing the perspective of the theory. Where IO was developed to help regulators ensure a healthy competitive environment, Porter uses it to help firms select positions in the competitive landscape where they can protect a competitive asymmetry.

> In their attempt to use IO thinking to develop a normative theory of competitive strategy, strategy theorists have turned the original policy objectives of this model upside down. For instead of seeking to assist policy makers in reducing returns of the firm to a fully competitive level, strategy theorists have sought to develop models to assist firms in obtaining greater than normal economic returns on their business

> investments… Firms seeking to obtain high returns on their strategic investments should focus on creating and / or modifying the structural characteristics of their industry to favour high returns.
>
> Barney 1986, p. 792

Left to its own devices, an industry's pressures force equilibrium and perfect competition. But firms can take action to ensure a sustainable competitive advantage and obtain higher economic returns by understanding the nature of the competitive forces in the industries they operate or are considering operating in, and modifying the structure characteristics of these pressures in their favour (Porter 1980). This approach became the dominant approach to strategic management through 1980–1990. It is referred to as the industry-based view or market-based view of strategy, because the critical factor for defining business strategy is the relationship between the organisation and the industry.

Chamberlinian economics, like IO, seeks to explain market competitiveness over time. However, Chamberlinian economics starts by examining monopolistic idiosyncrasies in individual firms and how these factor in the development of an optimally competitive environment. An example of such idiosyncrasies would be that spectators can only watch a sports superstar by buying a ticket to a match where their team is playing. That unique property provides the firm (in this case the sports team) with a monopoly in the sense that there is no alternative channel to watch that player. However, Chamberlinian economics also shows that with greater competition, the substitutive value of other firm's assets reduces the monopoly power of each individual firm. Using the sports analogy above, it is possible to watch equally good players on many other teams.

> Because firms in an industry or group typically have unique, but overlapping, resources and capabilities, competition within an industry has many of the characteristics of perfect competition… as well as many of the characteristics of a monopoly. Chamberlin called this type of competition monopolistic competition. Chamberlin was able to show that industries characterised by monopolistic competition also will be characterised by competitive equilibria… some firms in these industries can obtain sustained periods of superior financial performance by exploiting their unique assets and capabilities.
>
> Barney 1986, p. 793

The resource based theory of strategic management is rooted in Chamberlinian economics. Resource is a generic term for financial, human, intangible, physical, organisational or technological factors or capabilities (Thomas, Pollock and Gorman 1999). Resources are considered the building blocks of the firm's growth and competitive success. Resources are of strategic importance where they are valuable, such that a customer is willing to pay a premium for the factor's output; imperfectly imitable, such that the resource cannot easily be copied by a competitor, thus eroding the resource value; rare, thus increasing the value because of limited availability; and exploited by the organisation for economic rents (Oliver 1997). These characteristics of resources are commonly referred to as the VIRO framework (*V*aluable, imperfectly *I*mitable, *R*are, and exploitable by the *O*rganisation).

The most recent of these theories is based on the dynamism of competition in modern business environments (McGrath 2013). This paradigm is finding an anchor in Schumpeterian economics. Schumpeter's focus was on the role of innovation and entrepreneurship in fuelling creative destruction, his term for the revolutionary process that can be triggered by innovation, which destroys an established model and replaces it with a new, arguably better system. A relatively good example of this is the impact of the Apple iPhone on the smartphone, and the communication industry at large. Given the rapid pace of technological innovation and the competition between mega-technology companies like Google, Apple, Microsoft, Facebook etc., much of modern strategic management thinking is concerned with capturing value in this new, rapidly changing business environment.

3.1.1.2. The descriptive perspectives

The descriptive perspective is characterised by more fragmentation, as is borne out by Mintzberg's schools. Some of the most influential of these theories are the culture school which is arguably the dominant contemporary theory; and the learning organisation movement, which is one of the original theories within this perspective of strategic management. From the early 1970's until its maturity in the early 1990's the learning organisation began the reorientation of organisations towards the social constructs that they were. In the Royal Dutch Shell company, a new form of planning developed using learning principles that would come to be known as Scenario

Planning (De Geus 1991; Wilkinson and Kupers 2013). The success of Scenario Planning in helping Shell weather the oil crisis made it a force to be taken seriously. Organisational learning is associated with Mintzberg's concept of emergent strategy (Mintzberg and McHugh 1985). Emergent strategy refers to strategies that are formalised in retrospect rather than being deliberately pursued. It allows for factors other than the rational choices contained in the strategic planning process to influence the strategic determination of the firm. In organisational learning, tacit knowledge required for success might be outside the strategy process, but embedded in the lifelong learning practices of individuals and teams within the organisation.

The dominant descriptive theory of strategic management is the idea of organisational culture as a source of competitive advantage (Marcoulides and Heck 1993; Franklin 2000). One of the influential works that contributed to this movement was Peters and Waterman's *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best Run Companies* (1982). In it, they established through analysis of a number of companies, eight practices that seemed to consistently contribute to success. Organisations ignore these "soft factors" at their peril. The cultural school has unlocked a wave of interest in the more emergent aspects of strategy. This much is acknowledged in the following passage by Franklin (2000):

> In recent years, especially since the publication of In Search of Excellence (Peters and Waterman 1982), attention has shifted to the importance of "soft systems" in the development and implementation of strategy. This has led to an emerging school of thinking which prioritises leadership over management… which emphasises the importance of rhetoric and identity over structure and authority… and at one extreme, takes an ideological position which encourages "revolution" and "strategy innovation" as the impetus for growth.
>
> (Franklin 2000, p. 129)

The tenets of the cultural school are summarised, based on Mintzberg et al. (1998):

- Strategy formation is a process based on shared beliefs and understanding between interacting members of the organisation.
- Individuals are enculturated into organisational beliefs and norms, mostly through tacit feedback. As such, much of strategy is unspoken, unconscious competence.

- Strategy is thus best understood as perspective, through consideration of patterns of collective intentionality.
- Culture is ideological and typically encourages strategic inertia.

Culture is to the dynamic, descriptive perspective of strategic management what resources are to the rational, deterministic perspective of strategic management. Both concepts have proven durable due to their malleability. All strategic factors can be cast as resources; similarly, all strategically significant action can be traced back to culture. As such they are able to cast the type of net that strategic management theory seeks.

3.1.2. The stalemate of strategic management theoretical perspectives

That the strategic management theoretical landscape is fragmented is in itself not necessarily a problem. Theories can work in concord such that the collective effect is a complete explanation of a discipline. This is not the case with strategic management. Instead, the next few pages highlight the incompleteness of each theoretical position in isolation, the epistemological incompatibility of the theories, the sense in which they represent irreconcilable positions and the intractability of the situation for practitioners and academics alike.

Strategic management is a broad discipline. It includes the processes of planning and executing; the assessment of internal resources and external position; the cognitive and decision making processes; the role of leadership, culture and politics; different constructs of organisational systems including organic and mechanistic systems; the complexity and dynamic nature of organisations; the different levels of organisational strategy and the role of management; issues of control, measurement and incentives; issues of ethics and governance; the vision and mission that propels the organisation; learning and the role of information / knowledge; entrepreneurship and the role of innovation.

Remarkably, this is still an incomplete summary (Ma 2000). No one theory does justice to the breath of the discipline. Strategic management theories are necessarily parsimonious, focusing on specific organisational attributes. This is after all what Mintzberg et al. take advantage of in the formulation of their schools of strategic

management (Mintzberg et al. 1998). In this respect, the performance of an organisation can be due to the skill of its leadership (Taylor 1967); the position it occupies in the industry (Porter 1979); its access to scarce, immutable resources (Wernerfelt 1984); its core set of capabilities (Prahalad and Hamel 1990); its cultivation of dynamic capabilities (Teece, Pisano and Shuen 1997); its ability to leverage information technology (Porter and Millar 1985); its learning culture (Senge 1990); the practices of its managers (Whittington 1996), etc.

The above list is by no means complete. There is a long list of attributes associated with organisational performance including culture, power, politics, bureaucracy, nationality, complex adaptive systems, story-telling, empathy, evolution, innovation, compatibility or partnerships, industry revolution, change management, efficiency etc. The status of each strategic management theory is that each purports to explain organisational performance heterogeneity while focusing on specific organisational attributes and de-emphasising others. While there are clearly situations were some strategic management theories are not applicable, none of the theories explicitly defines its boundaries. A practitioner who simply followed the mechanics of the theory could, for example, use the industry based view in a monopoly organisation; the learning organisation principle in a polar expedition race, etc. The point is not that this cannot or should not be done, but that it is very plausible that an alternative method would yield better results in these situations.

The situation is such that if a practitioner had to choose between two strategic management theories based on attribute A and B of the organisation respectively, the choice of the most correct theory would depend on the strategic importance of the different attributes in the long run. But on what basis does the practitioner make this evaluation? Each theoretical position assumes that its attribute is the most critical; the industry based view assumes that the industry is the most significant strategic factor; likewise, the learning organisation focuses on learning as the vehicle of strategic transformation. The situation poses an intractable dilemma which can be brought into focus using the following analogy: In order to achieve superior performance, a strategic management practitioner needs to develop a strategy. Strategic management theories provide the recipe for the strategy, but there are many cookbooks. Now a modern library of cookbooks would have titles such as *How to cook everything vegetarian*; *The French kitchen cookbook*; *Pure dessert,* etc. In

this way they aid the chef in determining where the cookbook would be most useful. Strategic management theories are different. If they were books, they would be titles such as *Taking the time to cook right*; *Dishes and the secret to effective cooking*; *Cooking for the modern lifestyle,* etc. Each of these titles emphasise an approach rather than a focus area, and as such, could conceivably be effective for cooking of any sort. If a key criterion in strategic success is experience, where is the experience based view of strategy? Will picking a sub-optimal strategic approach lead to organisational failure? It depends. And what it depends on is completely opaque with anything but hindsight.

Is there a way for the various strategies to be used in combination? Not in any form that is given as part of the theory itself. It might be that practitioners find spaces in which different types of strategy practices co-exist. For example, it might be fashionable to have organisational culture engagements, which run parallel to the deterministic strategy of the firm. However, this type of co-existing is ultimately not what is required. Any organisation, given sufficient resources, can keep up a slew of approaches, but such demand-side integration is not ideal. The integration that is required is supply-side based, wherein the theories themselves point to their niche in the strategy and provide anchor points for other theories to aggregate their results, thus amplifying the theoretical base. Alternatively, theories could provide an indication of applicability such that practitioners gain a measure for the degree of risk they are taking and can potentially compare this to alternatives. Another solution would be the availability of a universal theoretical test which a practitioner could apply and compare results before committing to the application of a specific strategic management theory. None of these risk mitigating mechanisms exist. Practitioners are largely unsighted in selecting fundamentally incompatible and incomplete theoretical approaches. Before a practitioner has taken a single step, there is the significant possibility of failure.

This is the intractable position in which the discipline finds itself. It is a stalemate that the industry has learnt to live with. For some, the problem is no longer even visible. Strategies are complex, and there are so many real world situations that can decisively frame strategic outcomes. Surely in this environment any strategic approach would do as long as it gives the practitioner the flexibility to react in a timely manner? But if the content of all strategies cancel out, then surely nothing is

also just as good? This is not a satisfactory position for the discipline. Wittgenstein's method, as has been demonstrated above, was developed to combat such intractable positions. The situation in strategic management so tightly mirrors that of Wittgenstein's era of philosophy, that the following comment from Franklin closely mirrors Wittgenstein:

> A second concern arises from the tendency of human beings to want to generalise from the particular, to make claims that something has general applicability; top adopt someone else's successful practices without regard to the real possibility that the contexts and contingencies of their success are not transferable... These philosophical matters have real consequences. Unless writers and managers begin to attend to some of the philosophical issues relating to the discovery, development and focused application of knowledge, we will see "strategy" devalued in much the same way as the nature and scope of planning have been displaced and redefined.
>
> Franklin 1998, p. 314-315

As such, an application of Wittgenstein's method to the problems surfaced here could yield important insights for the discipline. The rest of the thesis explores this possibility.

3.2. The grammatical philosophy of strategic management

If Wittgenstein's philosophy is to work to address the philosophical stalemate of the discipline, it would require a new style of thinking on the part of the strategic management practitioners. This section provides an overview on the picture of strategic management that emerges from a Wittgensteinian style of thinking. In so doing. it provides an alternative perspective of the landscape of strategic management, and an object of comparison against which the theoretical perspectives of the discipline can be assessed.

Wittgenstein's concept of language encompassed not just the act of speech but the practices that associated speech with meaning. Wittgenstein was able to show that our concepts are circumscribed by language. The meaning we ascribe to words is dependent on their function within the context of societal practices (McGinn 1997). These functions mediated rules of normative behaviour. For Wittgenstein, to speak a

language is to be part of a community in which the language has a purpose. Wittgenstein called rules for normative behaviour *grammar*, and the practices of such communities' *language-games*. Wittgenstein was not restrictive about what constituted a language-game. He used it to show that language was embedded in the practices of its users and had meaning only within that context. In this regard, Wittgenstein's examples of language-games included the transaction between a shopkeeper and a customer; the working environment of a number of brick layers. In fact, he intends language-games to cover the wide range of almost unlimited human interactions:

> 23. But how many kinds of sentences are there?... this multiplicity is not something fixed, given one and for all; but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten… Here the term language-game is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life. Review the multiplicity of language-games in the following examples, and in others: Giving orders, and obeying them; describing the appearance of an object, or giving its measurements; constructing an object from a description (a drawing); reporting an event; speculating about an event; forming and testing a hypothesis; presenting the results of an experiment in tables and diagrams; making up a story, and reading it; play-acting; signing catches; guessing riddles; making a joke, telling it; solving a problem in practical arithmetic; translating from one language into another; asking; thanking; cursing; greeting; praying.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 11e-12e

In these few examples of types of language-games it is fairly easy to find that a number of practices typically conducted within organisations are listed: transactions like buying and selling, command and control, problem solving, reporting, presenting, etc. So the functions within organisations meet the criteria to be considered language-games. Anyone who has interacted with or been a part of a modern business organisation can attest to the unique, contextual *language* of that institution. New employees would need to have constantly explained the meaning of not just words and acronyms, but of organisational features, such as restricted parking areas, month-end reporting templates, etc. So different are the language-games from one organisation to another, that even when people move across

businesses in the same industry, they are as infants in a new world, dependent on others for the first few weeks of their induction.

> A context is not a mere physical environment of the utterance, but is the institutional and cultural background of the utterance. A context, so conceived, is “significant” in the sense that it is constituted by rules, procedures, norms, and the like... the use of a word is embedded in its situation... Wittgenstein's notion of use is, therefore the notion of context embedded linguistic behaviour.
>
> McDonough 1989, p. 7

An organisation is therefore a language, in the Wittgensteinian sense, and Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language is therefore applicable to the organisation. This has implications for strategic management which are explored below.

3.2.1. The societal context of organisational language-games

Organisations are a dynamic composition of interdependent language-games. In this sense, no organisation is an entity in itself. Take away the language-games one by one, and the organisation will dissipate with them. Since all language-games are purposeful, an organisation is a societally purposeful construct. Its language-games have meaning in the context of their societal function. The purpose of the organisation is its role in the language-game of society, and that role is delineated by an uncertain or redundancy of a function that is meaningful to society. Some societal functions delineate activities that play a transformative role, producing outcomes or developments in society. Much of our practice is so intended in that they perform critical tasks such as the movement of goods between places; the reorganisation of power hierarchies and methods by which decisions are made; the response to emergencies and prevention of accidents etc. And these functions have different forms in different societies.

It is the use of the function that constrains it and determines its form. Where these functions are well constrained, monolithic societal practices or concepts can be employed to fulfil the function. Structures of justice and power are typically thus construed, such as the system of courts which function as a single societal structure; the head of state; the military; etc. However, there are functions that are not

constrained in this way. A primitive one was the use of land to grow crops and rear animals. Decisions as to what to grow when; in what sequence; how to maximise land use, etc. all have an impact on the outcome. In practice, there are a variety of ways in which this function can be carried out representing a societal redundancy. Organisations coalesce around such redundancies or uncertainty and each organisation represents a specific possible solution or pattern of undertaking that informs a possibility in terms of the outcome of the function.

Organisations thus conceived represent the field of possible developments that is valuable to that society and inasmuch as each development is valuable, each organisation is of significance, but in a different way and because they share a common purpose they have non-arbitrary aspects. However, they are also unconstrained because of the redundancy of the societal function in which they are embedded. This provides a set of arbitrary differences that are not driven by the core purpose of the organisation, but can be significant in the language-game of the organisation itself. An example might be identity within a neighbourhood in which the office building is located (providing such location was functionally arbitrary). This duality is a feature of Wittgenstein's concept of grammar:

> According to this thesis, our meanings do not live up to the standards of absolute determinacy and fixity of semantic foundationalism, but they are not radically indeterminate: they are contextually determinate, that is, they acquire a transitory form of determinacy in particular contexts of communication, given the purpose of the communicative exchanges, the background conditions and practices, the participant's perspectives, their patterns of interactions, etc.
>
> Medina 2005, p. 89

Identifying organisations as a family resemblance concept, similar to concepts like language and games, means that rigid criteria for what counts as an instance of the class of concepts cannot be easily applied and is arguably not a valid framework for such concepts. One of Wittgenstein's comments on language bears citing:

> If we study the grammar, say, of the words "wishing", "thinking", "understanding", "meaning", we shall not be dissatisfied when we have described various cases of wishing, thinking, etc. If someone said, "surely this is not all that one calls 'wishing'", we should answer, "certainly not, but you can build up more complicated cases if you

> like." And after all, there is not one definite class of features which characterize all cases of wishing (at least not as the word is commonly used). If on the other hand you wish to give a definition of wishing, i.e., to draw a sharp boundary, then you are free to draw it as you like; and this boundary will never entirely coincide with the actual usage, as this usage has no sharp boundary.
>
> The idea that in order to get clear about the meaning of a general term one had to find the common element in all its applications has shackled philosophical investigation; for it has not only led to no result, but also made the philosopher dismiss as irrelevant the concrete cases, which alone could have helped him to understand the usage of the general term.
>
> Wittgenstein 1958, p. 19-20

And again, later in *Zettel* he writes:

> 112. It is not to be expected of this word that it should have a unified employment; we should rather expect the opposite.
>
> Wittgenstein 1967, p. 20

The picture that emerges is one in which more than one meaning is possible, and is possible within the boundaries (determined by language) of the same society, embedded in the context of different language-games. Those language-games might embody organisations, and multiple organisations can be employed to the same purpose with different constructs and metaphysical concepts. It is entirely consistent that different language-games, even within the boundaries of organisations, entertain different metaphysical constructs which create differences in the way meaning is attributed to events, organisational properties or activities. Indeed, this is often the case when we look at the practitioners and what they are doing and how they are making decisions.

3.2.2. The engaged practitioner in organisational language-games

Wittgenstein's philosophy points to the community of practitioners wherein which a language originates and has meaning. Language-games are constructs in which people participate to achieve specific objectives. And the objectives constrain the actions of participants into a set of complementary activities, which only have meaning within the context of the language-game.

> An intention is embedded in its situation, in human customs and institutions. If the technique of the game of chess did not exist, I could not intend to play a game of chess. In so far as I do intend the construction of a sentence in advance, that is made possible by the fact that I can speak the language in question.
>
> 338. After all, one can only say something if one has learned to talk. Therefore, in order to want to say something one must also have mastered a language
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 108e-109e

And practitioners master these practices through one another. This type of learning occurs by apprenticeship, through role models and story-telling. Wittgenstein holds that language-games are mastered through apprenticeship. The process of learning is not a process of acquiring new rules to be applied by rote. This may happen as part of the learning process but the outcome is mastery, not of specific rules but of the pattern of activities to which the practitioner is to become involved. Instead, language is not only learnt from another practitioner, but through that practitioner as well (Medina 2005). Gaining proficiency is a social process. Language learning is apprenticed; guidance is provided by a master in the practice. The process of language learning is a participative process of gaining autonomy in a set of normative practices:

> 208. I do it, he does it after me; and I influence him by expression of agreement, rejection, expectation, encouragement. I let him go his way, or hold him back; and so on.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 70e

The training process, once complete, makes the learner blind to alternatives. Wittgenstein describes this as having gone in a circle. The learner's training becomes their criteria that circumscribe their world-view (Medina 2005). How can the training become the criterion for judgement for the learner? The learner acquires skills, techniques, etc. This is the case in non-language learning as well. When learning to cook a dish, simply applying the steps and the techniques from a cook book is sufficient to ensure a successful outcome, but in language learning the learner is apprenticed into a community in which ambiguity and variation abound. No two situations are exactly similar and the learner is expected to be able to apply the normative standards of the community. Wittgenstein referred to this as learning a paradigm:

> It is as if we had hardened the empirical proposition into a rule. And now we have, not a hypothesis that gets tested by experience, but a paradigm with which experience is compared and judged. And so a new kind of judgement.
>
> Wittgenstein 1956, p. 17

It is in this sense that the training creates the criterion for future action; the hardening into rules of guidance and experience. These rules are not like the instructions in a cook book. Instead they are criteria for judgement; they create the means to evaluate situations and attach meaning to environmental factors and potential outcomes. This meaning validates the learning experience. Common interpretations of meaning denote members of the same community.

> What the initiate learner is being trained into are pattern-governed behaviours; in other words, these behaviours are performed because they conform to, contribute to, a complex social pattern… The initiate learner shifts [through the process of learning] from behaviour that merely conforms to a pattern but whose cause is independent of that pattern, to behaviour that conforms in virtue of being a part of the pattern… Our patterns are socially transmitted.
>
> Williams 1994, p. 182

Wittgenstein's philosophy does, in a meaningful sense, require an engagement that is born of personal practice. As such, a passive, unengaged reading of *Tractatus* or *Investigations* would not have the necessary impact on a reader for whom there is no ring of familiarity with their own concepts and practices, and no thought process to affect with this new style of thinking.

> Understanding the *Investigations* requires us to accept that it sets out to bring about a shift in our understanding which cannot be conveyed to a passive audience in the form of "results" or "conclusions"… This understanding is expressed, not in doctrines, but in a change of attitude… Wittgenstein wants to work on us (or better, he wants us to work on ourselves) in such a way that a whole style of thought which we find natural – the theoretical attitude – is gradually replaced.
>
> McGinn 1997, p. 29-30

The peace, to which Wittgenstein refers, is to be found in a new orientation, new concepts, new practices and thoughts. Baker (a renowned Wittgensteinian scholar whose collaborations with Hacker produced volumes of critical explorations of the

key themes of *Philosophical Investigations*) believed this is the sense in which Wittgenstein's philosophy was therapeutic, and (at least towards the end of his life) Baker viewed this therapeutic function as *the* objective of Wittgenstein's philosophy (Barker and Morris 2006). This could be considered something of an overstatement. But Wittgenstein's philosophy does, in a meaningful sense, require an engagement that is born of personal practice. To use a metaphor (which Wittgenstein employed from time to time), only someone who has some experience of the landscape – has walked down some of its paths – can begin to see the map of the broader landscape more clearly come into view, recognising familiar features of the gradients or fauna, but also seeing it from a new vantage point. Our understanding is constrained not by our intellect but by our practices and our rationalisation thereof, and it is only by working on this – our conception of the world – that a broader perspective is gained, wherein the philosopher sees similarities and differences, and dissolves problems that have their genesis in a misunderstanding of language.

One implication of this concerns the difference between the commonality of language between practitioners, and the normally-closed nature of organisational practices. Organisations have a finite set of practitioners depending on how the boundaries are drawn (acknowledging that the term organisation denotes the drawing of a boundary across some normative practice dimension). The differences are given in the table below:

Discipline	Philosophy	Strategic Management
Language	Normal language	Organisational practice
Community	Entire population	Specifically defined membership
Grammar	Available to all practitioners*	Different grammars applicable to sub-sets of organisations
Mastery	Philosophers have full access to community practices	Practitioners, researchers and academics have limited access constrained by organisational boundaries
Investigation	Same pitfalls for everyone. Common landscape	Different landscapes with similar & unknown features and pitfalls

*Table 3: Organisations are more closed than broader society language-games (*some sub-communities are closed depending on the homogeneity of the population). The table above shows the impact of this difference*

Organisations are normally closed systems relative to broader social communities. The argument for this is that organisations are selected communities, and the participants are selected for their expertise in specific language-games. Organisations therefore are homogeneous in terms of the language-game

proficiency of their practitioners. Broader communities have a balance of factors that work to make the community more open (immigration) as well as those that work to create a closed society (rituals, sub-cultures). As such, on balance, broader population communities display more interaction of people across a broader set of language-games, and greater ease of members of populations to engage in different or new language-games should the need arise. If a person decides to visit a new suburb, register for a dog permit, buy a ticket to a holiday destination, participate in a union protest (of which they are not members) etc. these activities are not barred from any member of the population. The types of closed practices (such as cultural rites) are limited in number compared to the overall set of community practices, although they are of greater significance. In contrast, most organisational practitioners are tightly constrained within a set of practices. Experiencing different practices such as a change in career, change in job, participating in board meetings (of which they are not members or new members thereof) etc. are often difficult or impossible. Philosophy works with a landscape where the pitfalls are the same for everyone, while strategic management has to contend with a variegated landscape where similar features from one organisation to another blend into unknown, seemingly unique practices and grammatical expressions. The mastery of the common landscape that is possible in philosophy is not given in strategic management.

3.2.3. The language-game about language-games

Every activity is part of the practices of the organisation, and the part the organisation plays in the larger societal practices. The organisation has a way of hiring, rewarding, promoting staff, scheduling meetings, selecting suppliers, advertising, pricing, launching products, measuring financial results, initiating structural changes, ensuring governance, etc. Where an activity needs to be defined in order to meet a need, the organisation has a way of defining the activity. It is not that the organisation is created and then the activities are determined, or that an organisation is moulded after a strategy is put in place. The grammar of the organisation, its rules for doing things, is embedded in the make-up of the organisation. The organisation does not exist without its grammar. Its grammar is

always expressed in its language-games. The language-games of the organisation are also the language-games of the society of which the organisation is a member, because organisations are not islands. They are always only possible as a set of communal language-games which have currency for the community because they fulfil a purpose in society which is significant and meaningful. It is not the case that the grammar of the organisation is uniformly spread, exerting equal influence on all practices. It is also possible (and likely) for the organisation to fulfil multiple inter-related purposes such that it is a network of language-games which are to a large or lesser degree affected by a set of associated grammars. So organisations are not neutral vessels for the strategic manipulation of management. They are built for purpose, and that purpose is embedded in the grammar of the organisation, and is expressed in every activity that is performed throughout the company, both those that contribute directly to the purpose and those that are part of the internal workings of the organisation.

Most organisations that are serious about strategic management form a strategic management unit or have a strategy function which runs the tasks associated with creating strategic plans and executing on strategic objects in the various forms in which these activities are carried out across organisations. Such formal units are subject to the grammar of the organisation like any other practice. Strategic management practices are not exempt from the normative pull from the purpose of the organisation, and inasmuch as they would have formal functions within the context of the organisation, they are circumscribed by the organisational grammar and cannot see past it. Their role is part formalisation and part ritual; the activities that convey gravitas to the decisions that the organisation takes. The strategic management process conveys legitimacy for decisions and actions that emerge from the language-games of the organisation. The point is that strategic management activities are already constrained by the language-games of the organisation. Strategic management activities are not immune from the grammar of the organisation.

There is already a context within which strategic decisions are shaped and executed. That context exists even where there are no formal strategic management processes and decision making takes place in line functions, since these are also circumscribed by the grammatical landscape of the organisation, that the approach an organisation

takes in crafting its strategy is already influenced by the meaning the organisation associates to activities; the types of practices the organisation deems justified to engage in; the extent to which the organisation is prepared to seek different perspectives; etc. Consequently, the performance of an organisation is determined by its practices and those practices are functionally defined. The financial unit funds certain projects and rejects others; the marketing team promotes a product in a particular way; the supply chain works with partners to streamline the pipeline, etc. It is these activities that determine the success or failure of the company. These activities can exist, and indeed be effective, independent of a strategic management process, so it is difficult to argue that an organisational activity labelled strategy and co-ordinated by a strategy unit, is a necessary part of ensuring differentiated organisational performance. Instead, considering that function as just another language-game of the organisation with the purpose of legitimising organisational choices provides a consistent picture of the organisation as a whole.

The rules by which an organisational practice is enacted is given by its grammar. It is the grammar of the organisation that determines what futures are possible by excluding certain possible paths as invalid and creating a bias for certain types of action within the organisation. Therefore, to really influence the performance of the organisation, albeit indirectly, strategic management focuses on understanding the grammar of the language-games of the organisation, and provides a mechanism for curating, pruning and cultivating different language-games and associated grammar. The objective of strategic management is to ensure a more robust set of possibilities become available within the organisational practice. Strategic management thus deals not with empirical facts but with normative practices. Activities that give meaning to other activities by setting boundaries, creating measurements, defining deadlines, providing incentives, deciding on objectives etc. Strategy entails the comprehension of meaning from many perspectives and with many voices. It is this muscle, which typically has no currency in the operational language-game of the organisation, but one that must be stretched as part of the practice of strategic management. This understanding provides the basis for the creation of a more robust company, through the curation of critical organisational language-games.

This is a unique role for the discipline. Strategic management is also uniquely positioned to fulfil that role. The practices of the organisation themselves are in

service of specific outcomes and can be measured in the sense that determines comparative performance. But these activities do not require strategic management practices to function. It is fully possible to define everything that is associated with the discipline of strategic management practice today, and put it to one side, without excluding the possibility of well-functioning organisations. Other operative functions are more critical. Even support functions like Human Resources, have necessary practices which apply in varying degrees to most organisations. Strategic management is not a necessary function for results in the near term, nor does its activities have any direct bearing on the organisational performance. Instead, by creating reminders for the possibility of incorporating novel language-games to complement existing organisational grammar, strategic management makes the organisation more robust in the execution of its purpose. And inasmuch as the language-games of society are available to survey, there is no analysis or introspection required in strategy. Instead, strategic management is a practice of understanding and curating language-games that serves to remind the organisation of its role in the societal language-games. The task of strategic management in this regard is essentially therapeutic.

In strategic management the particular purpose of investigation is to expose possibilities associated with the organisational purpose. The comparative assessment of practices is linked to the sense in which they give rise to desirable possibilities Mastery of strategic management entails a command of various landscapes of organisational language-games such that comparisons are created, and grammatical reform is initiated. Strategy is about the robustness of possible purpose. It ensures that our activities keep alive the potential to make the most meaningful impact in society.

3.3. The case for the grammatical method in strategic management

The above section of this chapter provides a picture of strategic management as a grammatical investigation, but not an argument for adopting the style of thinking advocated by Wittgenstein. In making his arguments, Wittgenstein understood that a change in style of thinking is difficult to facilitate. The difficulty is that any reader would still be evaluating the new proposal within the framework of their previous

style of thinking. The task is to arrest the false trains of thought hidden in the assumptions underpinning the existing mind-set, paving the way for new thinking.

> 349. It is very difficult to describe paths of thought where there are already many lines of thought laid down,--your own or other people's--and not to get into one of the grooves. It is difficult to deviate from an old line of thought just a little.
>
> 350. "It is as if our concepts involved a scaffolding of facts."
>
> Wittgenstein 1967, p. 63

This is the reason that Wittgenstein employs the method that he does in *Investigations*; using dialogues with interlocutors to expose disquietudes in the theorising style of explanations and showcase the strengths of an attentiveness to the grammar of societal language-games. *Philosophical Investigations* is as much a philosophical argument as it is a demonstration of Wittgenstein's grammatical method. A significant part of its value is not the arguments it makes, but that it showcases a new, grammatical way of thinking and making arguments. The following chapters seek to emulate Wittgenstein's approach in *Philosophical Investigations*; to make an argument for a grammatical approach to investigation, while simultaneously demonstrating the method in the arguments. These are done in both the therapeutic method (chapter 4) and the pedagogical method (chapter 5). In the therapeutic method the arguments that are made are focused on militating against the doctrines of strategic management that run contrary to the grammatical style of investigation, and against the style of strategic management that supports theorising. In the pedagogical method, the arguments focus on the variety of organisational language-games and their grammatical similarities and differences. In both cases, the method is demonstrated by examples.

The examples in the therapeutic method work as reminders of possibilities within the type of language-games the strategy is addressing. In Wittgenstein's words:

> Our investigation, however, is directed not towards phenomena, but, as one might say, towards the "possibilities" of phenomena. We remind ourselves, that is to say, of the kind of statements that we make about phenomena.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 42e

Therefore, when a strategy is tempted to use language like “15% increase in profits”, the grammatical investigation asks what language-games are associated with that statement. It also posits language-games from the experience of the practice which are absent from the prevailing expressions of the strategy, for instance, the handling of a warranty claim for a low-value customer. The therapeutic language-games of strategic management pulls the attention back to the understanding of the phenomena. An organisation is a continuously changing, interacting web of countless numbers of language-games. These include but are not limited to the following:

First, the organisation is involved in language-games about the use of scarce resource in society. Such resources are both tangible, such as raw materials, and intangible, like time, talent, etc. Resources in this sense are different from the concept of resources in the resource based view of strategic management, which ascribes resources as properties of the organisation, wherein the organisation owns the resources. In the context of the language-game about resources, the organisation is entrusted with the resources of society, towards a specific purpose. Sometimes that trust is encoded in an economic transaction, such as a concession that has been won through an adjudicated tender process; or the competition for graduate talent. But these structures can be seen as proving grounds to secure the trust of society. The resources of an organisation are thus transient by nature. There are a broad set of language-games about scarce resources in society that are relevant to the function of an organisation; organisations duly get involved in the education system, the immigration framework, labour market regulations, etc. At the same time, organisations are applying practice expertise to scarce resources in different ways to serve the needs of the society.

Second, organisations are involved in the language-games wherein they are vehicles for the provision of specific needs for individuals and other collective structures. In this regard, organisations produce outputs in the form of goods and services for the realisation of specific purposes. Often these practices are so central to the purpose of the organisation that they are considered as the main function of the business. Drucker (1994) typically identified the purpose of businesses as their function within such markets where they are serving customers.

> There is only one valid definition of a business purpose: to create a customer.
>
> Drucker 1954, p. 37

It is certainly possible to view everything a business does in reference to its practices associated with creating products and serving customers, in the same way that some might advocate the same in terms of creating shareholder value. These represent an aspect of the organisational language-games; a lens which provides society with a way of sense-making in that the tangible outputs that are goods and services can have significance and meaning in different ways in different language games.

Third, organisations themselves are a part of the language-games of society that ascribe value to functions and transactions. Research by biomedical firms have altered society to health benefits and risks associated with certain practices or products; persistent success by a technology or retail firm, might lead to an elevation of specific practices which are valued by the firm, to a greater place of relevance in society. The assembly line was brought to prominence by the success of Ford. Similarly, a design revolution has been triggered by the success of Apple almost a century later. Organisations themselves are subject to value rankings across a number of dimensions for a number of different societal purposes, one of them being the practice of attracting capital which organisations require to fund their activities. But organisations can also be ranked in terms of other metrics. Evidence of this can be seen in the fact that *Fortune* has expanded its original focus from listing the top companies by market capitalisation to also listing the “top companies to work for”, the “most innovative companies” and the “most admired companies”, thus acknowledging different methods for assessing the fit of organisations to their societal purposes.

Fourth, organisation language-games provide a location for the creation and distribution of economic value. Sometimes this is seen as the central purpose of business, i.e. to create wealth for shareholders. Organisational language-games are well suited to this purpose because of the role they play in providing solutions to ambiguous problems in society. The solution an organisation provides is the creative response of its language-games. Different organisations would respond differently, and society would respond differently to the various options available, rewarding the fit of the solutions with the purpose of the function in society.

Fifth, the organisational language-games represent an aggregation of a community for purposeful interaction. In this sense, they provide an identity to key members of the community, who are typically people or groups of people who are embedded in the practices of the organisation and thus these practices circumscribe a world view. These are typically employees but can also be customers, suppliers etc. Each community can, it can be argued, have a different worldview, and a different reality.

> 387. I want to say: an education quite different from ours might also be the foundation of quite different concepts.
>
> 388. For here life would run on differently - What would interest us would no longer interest them
>
> Wittgenstein 1967, p. 68

Sixth, the organisation can function as a metaphor; a cautionary tale for failure, and a role model for success, and for the aspiration of other societal or similar functions. In this sense, the organisation is encoded in the grammar of the society, beyond aspects where it directly functions. Its influence is felt as a justification for comparative action; an analogy to a common purpose; a foil for a call to action by rivals, etc. Very few organisations wield such influence, but those that do also have the potential to exploit it in the way they participate in societal language-games.

The examples above are by no means exhaustive, yet they map a wide scope of language-games that define various organisations. A grammatical method of strategic management asks that the picture of the organisation provided be sketched in the language-games of the organisation, and its role in society. The purpose of reminding ourselves of the language-games is to remind ourselves where the meaning of the metrics and objectives really lie: in the forms of life of the society. And no abstracting is necessary to grasp the meaningfulness of the language-games of the organisation. Instead what is necessary is a greater understanding which is attained through getting a broader perspective on the way in which the language-games of the organisation work in their societal context. It is not for strategy to produce results. Marketing improves the brand messaging; Accounting improves the organisational efficiency; HR improves the talent pool. It is the role of strategy and strategic management to remind the practitioners in the organisation what their ongoing battle to achieve mastery in their language-games is in service of. It reminds

them of what is possible. And to be purposeful in the pursuit of organisational possibilities is arguably akin to achieving peace from theorising which Wittgenstein sought (Wittgenstein 1953).

On the other hand, the examples in the pedagogical method require a clear understanding of oneself; the understanding that each person has deep seated commitments to various modes of conceptual reality that are in essence a projection of their familiarity with one or another language-games of their communities. To understand and to work to overcome these barriers to have a change in ones' style of thought; learning to see alternative conceptual landscapes is a personal, subjective exercise. Wittgenstein wrote:

> Work on philosophy… is really more work on oneself. On one's own conception. On how one sees things. (And what one expects of them).
>
> Wittgenstein 1969, p. 24

Such examples might ask, when a strategy is tempted to use language like "15% increase in profits", what societal language-game is it that gives the metric its meaning. or ask for what practices of the organisation the metric might not have meaning (i.e. use). What might strike a person undertaking such an investigation is the limited use of some of the typical metrics in organisational language-games.

Wittgenstein also makes the point that misunderstandings happen due to withdrawal from the practical engagement in language, and from reflection and abstraction:

> The confusion which occupy us arise when language is like an engine idling, not when it is doing work.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 51e

Not everything a practitioner does are operational activities. There are periods for relaxation, planning, feedback etc. The task of strategic management is to utilise these periods to create conversations that bridge language-games. So, strategic management can be conceptualised as the effective use of non-operational time in organisational constructs. To understand how to think about non-operational time in organisational practice, consider the following case. Imagine a patient walked into a doctor's room with a particular ailment of which the doctor has no prior knowledge. The doctor duly calls a colleague to consult on the matter. Having consulted, the

doctor is advised to perform a test, for which she requires a specific set of tools. However, not immediately having the tools available, the doctor requests the patient return the following day. Contrast that with a different experience for the patient: The doctor recognises the symptoms as a specific ailment, and selects the appropriate apparatus which is readily at hand, in order to confirm her suspicion. Both experiences require a minimum set of activities. In this case a diagnosis and a confirmation. Operational time then can be thought of in a number of ways. Firstly, as the critical set of activities required for an organisational output (one that has societal function). Alternatively, operational time can be thought of as the least set of activities or duration needed for an organisational outcome. Finally, operational time could be seen as an assembly line of organisational activities required for desired outcomes. Strategic management, as a grammatical inquiry, has no call on operational activities of the organisation. These are the domain of functional departments or specialist individuals. But non-operational time belongs to circumstance. And these circumstances can be brought together in organisational conversation and ritual. The key is to recognise what reservoir of practices are available to strategic management for curation. Formal and informal practices such as lunch-time, smoke breaks, strategy sessions, team meetings, etc. are all opportunities for conversation and in many of these practices conversations naturally occur. But opportunities for conversation can also be created, curated and embedded in non-operational time rituals. Here the strategist engages in an ethnographic practice, creating new immersive experiences for organisational practitioners, observing the impact of these spaces on their operational activities, and curating the language-games accordingly. These experiences include the following types of practices:

The first type could be referred to as rituals of performance. The act of observation has an impact on the observer and the observed. Some restaurants, for example, provide a window onto the activities in the kitchen. Sometimes the chef completes the preparation of the meal at the customer's table. When done effectively, the outcome is a showcasing of the craft of the professionals, and a greater appreciation of the meal. In organisations, such rituals create stories, role models, bench marks and constructive competition. The second type of language-game is organisational games. Exposure to simulations or situations of controlled competition can create

experience with consequential circumstances, making practitioners more proficient in handling uncertain or difficult situations. Finally, the immersion exercise puts practitioners directly into the experiences of others, allowing them to experience different language-games first-hand about which they would otherwise not be aware. These are some of the types of language-games that form the canvas for strategic management practice. These are by no means exhaustive. Strategic management is a creative endeavour and, the language of organisations provides a wide varied canvas for creative expression. The goal here is to demonstrate the method through examples. To generate new perspectives, packing the grammatical landscape with rich new features that are familiar to the practitioner, such that there are always landmarks no matter where the road turns. Strategic management can be thought of as a language-game about language-games. Its task is to create language-games that allow practitioners to experience connections between their familiar language-games and other related language-games.

3.4. Summary and conclusion

Wittgenstein's method is advocating a style of thought, and the understanding that is gained is not from learning new doctrine, as in the case of a new theory, but from undertaking a different type of inquiry; from seeing differently. Wittgenstein explained this in the following manner, in reference to his discussions with Alan Turing on the foundation of mathematics:

> You are inclined to put our differences in one way, as a difference of opinion. But I am not trying to persuade you to change your opinion. I am only trying to recommend a certain sort of investigation. If there is an opinion involved, my only opinion is that this sort of investigation is immensely important, and very much against the grain of some of you.
>
> Wittgenstein 1976, p. 103

He knew that there was a difficulty for people in undertaking the type of examination he was advocating, because it turned on an investigation of our norms of representation; the way we conceptualise significant and meaningful aspects of our practice. The difficulty comes in that, because these representations are normative, they colour our picture of the world such that we think that the world itself is

necessarily comprised of such concepts. And such a thought process is reinforced by a realist perspective and the scientific method, which is so very successful in its elucidation of empirical concepts. It is difficult to accept that what we think are different types of physical concept – metaphysical ones – are actually our norms of representation. This is not because we are not intelligent, but because the type of thought process that is required for this realisation is one we are not used to engaging in.

> One cannot guess how a word functions. One has to look at its use and learn from that.
>
> But the difficulty is to remove the prejudice which stands in the way of doing this. It is not a stupid prejudice.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 109e

So Wittgenstein's method serves to remind us of the way our language functions.

The significance of the grammatical perspective is that it eliminates some of the problems of the prevailing theories of strategic management. Firstly, it escapes the stalemate of theoretical perspectives, and the intractable problem of theory selection in practice. The grammatical perspective does not posit a theory. Instead it works to develop an understanding of the practices of the organisation, and the curation of the language-games of strategic management. Wittgenstein's grammatical perspective provides a different picture of the organisation, the organisational practitioner and the role of strategic management. These differences have advantages for the practice of strategic management but do not in themselves validate the grammatical perspective. It is not the intention of the grammatical investigation to appeal to an empirical fit of the perspective for its validity. Instead, the following chapters engage in a Wittgensteinian critique of the discipline of strategic management, based on Wittgenstein's method in *Philosophical Investigations*. The process of arguing for a grammatical approach to strategic management involves the dual tasks of making a grammatical argument, and demonstrating the grammatical method by examples. The purpose of the critique is to bring about the change to an adoption of the style of thinking of the grammatical method.

Chapter 4: Wittgenstein's therapeutic method of grammatical investigation in strategic management

4.1. Strategic management as group therapy

This thesis makes arguments based on the later philosophy of Wittgenstein, using his grammatical method of investigation to critique the discipline of strategic management. In this regard, this chapter applies the therapeutic method of Wittgenstein's grammatical investigation to the critique of the prevailing theories of strategic management.

The therapeutic method served to expose the emptiness of the explanations given in theorising. The method's aim is to work against a style of thinking that leads to false pictures of the phenomena under investigation. In the case of strategic management, such thinking leads to a misconception of the discipline, and from there the potential arises to make unfounded judgements and choices. At the foundation of eradicating these types of errors is an acceptance of the source of the problem. The prevailing approach to strategic management, on the other hand, follows what Wittgenstein would categorise as a theorising method of investigation which seeks to resolve the problem through greater and greater theoretical precision. This leads to the searching for deeper, more intricate insights. This tendency leads to the proliferation of theories, either in search of a better unifying theory of the discipline, or in providing sharper specificity in a particular aspect of the discipline. Wittgenstein describes the situation as follows:

> [We] go astray and imagine that we have to describe extreme subtleties… We feel as if we had to repair a torn spider's web with our fingers… The more narrowly we examine actual language, the sharper becomes the conflict between it and our requirements… The conflict becomes intolerable; the requirement is now in danger of becoming empty.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 46e

What a person who seeks a theoretical explanation requires as a resolution to the problem, creates an unending chain reaction of theoretical refining. Wittgenstein's therapeutic approach arrests that process. It reminds the person of what type of

phenomena they are investigating, and provides a method of investigation that resists the temptation to theorise:

> For we can avoid ineptness or emptiness in our assertions only by presenting the model as what it is, as an object of comparison – as, so to speak, a measuring-rod; not as a preconceived idea to which reality must correspond (The dogmatism into which we fall so easily in doing philosophy).
>
> Wittgenstein 1967, p. 51e

By characterising the method as a therapy, Wittgenstein emphasises a number of critical aspects of the method (McGinn 1997). The first is that the method requires the person to be a willing participant; to be struggling with a problem and open to a different method of resolution, away from their normal tendency. Secondly, the method works over a period of time, from a cumulative exposure to alternative ways of thinking. Everyone is therefore in different places in their therapy; and one person's area of bias might not feature in the therapy for someone else. In this sense strategic management cannot be thought of as a competence, since it makes no sense to compare therapy notes. It is a commitment to the purpose of the language games of the organisation and of their functions in society. Finally, and as a consequence of the first two aspects, the method is a personal process. It works on the biases and theoretical tendencies already present in the way an individual approaches the discipline. In that sense, strategic management can be considered a type of group therapy in the sense that each person is part of a collective (the organisation), but wrestling with a private set of biases. In this way, a discourse in strategic management ensures that the collective gets clear about their own metaphysical commitments through sharing perspectives. Each person learns by seeing differences and similarities between their commitments and those of others. This provides a picture of the strategic management department as a support group, for the organisation and for themselves. The academic and research communities could also act as such a group. The nature of the body of literature would in this way pivot from a conversation about theories to one about various metaphysical biases, and confessions of the types of rationalisations that organisational practitioners could be prone to. The literature would provide a catalogue of signposts; reminders of the types of dangers that lie along different paths of rationalisation and the information needed to get back to the phenomena under investigation. Each group is a means to

an end. It has a specific purpose, or set of specific purposes, and these must always be a feature of the discussion. Peterman (1992) summarises the requirements on such a community as the following:

- It must be able to present a valid defence of its therapeutic ideal. By this he means that it must be able to describe a language-game in which the tension it solves is shown to give peace. The language-game need not have anything to do with anyone's specific tension, but can serve as a point of initial departure for discussion.
- It must describe the danger in ignoring the tension for which the community is galvanised. Again this can take the form of a language-game or any thematic representation (e.g. an allegorical tale) that squarely brings into mind what is at stake.
- Lastly, it needs to be reasonably confident of achieving its goal. Remembering that the goal is not the actual practice or result of the practice within the organisational language-game. That function is outside of the practice of a grammatical method of strategic management. Here the result is a change in orientation. A new perspective that comes with seeing new possibilities, and the dissolution of the tension. Below, the method described for achieving this would be the dialectic approach to exploring topics using the voice of one or more interlocutors and examples in the form of language-games. This process is used by Wittgenstein in *Investigations* and serves to help practitioners see connections where they would have otherwise been oblivious to the style of thinking that brings such aspects into focus.

The group's discourse is thus part of the method of strategic management. It surfaces and interrogates commitments to action, and the rationale, or grammatical basis for these commitments. The method of conducting the dialogue follows from Wittgenstein's style in *Investigations*. In this regard, he attacked philosophical ideas which were at odds with the notion of a grammatical investigation. For example, his critique of St. Augustine's picture of how language stands for objects, clears away a prevailing theme in the way philosophical theories explained the meaning of language, allowing the reader to more readily consider his grammatical understanding of meaning as embedded in language-games. Similarly, ideas that

stand in opposition to the grammatical perspective of strategic management given in the previous chapter would be the target of critique in this chapter. These include the idea that strategic management is about competition, from which the performance heterogeneity question derives. By the reading of Wittgenstein's grammatical approach put forward in the previous chapters, strategic management needs to be attentive to the language-games of the organisation, and their purpose in the language-games of society. A reader therefore needs to be dissuaded from the notion that they need only be attentive to the competitiveness of the organisation, and to the factors associated with the resultant performance outcomes of such competitive positions. Another target is the necessity of strategic management concepts such as competitive advantage. Such necessary conditions seem to provide a definition for what must be the case for a strategy formulation or identification. This definition is at odds with the grammatical approach which would view such concepts as grammatical rules of the language-games of strategic management. A final conflicting notion would be addressed; the definition of a category of things called organisations to which are attributed universal qualities such as resources, industry positions, etc. The idea of the organisation as an entity is problematic because it allows the tendency for universal attributes to be assigned, such that organisations can be thought of as various configurations of these attributes. This goes against the idea that organisations are sets of language-games, and that each organisation is a distinctive practice which might be compared to others for the purposes of seeing similarities and differences.

This chapter is also aimed at providing an example of the therapeutic method as it can be used in strategic management. In this regard, its arguments represent a style of thought that strategic management practitioners can emulate in their practices.

4.2. The performance heterogeneity question in strategic management

4.2.1. The essence of strategic management

In a critique of Porter's theories of strategic management in *Forbes* magazine, Denning refers to Porter as "the Aristotle of business metaphysics" (Denning 2012). The impact of Porter's influence on the discipline of strategic management is difficult

to deny. In 2015, Michael Porter was ranked as the top business thinker by *Thinkers50* who have published their ranking bi-annually since 2001. In that time no other management thinker has had the same staying power. Porter is the only thinker that was also on the top 10 in 2001 (he was 3rd), and has only dropped out of the top 10 once. Porter might not have invented the discipline of strategic management, but his theories, starting from his 1979 article, *How Competitive Forces Shape Strategy* (Porter 1979) catalysed the success of the discipline. Much of the actual tools and analytical activities that are associated with strategic management owe their origin to Porter's work on generic strategies (Porter 1980).

Denning's critique of Porter is not as important here as the nature of the critique, which turns on what could be determined to be the essence of strategic management:

> Porter begins his publishing career in his March-April 1979 Harvard Business Review article, "How Competitive Forces Shape Strategy", with a very strange sentence: "The essence of strategy [formulation] is coping with competition." Ignoring Peter Drucker's foundational insight of 1973 that the only valid purpose of a business is to create a customer, Porter focused strategy on how to protect businesses from other business rivals. The goal of strategy, business and business education was to find a safe haven for businesses from the destructive forces of competition.
>
> Denning 2012

This sentence provides a series of insights for the style of thought in the discipline. Denning does not take issue with the idea of an essence of strategic management, but with the location of it in Porter's theories. Furthermore, he accepts the unspoken foundation of the nature of strategy: that strategy explains the performance of the firm. A logic for this style of thinking could be stated as follows:

> *An organisational attribute, x, exists such that*
>
> *x is the essence of strategy*
>
> *Strategy explains performance*

This way, a theory provides insight into the performance of organisations by explaining the way the essential attribute of strategic management functions. The crux of Denning's argument, and indeed much of the literature of strategic

management, concerns the question as to what attribute, "x", is the essence of strategy. Porter will answer:

> Competition is at the core of the success or failure of firms. Competition determines the appropriateness of a firm's activities that can contribute to its performance…
>
> Porter 1980, p. 1

Others might argue that it depends on a variety of factors such as customers, resources, learning, culture, leadership, dynamic capabilities, etc. The scope of the list demarcates the breadth of strategic management theories, but just because there are a number of theories does not give them equal status. Competition is such a central tenet of the way businesses are conceptualised that to question its essential, foundational position seems unthinkable. But is it possible to describe a language-game about organisational performance without competition? Consider the following primitive language-game about shoe salesmen who visited the Kalahari (source unknown):

> *Two shoe salesmen were dispatched to the Kalahari to assess the viability of the market for their product. The first one returned, and proclaimed "There is no market for shoes here, because no one wears any shoes". The second one return excited and said "There is a huge market in the Kalahari, because no one wears shoes!"*

Those in the Drucker camp might spring to attention at the example. Here then is a validation surely of the centrality of customers to performance? And those in the Porter camp might say that there is an intrinsic competitiveness in the salesmen racing to open new markets. Wittgenstein makes the point that a theoretical model is like a pair of spectacles; everything is seen through that perspective. Nothing can escape being mediated through it, and it only occurs to a person to take them off if they know they have them on in the first place. The way of thinking that is encapsulated in a theoretical explanation provides a strong urge to interpret the workings of the language-games of society. The problem is not that the working of the language-game is not open and available, but that the prevailing way of thinking makes one blind to that which is in plain sight. If, in the case of the salesmen in the Kalahari, an attempt was made to describe the practice of the language, the following description might be given:

> *Both salesmen are part of organisations that have a function in their native societies of providing shoes. And the function of their inquiry is to ascertain if their organisations, given the role they typically play in societies, can be a functional part of this new society. And the different answers tell us something about the differences in their organisational grammar; that the organisations evaluate what is meaningful in society differently.*

What constitutes performance here is that the organisation has a function in the language-games of society, and it might be that one can point to that role by assigning a metric. Consider the situation in reverse: A visitor from the Kalahari was in the society of the shoe salesmen and saw a pair of shoes for the first time in a shopkeeper's window. Such a person might inquire "What are those?" And a passer-by might not initially understand that the person does not know shoes, and state the company brand name instead, adding that "…they are very popular this season." Such a statement provides a measure of the performance of the brand not the functional purpose of the company. Likewise, to highlight the creation of customers is to propose a metric for a particular purpose. So if the same person asked what the purpose of a restaurant was, and made their assessment based on outcomes they might say any of the following:

- *x* number of dishes for customers
- *x* customer loyalty in return customers and recommendations
- *x* amounts of money in cash sales
- *x* amount of waste in the process of food production and consumption
- *x* amount of critical acclaim in the form of ratings and prizes
- *x* period on the waiting list as a result of popularity
- *x* number of employment opportunities

This is hardly a complete list, but serves to show the diversity of the metrics possible. And to combine them into an index? What would such an index mean? What function in the society would such an index have, unless it was developed with a function in mind, in which case we are back to the above premise for metrics in the first place.

Now Drucker might be tempted to say that one of these could be more important than the others. More fundamental to the business, that is to say. To check this

perhaps it is worth considering if there are scenarios in which we could see businesses failing (no longer being part of the functions of society) due to any one of the areas of measurement listed above? And it should be clear that the possibility exists in all cases (think of waste in terms of environmental responsibility). Could a business say that customers were more important than anything else? Yes, and in so doing they would have established a grammatical rule for the organisation, similar to the ones the shoe salesmen used to evaluate the new markets.

But competition is surely more fundamental? Because sooner or later, a business must run into competition in one form or another. But what is at issue is whether competition is a fundamental characteristic of the performance of a company. It is certainly easy to think of non-business situations where competition is fundamental. Warfare is a case in point. And there is a lot of literature on military strategy, and military leaders that make their way into business school literature. One such text is *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu. Consider the following passage:

> 11. These five heads should be familiar to every general: he who knows them will be victorious; he who knows them not will fail.
>
> 12. Therefore, in your deliberations, when seeking to determine the military conditions, let them be made on the basis of a comparison, in this wise:
>
> Which of the two sovereigns is imbued with the Moral Law? [By Moral Law Sun Tzu means that the leader inspires the trust, and unquestioning loyalty of his followers]
>
> Which of the two generals has most ability?
>
> With whom lie the advantages derived from Heaven and Earth? [These two factors comprise the environmental effects that are to be taken into account in preparation for battle]
>
> On which side is discipline most rigorously enforced?
>
> Which army is stronger?
>
> On which side are officers and men more highly trained?
>
> In which army is there a greater constancy both in reward and punishment?
>
> Tzu 1971, p. 6

Notice the consideration of environmental factors as well as internal resources. The influence of military maxims in strategic management is pervasive. Indeed, the word

strategy itself is derived from the Greek word “strategos” which means “general” (Heracleous and Jacobs 2005). Is the practice of strategic management akin to that of a military endeavour? There do seem to be times when business leaders seem to be at war with each other. Steve Jobs is famously quoted as having said:

> I’m going to destroy Android [the competitor to his Apple platform] … I’m willing to go thermonuclear war on this
>
> Isaacson 2011, p. 665

Yet there are times when businesses that would be otherwise competitors co-operate towards a greater goal. But this happens in warfare occasionally as well. There are even occasions when warring generals might aid their opponents. Saladin sent King Richard replacements for his horse when it was killed in the Battle of Arsuf. But there are also business endeavours that have no military parallels. Businesses are constantly looking to pioneer new markets, sometimes completely reinventing what they do, and creating whole new business landscapes. Some companies change completely over time. Toyota, the company that is now world renowned as an automotive giant, competing for the status of the biggest automotive company in the world, started off as a division of Toyota Automatic Loom Works. One might be tempted to draw parallels here with technological developments in the application of military power, but this would be an erroneous analogy. Within industries, such as the automotive industry, there are also technological developments, like the development of the assembly line or the technology behind electrical and fuel efficient vehicles. Technological advances do not automatically in themselves constrain the decisions that businesses take to develop new markets or industries. When a business leader decides to create a new industry or develop a new market, it is more analogous to a military leader picking a battlefield where no other military opponent is present to fight.

One might say that the practices of a business can include, but is not exclusively constituted by, an understanding of its role in the community, a focus on creating demand for the products or services it produces, a growth agenda that includes new products and new markets, an imperative to ensure the achievement of a particular set of financial results, a continuous review of the processes and practices within the organisation, governance of the legality of the organisational practices, a

guardianship of the culture and heritage of the business, a distinction between various stakeholders and the administration of roles within the organisation to manage these stakeholders, a balance between opportunity seeking and risk mitigating practices, etc. The above list is hardly exhaustive. And such a list serves to showcase the various concerns and objectives of the organisation in such a way as to put in doubt the possibility of a particular attribute being overall responsible for these outcomes or that a direct comparison to military practice is apt.

What then is the role of competition in the language-games of organisations? One answer might be that it is the limiting case of the management of scarce societal resources. Ancient history not only boasts generals like Sun Tzu, but also viziers like Hemiunu, the prince of ancient Egypt who oversaw the building of the Great Pyramids at Giza. The logistics are staggering. Over two million stone blocks, each weighing between 2-70 tons would have to be quarried and transported about 20km and across the Nile. It required a knowledge of geometry and astronomy to position the pyramids in relation to the zodiac and true north. It required co-ordination of a peak workforce of about 40,000 people, including artisans, labourers and support services staff, most of whom were transient workers. Such efforts in resource management were repeated across the world on specialised projects, such as pyramid building in South America; ship building in the Viking Nordics; temple and mausoleum construction in Asia and the Middle East. Across the world, co-ordinated agriculture was the catalyst for the civilisations that could amass wealth and conquests necessary to undertake such projects. Strategic management need not be viewed purely in the limiting case of direct competition for scarce resources. A broader vantage point is arguably necessary to ensure a more robust discipline.

There are therefore at least three ways in which organisational attributes cannot be essential properties of strategic management. The first is that there are obviously some theories of strategic management based on narrow attributes which are clearly not universally necessary in explaining organisational performance. The power dynamics in organisations is such a case, and by extension, many of the theories that rely on an emergent perspective in strategic management accept that there are cases in which the emergent strategy is not dependent on particular factors. Certainly, not all emergent aspects of strategic management are dependent on all descriptive theories of the discipline. The same is true of resources and capabilities

which are either too broadly defined to be anything but tautologous concepts, or are defined specifically and relinquish their universality (Teece, Pisano and Shuen 1997; Eisenhardt and Martin 2000). The second is that sometimes the literature confuses organisational attributes with organisational metrics. Metrics define important criteria for the organisation in that they indicate degrees of performance, but do not have explanatory power. Stating that a business failed because it had no customers still leaves the question as to why it failed unexplained. Finally, the literature confuses a limiting case of the function of the organisation with an attribute. Competition is such a case. The premise of a competition attribute makes the mistake of ascribing a function to competition in organisational planning, whereas the function is arguably better framed as the utilisation of scarce resources in society. Part of the social make up of human beings is that we coordinate tasks, utilising our environment to create meaningful outcomes based. The competitive scoring of that utilisation in terms of customers, revenue, or any other metric constitutes a grammatical choice on the part of the society or the organisation.

Wittgenstein's method focuses on the function of the language-games of the organisation, and the significance of the language-game is in plain sight. One function of strategic management is therefore to provide a clear picture of what is possible, given the functions of the organisation in society.

4.2.2. The performance of organisations

Are we proposing a function based view of strategy? Can the language-games of the organisation not sit in the position of "x" in the explanatory function of strategic management given in the previous section? Firstly, this suggestion would run counter to Wittgenstein's philosophy which specifically wants to do away with all explanations. Secondly, organisational language-games are not attributes of strategy. The relationship between strategy and language-games is like that of a house and its rooms. That is to say, that the practices of strategic management are in themselves language-games of the organisation.

Now a person might still want to say that strategy explains organisational performance, and it might be that our theories have not yet achieved the crystalline

clarity required. We are in a supposed pre-paradigm state from which we will emerge with a clearer theoretical landscape (Boyd, Finkelstein and Gove 2005). But Wittgenstein cautions about this very style of thinking:

> 38. …For philosophical problems arise when language goes on holiday…
>
> […]
>
> 107. The more narrowly we examine the language, the sharper becomes the conflict between it and our requirement (For the crystalline purity of logic was, of course, not a *result of investigation*; it was a requirement) …
>
> 108. The preconceived idea of crystalline purity can only be removed by turning our whole examination round (One might say: the axis of reference of our examination must be rotated, but around the fixed point of our real need).
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 46e

There seems to be a preconceived requirement that strategic management functions a particular way. Wittgenstein's notion of language going on holiday captures the idea that the confusion in the discipline stems from taking concepts out of their natural context, in which they have a purposeful function, and examining them in a different context. When Denning calls Porter "the Aristotle of business metaphysics" (see above sub-section), it can be argued that he is identifying the point at which strategic management began importing concepts from economic theory. And for an economist, why firms differ would seem a logical entry point into strategic management. Certainly much of economic theory is based on the assumption that market equilibrium asserts itself over time. In markets where equilibrium is at its most powerful, a homogeneous market place is resultant with pure commoditisation and no differences between firms. These firms might even share production, distribution or retail facilities with only superficial differences to their goods and services. A subtler expression is also seen in the steady state nature of markets which reach a point whereby changes in firm market positions are locked in, and do not change over time. Firm activities to increase market share or profits are heavily constrained by the structure of the market. Economic theory expects homogeneity to eventually assert itself.

> The evidence which strategy researchers view as the motivation for their intellectual agenda are interpreted by many economists in terms of “nuisance” parameters – things which must be controlled for but which are not of intrinsic interest
>
> Cockburn, Henderson and Stern 2000, p. 1124

Cockburn et al. argue that ‘grappling with this problem should be of central concern to strategy researchers’ (Cockburn et al. 2000, p. 1124). The research base of the industry is largely in step with that call to action. The discipline has therefore been drawn into a language-game about transactional economics, rent generation, market equilibrium, etc. When the strategic management discipline is framed purely as an economic science, it is then that the discipline is forced to duel with established economic theory. But strategic management is concerned with much more, and economics is not an effective proxy for the complexity of social and psychological factors that are embedded in the discipline of strategic management. One might be tempted to say that strategy is more often linked to certain factors (such as finance) rather than others, such that it is parsimonious to consider only these strategic traits of the organisation. While this view is popular and often the basis of strategic management research (Peters and Waterman 1982; Collins 2001), the view is unsubstantiated empirically and amounts to either a bias about the nature of the firm rooted in a positivist paradigm, or a practical limitation due to the availability of financial records vis-a-vis other forms of organisational information.

Asking why firms differ can have a different meaning in economic theory compared to strategic management and this difference can be likened to the difference between the concerns of such disciplines as physics and engineering; accounting and economics; cosmology and astronomy, etc. The juxtaposition of the disciplines might be framed by the following analogy: that they gaze at the same subject and see different aspects. Strategic management deals with the grammar of organisational practices. For strategic management, the economic frame of the heterogeneity question has little currency, except as a confirmation of the language of economics as it applies to discussions about industry trade and transactions. Strategic management, as a grammatical discipline, does not contribute to the theory of economics. Its contribution is in the understanding of how language-games, like those that apply to economic transactions, are purposeful practices in specific organisations. In that respect, strategic management can attest that organisations

differ in a variety of different ways, typically linked to the practices and purpose of the organisation. Not all these differences can be aggregated into performance metrics. Those that can, have different ways in which they can be measured, and some ways of measurement might be more significant for different organisations or different stages in organisational development or different language-games in which the organisation functions. For some purposes within the same organisation it might be more justifiable to report on the top line growth of the company and for others, the net income might be the more critical metric. Some industries would be more interested in relative metrics such as growth in gross margin or increased market share.

In this sense, organisational performance has a normative rather than resultant function in strategic management. The proficiency the organisation seeks colours its language-games resulting in a positive feedback loop. From a grammatical perspective, results are language-game specific. This means that they are contextually determined depending on the language-game within which they apply. In that sense, they are multiple discrete points of results for consideration within any language-game, and the way in which the results are evaluated is dependent on the role of the particular organisational language-game in terms of the purpose of the organisation within societal language-games. The results are more or less tightly constrained by the organisational purposefulness such that they could be more or less critical and also more or less precisely agreed and this agreement is of the normative meaning of activities and their resultant outcomes within organisational language-games. It is the agreement of how meaningfulness is measured and such results are embedded in the language-game as grammatical rules. Such rules are the justification and determinants of action.

This picture has the purposefulness of the organisation as the kinetic driver of activities. Results are varied and contextual, although they can be comparable in similarities and differences across language-games and across organisations. They include but are not limited to financial results, which are applicable to some language-games and not to others. What is important is that the community has selected a particular measure of meaningfulness rather than an alternative for this particular language-game within the organisation. And it should be clear that the language-game changes for different selection of measurement; it changes the

grammar of the practice because what was the obvious action previously might no longer be the case. All organisational practices are purposeful, although some are more tightly constrained by the roles of the organisation in societal language-games. An analogous comparison might be to say that while the gravity of a celestial body influences all other bodies, the degree of its gravitational pull is stronger or weaker depending on the proximity of the bodies. Similarly, activities that are closely coupled with specific societal functions are more directly constrained by the societal need. The degree of interpretational difference between practitioners narrows sharply in contrast to practices that are internally bound within the organisational construct and are thus more open to potential ambiguity and experimentation. Organisational results in this sense form the key to strategic inquiry. The justification for action is a grammatical signature. It at once brings a greater understanding of the purposefulness of the organisation's activities, while consequently sharing the normative interpretations that make up the grammar of the language-game.

A person might respond with the plea that we can, and do, compare results, especially financial, market related results. Yes, but in what language-games does this comparison occur? When a CEO attends to the share price of the company, for what purpose is he doing so? Maybe for a number of reasons, of which a couple can be suggested here. The company is part of a financial system whereby it is able to access capital based on the understanding of the value in its intended further uses of the capital and ongoing business performance in a variety of societal functions (mostly here concerned with the services or goods provided but not exclusively), snd part of the CEO's function is to access capital at as low a cost as possible for the organisation by providing the right rationale for investment. And for a worker on the production plant who might have invested in a company share scheme or pension fund for retirement purposes, there is a relative understanding of the health of the business based on broad trends or reactions to key events by the stock market. But the plant supervisor does not change the duty roll according to the stock market. So the stock market is a mechanism for a set of societal language-games in which organisations participate.

Now we can return to the shoe salesmen in the Kalahari. Even though they are intended to be proxies for organisations in the same business, i.e. selling shoes, the similarity of their purpose in the societal language-game that defines their product

output is masked by a difference in the societal language-game that defines the nature of the relationship between the business and the community. One organisation is a community builder, seeking an interventionist role whereby it shapes lives and fundamentally influences society. The other is a community supplier, fulfilling a need that is already expressed. This difference shows up in the decision of one company to pass up the opportunity to serve a role within that community, while the other business makes the decision to invest significantly. Wittgenstein speaks in this sense about a system of verification:

> 105. All testing, all confirmation and disconfirmation of a hypothesis takes place already within a system. And this system is not a more or less arbitrary and doubtful point of departure for all our arguments: no, it belongs to the essence of what we call an argument. The system is not so much the point of departure, as the element in which arguments have their life
>
> […]
>
> 279… But how does this one belief hang together with all the rest? We should like to say that someone who could believe that does not accept our whole system of verification.
>
> This system is something that a human being acquires by means of observation and instruction.
>
> Wittgenstein 1969, p. 16, 36

Organisations fulfil a set of societal roles, which form a system of verification. It is this system that exerts influence on the language-games of the organisation, and the resultant practices are as a result of the combined effect of the system, and that effect is not strongly coupled to the purposefulness of the organisation due to the indeterminacy defined earlier. So to talk about a single role for the organisation is to make an arbitrary choice. Practitioners need to consider multiple roles, in combination and in different sets of combination, learning to understand the meaningfulness of the practices they influence and the grammar thereof.

The above is significant for two main reasons. Firstly, it provides the basis for a skill that strategy practitioners can apply to investigate language-games. This method links the purpose of the organisation, the grammar of the language-game, and the iterative exploration of the practitioner. It defines the results that are important to the

strategic management discipline. Not results that have been borrowed from the language-games of economics, but results that are consistent with the picture of strategic management as a grammatical investigation, wherein organisations are constituted of language-games, practiced in pursuit of societal purposes. The example of the salesmen in the Kalahari provides a picture of the understanding that can be gained by the strategy practitioner, and it should be evident that this understanding into the role that the organisation plays in society is possible through the application of the grammatical method, and provides a perspicuous understanding of the likely activities of both organisations.

4.3. The metaphysical concepts of strategic management

In the process of theoretical elucidation new concepts are “discovered” which serve a critical role in the explanatory function of the theory. If strategic management is able to discover ontologically significant concepts, it would certainly be justified in ascribing the definitive character of aspects of the discipline to such concepts. This is what is claimed in the case of competitive advantage:

> The hypothesis of competitive advantage dominates theories of sustained superior performance. Under any leading strategy theory, sustained superior performance exists, it has specific causes, and these causes are tied to the concept of competitive advantage… Competitive advantage has generated a large volume of scholarly output, both theoretical and empirical (Bowen and Wiersema 1999; Rouse and Daellenbach 1999); firms do, by all accounts, attempt to identify, create and leverage competitive advantage (Collis and Montgomery 1995; Porter 1996); and competitive advantage is universally accepted in strategic management courses and textbooks as an essential concept in strategy (Barney 1997; Grant 1998).
>
> Powell 2001, p. 875-876

The claim therefore is that competitive advantage is the source of sustained superior performance, the ultimate objective of strategic management. There are a number of arguments concerning various contentions of competitive advantage in the literature (Conner 1991; Rumelt 1991; Coff 1999; Cockburn et al. 2000; Priem and Butler 2001; Powell 2002; Knott 2003). However, the aim of this section is a grammatical critique, based on Wittgenstein’s philosophical method. And so the question we seek

to answer is as follows: in what language-games of the organisation do the concepts of competitive advantage and superior economic returns have currency? If the literature is consulted, two different applications seem to surface. The first is the use of competitive advantage and superior economic returns as a goal. This is the case in the following Porter (1996) extract:

> Competitive advantage grows out of the entire system of activities… Strategic fit among many activities is fundamental not only to competitive advantage but also to the sustainability of that advantage… Strategic positions should have a horizon of a decade or more, not of a single planning cycle.
>
> Porter 1996, p. 73-74

Porter's notion of the concept seems to be concerned not with how the goals are sought. But there is also literature in which superior economic returns is operationalised as a measure to gauge industries:

> Economic performance was operationalized with two measures: an accounting measure, return on assets (ROA), and an economic measure, Tobin's q, the ratio of firm market value to the replacement costs of its assets. ROA, net income divide by total assets, was selected because much prior strategic management and economic research has employed a measure of accounting returns, often ROA. Tobin's q was selected because some studies have found results to vary between accounting and economic measures (Hoskisson et al. 1993) … Tobin's q was operationalised as the ratio of market to book value… Superior economic performance was operationalised as statistically significant above-average (relative to the industry or reference set) economic performance over a five year period… Sustained superior economic performance was operationalised as superior economic performance that lasted six or more consecutive windows (i.e. ten years) … While this establishes an admittedly conservative test, any shorter period, e.g. nine-years, would, given the methodology employed, permit a firm with a single year of extraordinary performance (e.g. due to the sale of a subsidiary) to be classified as a sustained superior performer.
>
> Wiggins and Ruefli 2002, p. 86-87

While Wiggins and Ruefli has a significant degree of specificity in their metric, what constrains this metric? In the paper they point to other research, and concerns about statistical rigour (Wiggins and Ruefli 2002). Consider the following language-game:

> Two students have to take a test. Neither of them know what the test would entail and the nature of the test is such that there is significant variability in the subject matter. Now the first student goes to the second one and declares that she has worked out a principle for how the questions would be set, and she presents her result for what the questions were likely to be. Initially the second student might be impressed, but then the question would arise as to how the principle works. And if the first student were to explain that she had inferred some rules based on the duration of the test, feedback from past students to establish a statistical rotation of topics, and some basic knowledge of the faculty involved. Now, given the information at hand, an argument can be made that her principle would be the best possible theory that could be developed. The principle explains a lot about the circumstance under which it was developed and very little about the test to be taken by the students.

The principle plays no part in the way of the language-game of the test setting. It can however play a part in the way in which the students now conduct themselves in preparing for the test. In other words, it can have a normative role in the language-game of test preparation. Similarly, the argument made here is that the concepts of superior economic returns and competitive advantage play no role in the operational language-games of the organisation, but can play a normative role if used as a grammatical rule or measure of how organisational practices are conducted.

But sustainable economic returns are surely part of the language-games of organisations. Which organisation would not want such returns? And is it not so that this is what organisations are striving towards? This might indeed be the case. In fact, it is quite plausible that many CEO's and business managers would confirm exactly that. And they might even be able to say that they strive to achieve sustainable competitive advantage through such and such means which in their estimate should yield a consistent performance level of such and such returns over the next 5 financial periods. But that is not what is at issue here. An ontological concept cannot get its justification for existence from an organisational metric. It is somewhat analogous to ancient warriors belief in tonics that created magical force-fields to protect them in battle. The force-field does not exist because the precise specification for the tonic ingredients and ritual of consumption are defined. The concept of superior economic performance and its link to competitive advantage needs to be verifiable in its own right, that is, in terms of the function of the concepts in societal practices.

But could we not describe the functioning of superior economic returns? Take the following language-game as an example:

> Two children erect lemonade stands side by side, and throughout the day, the first lemonade stand consistently gets more customers than the second one, such that by midday, there is a clear track record of commercial transactions that has been established. Now what could have created this difference. Well, let us say that the first child's stand is better considered, in a manner that aligns with Porter's notion of strategic fit; better presentation, more welcoming feel; more efficient processing of customers; better tasting lemonade, etc.

Is that not analogous to what happens for superior economic returns? Well, what has been described is a set of language-games that go into preparing for a function that has societal value (i.e. providing freshly squeezed lemonade). And presumably it was the knowledge of the societal preference for lemonade or the grammar of the societal need for lemonade that led to the first child making the choices that she did. For if it was a competitive advantage – let's even pick the competence of the existing knowledge of societal preferences – that was leading to the better results, she could begin to think that she should pay more attention to this thing called existing knowledge of societal preferences. Perhaps she should invest in encoding it in a manual and franchising based on the knowledge. And so she invests a week in the process, and launches five franchise stands. Now there exists a very plausible scenario in which neither the original nor the new franchises do well in the second week, because the language-games of society might have changed or might respond differently to increased lemonade stands. We can run this analogy in different ways or even in increasingly more complexity so that it almost mirrored the phenomena of investigation, but there would likely be at least one scenario under which the abstraction of a theoretical concept from a functional practice of society, could not replicate the future grammar of the societal practice. If that is the case, then the practitioner would have to check the actual language-game, and in this way the theoretical concept would fall out of existence since there would be no practice of use for it (the engagement with the actual language-games of society being a more complete activity for the same purpose).

In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein describes a type of question which we misunderstand as requiring an explanation:

> Something that we know when no one asks us, but no longer know when we are supposed to give an account of it.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 42e

These types of questions are the ones that frame our perspective or way of thinking. Wittgenstein cites questions such as “what is time?” or “what is meaning?”, but it extends to questions that relate to the meaningful constructs in society.

> These phenomena constitute the form of the world which we inhabit, and in asking these questions we express a desire to understand them more clearly. Yet in the very act of framing these questions, we are tempted to adopt an attitude towards these phenomena which, Wittgenstein believes, makes us approach them in the wrong way… What we really need to do is turn our whole enquiry round and concern ourselves, not with explanation or theory construction, but with description.
>
> McGinn 1997, p. 18-19

In strategic management, the temptation exists to explain performance, and that temptation leads to a propensity to create abstract constructs which take us away from the phenomena of experience. A grammatical investigation serves as a reminder what is at issue is the role of the organisation in the language-games of society. It is within the language-game that the organisation has meaning.

4.4. The universals of strategic management

Many of the theories of strategic management rely on a perspective of the organisation as an entity with attributes such as position, resources, competitive advantage, configuration etc. This picture of the organisation stands in opposition to a grammatical perspective of strategic management. This sub-section would propose an alternative to that picture based on Wittgenstein’s family-resemblance notion. The argument being made here is not necessarily that an organisation is a family resemblance concept. That would not be in line with Wittgenstein’s philosophical position. Instead, the argument is that there is as much justification for the use of the family resemblance concept, which can reveal aspects of the organisation that would have been left potentially interrogated. Wittgenstein explains the concept of family-resemblances in the following way:

> 66. Consider for example the proceedings that we call ‘games’. I mean board games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all? – Don’t say: ‘There must be something common, or they would not be called “games”’ – but look and see whether there is anything common to all. – For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that… here you find many correspondences… much that is common is retained, but much is lost. Are they [games] all ‘amusing’? Compare chess with noughts and crosses. Or is there always winning and losing… In ball games there is winning and losing; but when a child throws his ball at the wall and catches it again, this feature has disappeared… Think now of games like ring-a-ring-a-roses; here is the element of amusement, but how many other characteristic features have disappeared!
>
> Wittgenstein 2005, p. 27e

For Wittgenstein, similar constructs do not need to have essential or necessary features. Instead of a single net that attempts to blanket all organisations, each organisation can be thought of as a coherent set of language-games, or a grammatical construct. They have overlapping as well as distinct features, and so that a plurality of interpretations has value provided we accept them as objects of comparison, that help broaden our understanding of the organisation, rather than as concepts that provide insight into the fundamental nature of the organisation.

> The result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing… I can think of no better expression to characterise these similarities than “family resemblances”; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way – And I shall say: games form a family.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 32e

Organisations can similarly be thought of as forming a family. Wittgenstein’s philosophy provides a perspective of organisations as grammatical constructs. Each organisation develops a set of language-games which are practices constrained by the norms of organisational practice. These norms can often be similar to those in other organisations because organisations function with similar societal constraints. Strategic management theoretical models are by this logic, the illumination of various language-games which manifest themselves to different degrees in different

organisations depending on their context. Such language-games can also be imbued with differing levels of significance based on the differing grammatical rules of organisations. This perspective would be able to account for the perceived inconsistency that persists in terms of the universal applicability of strategic management theoretical models. Having command of a strategic management theoretical model is like knowing a language and being a language practitioner is to engage in the language-games of that organisation.

Every activity is part of the practices of the organisation, and the organisation plays a role in the larger societal practices. The organisation has a way of hiring, rewarding, promoting staff, scheduling meetings, selecting suppliers, advertising, pricing, launching products, measuring financial results, initiating structural changes, ensuring governance, etc. and where a practice needs to be defined in order to meet a need, the organisation has a way of defining the activity. It is not that the organisation is created and then the activities are determined, or that an organisation is moulded after a strategy is put in place. The grammar of the organisation, its way of doing things, is always embedded in the constitution of the organisation. The organisation does not exist without its grammar. Its grammar is always expressed in its language-games.

The language-games of the organisation are the language-games of the society of which the organisation is a member, because organisations are not islands. They are always only possible as a set of communal language-games which have currency for the community because they fulfil a purpose in society which is significant and meaningful. It is not the case that the grammar of the organisation is uniformly spread, exerting equal influence on all practices. It is also possible (and likely) for the organisation to fulfil multiple inter-related purposes such that it is a network of language-games which are to a large or lesser degree affected by a set of associated grammars. Organisations are not neutral vessels for the strategic manipulation of management. They are built for purpose, and that purpose is embedded in the grammar of the organisation, and is expressed in every activity that is performed throughout the company, both those that contribute directly to the purpose and those that are part of the internal workings of the organisation.

The purpose of the organisation described here is not the profit motive of the shareholders or the needs of the customer. These are complementary measurements that can sometimes also serve as a proxy for organisational purpose in the same way it might be possible to determine the winning team by comparing the demeanour or morale of their players. One of the most quoted passages from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* explains the role of language in fixing meaning:

> 43. For a large case of cases – though not for all – in which we employ the word "meaning" it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 20e

The language, in our case, is the practices that constitute organisations and organisations, as constructs, are inside the language, and therefore must also have meaning and purpose. The purpose of the organisation as a grammatical construct is its role in the language-game of society, and that role is delineated by an uncertain or collaborative requirement of a function that is meaningful to society. Every society has practices which have functions within the context of that society. Those functions delineate the activities that play a transformative role. They produce outcomes or developments in society. Much of our practice is so intended; it builds on what has been done by others; it moves people and goods between places; it re-organises hierarchies and methods by which decisions are made; it responds to emergencies and prevents accidents and these functions have different forms in different language-games.

It is the use of the function that constrains it and determines its form. Where these functions are well constrained, monolithic societal practices or concepts can be employed to fulfil the function. Structures of justice and power are typically thus construed, such as the system of courts which function as a single societal structure; the head of state; the military; etc. However, there are functions that are not constrained in this way. A primitive one was the use of land to grow crops and rear animals. Decisions as to what to grow when; in what sequence; how to maximise land use; etc. all have an impact on the outcome. In practice there are a variety of ways in which this function can be carried out representing a societal redundancy. Organisations coalesce around such redundancies or uncertainty and each

organisation represents a specific possible solution or pattern of undertaking that informs a possibility in terms of the outcome of the function.

Organisations thus conceived represent the field of possible developments that is valuable to that society. And inasmuch as each development is valuable, each organisation is of significance, but in a different way. And because they share a common purpose they have non-arbitrary aspects. However, they are also unconstrained because of the redundancy of the societal function they are embedded in. This provides a set of arbitrary differences that are not driven by the core purpose of the organisation, but can be significant in the language-game of the organisation itself. An example might be identity within a neighbourhood in which the office building is located (providing such location was functionally arbitrary). This duality is a feature of Wittgenstein's concept of grammar:

> According to this thesis, our meanings do not live up to the standards of absolute determinacy and fixity of semantic foundationalism, but they are not radically indeterminate: they are contextually determinate, that is, they acquire a transitory form of determinacy in particular contexts of communication, given the purpose of the communicative exchanges, the background conditions and practices, the participant's perspectives, their patterns of interactions, etc.
>
> Medina 2005, p. 89

Identifying strategic management as a family resemblance concept, similar to concepts like language and games, means that rigid criteria for what counts as an instance of the class of concepts cannot be easily applied and is arguably not a valid framework for such concepts. One of Wittgenstein's comments on language bears citing:

> If we study the grammar, say, of the words "wishing", "thinking", "understanding", "meaning", we shall not be dissatisfied when we have described various cases of wishing, thinking, etc. If someone said, "surely this is not all that one calls 'wishing'", we should answer, "certainly not, but you can build up more complicated cases if you like." And after all, there is not one definite class of features which characterize all cases of wishing (at least not as the word is commonly used). If on the other hand you wish to give a definition of wishing, i.e., to draw a sharp boundary, then you are free to draw it as you like; and this boundary will never entirely coincide with the actual usage, as this usage has no sharp boundary.

> The idea that in order to get clear about the meaning of a general term one had to find the common element in all its applications has shackled philosophical investigation; for it has not only led to no result, but also made the philosopher dismiss as irrelevant the concrete cases, which alone could have helped him to understand the usage of the general term.
>
> Wittgenstein 1958, p. 19-20

And again, later in *Zettel* he writes:

> 112. It is not to be expected of this word that it should have a unified employment; we should rather expect the opposite.
>
> Wittgenstein 1967, p. 20

The picture that emerges is one in which more than one meaning is possible, and is possible within the boundaries (determined by language) of the same society, embedded in the context of different language-games. Those language-games might embody organisations, and multiple organisations can be employed to the same purpose with different constructs and metaphysical concepts. It is entirely consistent that different language-games, even within the boundaries of organisations, entertain different metaphysical constructs which create differences in the way meaning is attributed to events, organisational properties or activities. Indeed, this is often the case when we look at the practitioners and what they are doing and how they are making decisions.

This is not a triviality to be assumed away. This is how the organisation is functioning. And because of these differing grammatical constructs, there is no single way of pronouncing on the subject matter in question, except to say that it is about the language-games of the organisation, and the mastery of the different language-games thereof. And inasmuch as every practice is a language-game, the activity that denotes the practice of strategic management is a language-game about language-games. Language-games are societal constructs in which people participate to achieve specific objectives. And the objectives constrain the actions of participants into a set of complementary activities, which only have meaning within the context of the language-game.

4.5. Summary and conclusion

The objective of the above section was to use Wittgenstein's methodology to provide a therapeutic critique of the theories of the strategic management discipline. What should be evident from the above chapter is that no theoretical model of strategic management has been provided. The above investigation has not attempted to define a way to do strategic management, either in terms of tools, process or activities. This is a purposeful characteristic of Wittgenstein's method in that it provides no positive theory of its subject matter. Instead, it makes one attentive to the language-games of the organisation. The meaning of the organisation is embedded in the grammar that defines the way these language-games or practices are executed and evaluated. It therefore makes sense that each member of the organisation understands the role in the various practices in which they are engaged; that they understand the broader context of these practices in terms of their grammar, i.e. the various meanings associated to the practices; how these practices are related to other practices in the organisation and other similar practices; how the set of practices of the organisation fulfil their different functions in societal language-games; the importance of these societal language-games to them, their families, their communities and the broader society at large; how their function in the society is unconstrained and how other organisations respond to fulfil similar roles in the same or different societies; how engaged the organisation is in the way these societal functions are changing and the changing roles of the organisation in society.

Much of this understanding is missing in the way many practitioners engage their roles in organisations. The value of this understanding is clarity about the purpose of each person's function. And such clarity is independent of any theoretical position or abstraction. In this way, each individual choice is made up of a set of commitments to the actual practices of the language-games, and the combination of the activities of the organisation is tethered to the function of the organisation in the societal language-games. Wittgenstein's criterion for a theory was that it was internally consistent, that is to say that its rules and framework express the logic of the theory in its totality.

The view of strategic management provided here, that arises from Wittgenstein's later philosophy develops an organisation as a family of language-games that work

in accordance with the grammar of their practices, which is partially constrained by the language-games of society. The possibilities for how and what the organisation's role is in society, or the organisation's ability to fulfil different roles in society is given by the composition of this family of grammatically coherent practices. To want to influence the performance of the organisation is to start a process of thinking in a narrow way about the organisation. And this is of course a natural thing to do while engaged in the language-games for which those metrics have meaning. It becomes problematic when the metric is extended beyond its particular language-game.

The ability to arrest the tendency to abstract in this way is demonstrated by Wittgenstein's method in the above section. Here the aim is two-fold. Firstly, to make the argument for the use of the theoretical method in strategic management, by critiquing aspects of the canon of knowledge of the discipline that are not in accordance with the idea of a philosophical investigation. Secondly, to demonstrate the method itself, using it to make the arguments of this section of the thesis.

The above argument aims to dissolve the problems of theoretical stalemate in strategic management. It shows where the discipline has made conceptual and metaphysical missteps that have prompted the asking of questions that the discipline is ill-suited to answer and thus achieves ambiguous results in the pursuit of such questions. Unshackled from this construct of its purpose, strategic management is free to explore anew its purpose within the organisational construct. The function of strategic management in this sense is changed from a focus on performance heterogeneity to a focus on perspicuous understanding of the link between the language-games of the organisation and the role it plays in the language-games of society. This thesis argues that this purpose is unique and of critical importance to the organisation and to society as a whole. Strategic management investigates the very language-games by which organisations fulfil their role in society. Mastery thereof consists in knowing how different language-games are compatible with different grammars, and understanding how different grammars unlock specific linguistic possibilities. Styles of thinking that take the discipline away from this task arguably make the experience of the organisation poorer in that the potential exists for unfulfilled possibilities. The robustness of the organisational language-games in fulfilling its purpose in the face of different possible futures is the proposed meaning of strategic management.

Chapter 5: Wittgenstein's pedagogical method of grammatical investigation in strategic management

5.1. A grammatical way of seeing in strategic management

Wittgenstein's philosophy works from the premise of a society in which human beings engage in different normative practices. This thesis applies the style of thinking in the later philosophy of Wittgenstein in order to eliminate persistent problems in the prevailing perspectives of the discipline. Wittgenstein's grammatical investigation had two complementary approaches: the therapeutic method, which was applied in the prevision chapter of the thesis, and the pedagogical method, which is the focus of this chapter.

Wittgenstein's work is often criticised as a negative endeavour because of its emphasis on breaking down unquestioned metaphysical assumptions. Wittgenstein himself was aware of this. He wrote in *Investigations*:

> Where does our investigation get its importance from, since it seems only to destroy everything interesting, that is, all that is great and important? (As it were all the buildings, leaving behind only bits of stone and rubble). What we are destroying is nothing but houses of cards and we are clearing up the ground of language on which they stand.
>
> Wittgenstein 1961, p. 48e

What remains – what is foundational – is the language of practice, which is the community by which the organisation is constituted, and which could not exist but for the normative practice that exists in response to a societal need. Wittgenstein's human being is a socially constrained individual, given to act in socially co-ordinated ways. Wittgenstein's philosophy makes us aware of the way we are seeing based on these constraints, and other possibilities embedded in the grammar of the language. He is not attempting to construct a theory of language, nor is this thesis building a language based theory of strategy. That would be counter to Wittgenstein's philosophical refrains. What is argued for here is the value of seeing anew; seeing similarities, differences, and connections across the landscape of actual and potential language-games, and to be able to act on this enhanced perspective. Using

Wittgenstein's analogy, there is a temptation to clear the rubble and erect a new façade in its place; no less misguided than the first, but different. Wittgenstein's method warns against this. The therapeutic method addresses the dangers of such thinking. The pedagogical method provides an alternative way of thinking, based on what Wittgenstein referred to as a perspicuous representation of the grammar of language. Wittgenstein remarks in *Investigations*:

> 122. A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not command a clear view of the use of our words – our grammar is lacking this sort of perspicuity. A perspicuous representation produces just that understanding which consists in "seeing connexions". Hence the importance of finding and inventing intermediate cases.
>
> 123. A philosophical problem has the following form: "I do not know my way about".
>
> […]
>
> 125…The fundamental fact here is that we lay down rules, a technique, for a game, and that then when we follow the rules, things do not turn out as we had assumed. That we are therefore as it were entangled in our own rules. This entanglement in our rules is what we want to understand (i.e. get a clear view of). It throws light on our concept of meaning something…
>
> 126… One might give the name "philosophy" to what is possible before all new discovers and inventions
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 49e-50e

The pedagogical method is one in which the practitioner comes to see their way more clearly, in that they understand the grammar of the language-games in society for which the organisation has a role, and this gives meaning to the context of their circumstance; they can see the linkages between the various activities of their organisation and other organisations in similar situations; they see the golden thread that connects their role in the language-games in which they are members to the function of the organisation in the language-games of society; and they can see how to act. It should be clear from Wittgenstein's comments and from the above that there are many different potential perspectives that would be useful to a practitioner, each depending on the nature of the problem encountered. It is distinctly possible that there are several potential practices that are in accord with a grammatical investigation as a strategic management practice. The perspectives documented

here are meant to show a potential expression of the approach advocated based on Wittgenstein's later philosophy, and to demonstrate the method of grammatical investigation in strategic management. The chapter builds on the perspectives of Wittgenstein's philosophy as an engaged practice in three ways: the ethical perspectives, wherein Wittgenstein's work advocates a personal connection between the person and the practice; anthropological, wherein Wittgenstein stresses the learning and proficiency of individuals within a community or set of communities; and finally, ethnographical, wherein practitioners develop new ways of seeing the landscape of their language-games.

The table below gives a summary of the way in which Wittgenstein's later philosophy incorporates these perspectives:

Ethical	Anthropological	Ethnographical
- Work on philosophy requires work on oneself. Ethics is intimately linked with a person's style of thought - very philosophical error is a mark of a character failing. An individual bias or prejudice is surfaced - Becoming aware of a predilection for a particular style of thought - Ethics is a choice between duty and exile or death. The commitment to their duty in the language-game gives individuals peace - The practice of group therapy can be used to operationalise Wittgenstein's ethics in organisations	- The community is the primary unit for which the normative language functions - Meaning is typically given by the use or purpose of the language-games - The rules of language-games or grammar is a historical phenomena emergent from the need for specific practices within communities - Sense-making occurs within the language-games and is contextual rather than universal - Normative participation in the language-game as a skill - Learning and induction through others - imitation and apprenticeship	- Concerned with seeing connections - differences, similarities and relationships across phenomena - Avoid metaphysical commitments by considering practices as objects of comparisons - Perspicuous understanding connects possible futures to the grammar of the language-games of scoeity - Organisations are family resemblance concepts with arbitrary and non-arbitrary features - The practice of curating language-games can be used to operationalise Wittgenstein's pedagogical method in organisations

Table 4: The ethical, anthropological and ethnographical perspectives of Wittgenstein's later philosophy

Wittgenstein's later philosophy is anthropological in the sense that it pivots around the practices of the community. It is the practices of the community that unseat Descartes's self as the central focus of the approach. Wittgenstein's philosophy is based on a primacy of action. This is already present in *Philosophical Investigations* and even more acute in *On Certainty*. It is these societal practices that mediate the meaning of our language. Being a functional member of a community means being able to participate in its language-games:

> What children learn is not how to translate their thoughts and wishes into words, but how to request, demand, beg, nag, ask and answer questions, call people and to respond to calls, tell people things and to listen to what others tell; in short, they learn to be human – not homo sapiens, but homo loquens [speaking man]. As the linguistic behavioural repertoire of the child grows, so too the horizons of possible thought, feeling and volition expands.
>
> Hacker 2013, p. 115

The important skill here is the ability to participate effectively in language-games. Proficiency within multiple language-games provides the individual a place in the community. Mastery of normative participation in a diverse set of language-games is a requirement of the community.

This is different from the ethnographical skill. The skill requires an ability to see similarities and differences between language-games; to understand the landscape of possible practices and associated grammars. The strategist can be seen as a sort of map-maker, charting the landscape of the language games of society. These maps are the basis of grammatical inquiry. It is through the comparison of different language-games that understanding is gained. Wittgenstein employed language-games as objects of comparisons in at least three different ways.

First, the juxtaposition of similar language-games. Where a practitioner has experience of similar organisational practices with different grammars, such a comparison can be made. The practitioner's knowledge of the language-games need not necessarily be through direct participation in all compared alternatives; such understanding can be gained through a curiosity that is fed by observation and internalisation or through accounts and storytelling by known participants. The practitioner's understanding must have the perspective of a participant in the language-game. The important thing is that the understanding is not a conceptual one but a practical one. Knowledge of the concept of the language yields no information about its practices and is not useful within the grammatical construct of strategic management. For example, I might have a justified concept of French as a beautiful language, or German as a technical language; or I might have an understanding of the characteristics of the language such as the number of genders, the use of negation, the peculiarities of the alphabet, etc. This does not make me a functioning speaker of the language, and it is the practice of the language that gives

it meaning. This is a central tenet of Wittgenstein's philosophy. In philosophy, it is given that the philosopher is also a functional practitioner of the language. Therefore, this condition is often assumed to be in place; this contrasts with the practice of strategic management where it is not a given that the strategist would have functional knowledge of the language-game under investigation. And such knowledge is a precursor for the participation in the ethnological skill for a given investigation where similar language-games are objects of comparison. So in comparing actual language-games, it is practical understanding that yields the necessary perspective.

Second, the comparison could involve primitive or simplified versions of the language-games in question. This is an analogical technique, whereby the process involved is to replace complex language-games with simpler, more familiar ones, stripping away the complexity to bring the essence of the practice into view. An example of this would be to imagine a similar practice in a smaller organisation, in a more historic setting or a familiar social practice. One could replace organisational planning with family budgeting; strategy implementation with military tactics etc. This type of comparison is constrained by the essential feature of the language-game that is to be highlighted by the comparison, and is only successful if it shows the feature clearly for further investigation.

Finally, imaginary language-games can be invented in order to create a comparison. And these language-games can be applied to the past, present or future situations. The constraint for such language-games is that they are substitutive with the actual language-game under investigation, and that they bring into focus specific aspects of the grammar of the language.

The rest of this chapter uses the three perspectives of Wittgenstein's philosophy and the corresponding strategic management competences as a structural framework for investigating the aspects of the practice of strategic management given in the table above. The picture presented here is not to be taken as a new theory of the discipline in the scientific sense. The grammatical perspective is not intended as a dogmatic assertion about the discipline. Instead, this section engages in an evaluation of the grammatical basis for the discipline. This means asking questions and gaining an understanding of the various language-games in which the

organisation plays a role, and understanding the ethical, historical, practical and socio-economic implications for the members of the community for which the language-games serve a purpose. The thesis puts forward a picture that makes a particular sense of the organisation as a social construct. The completeness of the picture would be given in the various types of language-games and situational thought experiments and cases that provide the basis for the understanding of strategic management advocated.

5.2. The ethical perspective of strategic management

5.2.1. Working on oneself

We know that philosophy was a very personal practice for Wittgenstein, bordering on a practice of moral character. He remarked that *Tractatus* was an ethical work. Monk's biography of Wittgenstein, *The Duty of Genius* (1990) makes this very point as an overarching arc of the narrative:

> …for Wittgenstein, all philosophy, in so far as it is pursued honestly and decently, begins with confession… [Quoting Wittgenstein:] "Lying to oneself about oneself, deceiving yourself about the pretence in your own state of will, must have a harmful influence on [one's] style"… It is no coincidence that Wittgenstein wrote the set of remarks with which he remained most satisfied at a time when he was most ruthlessly honest about himself.
>
> Monk 1990, p. 365

It was not that Wittgenstein subscribed to any mystical beliefs. It is instead, a feature of Wittgenstein's view of philosophy as an engaged enterprise. Consider the first line from the preface of *Tractatus*:

> This book will perhaps only be understood by those who have themselves already thought the thoughts which are expressed in it – or similar thoughts.
>
> Wittgenstein 1961, p. i

And again the penultimate paragraph from the preface of *Philosophical Investigations*:

> I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking. But if possible, to stimulate someone to thoughts of his own.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. ii

Wittgenstein's picture of philosophy is not like science where a person can scan a set of results and be satisfied in the knowledge gained, without having to wrestle through the missteps and painstaking work that must have been necessary in the initial pursuit of such knowledge.

> The results of philosophy are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and of the bumps that the understanding has got by running its head up against the limits of language. These bumps make us see the value of the discovery.
>
> Wittgenstein 1967, p. 48e

Instead the method advocated by Wittgenstein requires a clear understanding of oneself; the understanding that each person has deep seated commitments to various modes of conceptual reality that are in essence a projection of their familiarity with one or another language-games of their communities. To understand and to work to overcome these barriers or biases; to have a change in ones' style of thought; learning to see alternative conceptual landscapes is a personal, subjective exercise. Wittgenstein wrote:

> Work on philosophy… is really more work on oneself. On one's own conception. On how one sees things (And what one expects of them).
>
> Wittgenstein 1969, p. 24

The grammatical approach to strategy allows that human beings can make rational decisions and still be invested in these decisions. The choices and the practices people make are important to them. From a Wittgensteinian point of view, they define their role in the tribe, and therefore their form of life.

5.2.2. Organisational belonging in strategic management

Human societies have placed a significant responsibility in our organisations and institutional structures to mediate meaningful functions within society. The influence of religious institutions through the Middle Ages is mirrored by the influence of the

corporation in the Industrial and post-Industrial era. What reverberates through the world, even more so than the policies of political regimes, are the decisions of influential leaders of corporations. Many of these decisions are directed by what we think of as the strategies of these corporations; their systemic, deliberate choices. These choices are not made in isolation. The corporation is not a programmed machine executing an uninterruptable sequence of activities. While people are often tempted to use language which refers to organisations in this way, this is usually intended as metaphor rather than the confession of a deeply held belief. People also often use language that confines the consequential choices made by corporations to a small set of individuals. This is one step down the responsibility ladder; an admission that human beings bear the responsibility for the actions and consequences thereof, but not a personal acceptance of such responsibility.

Strategic management theory is not ethically silent. The following passage introduces the issue:

> One of the concerns with strategy as a field is that its goal (durable profits) appears at odds with that of microeconomics (homogeneous firms with zero profits). Thus even if we can find sources of durable profits, maybe we shouldn't – because doing so comes at the expense of social welfare. In this sense strategy is an "economic bad". Probably the most vivid evidence of this tension is the fact that Porter's Competitive Strategy (1982) is Industrial Organisation turned on its head – exploiting indications of anti-competitive behaviour to create prescriptions for durable profits.
>
> Knott 2003, p. 687

The research in what is called Strategy-as-Practice also voices the following disquiet:

> While people do strategy, strategy theory is populated by multivariate analyses of firm or industry-level effects upon firm performance. There is a curious absence of human actors and their actions in most strategy theories, even those that purport to examine the internal dynamics of the firm, such as the resource-based view.
>
> Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009, p. 69

It is not that strategic management theories advocate bad choices, but a narrative can be made, as suggested by Knott (2003) and Denning (2012), that some forms of strategic management theory promote choices aimed at the accumulation of profits

without any moral restraint. To the discipline's credit there is a great deal of interest in ethics and moral philosophy amongst strategy practitioners. There is also a significant body of literature on the topic (Arthur 1984; Singer 1994; Hosmer 1994; Husted and Allen 2000; Robertson and Crittenden 2003; Walls, Berrone and Phan 2012) and there are at least two journals, the *Journal of Business Ethics* and *Corporate Governance: The International Journal of Business in Society*, dedicated to the topic. Indeed, it can be argued that such considerations are now more in the spotlight than ever before:

> Corporate governance has become one of the most researched topics in the organisational field and a perennial cause celebre amongst business journalists, scholars, and public policy makers… The field of corporate governance addresses a wide variety of topics with financial performance as the focus.
>
> Walls, Berrone and Phan 2012, p. 33

The issue is that often ethics is viewed as being in the service of the economic performance of the organisation. Some strategic management theories assume that ethics can be integrated as an input variable in the various economic frameworks underpinning the various theories of strategic management.

How the discipline of strategic management responds to scandals as Enron or the Subprime Mortgage crash could serve to reinforce the practices of organisations against such possibilities in the future. In 1952, the DH106 Comet, the first production commercial jetliner, began its life in service. Within a year it had suffered a number of accidents in flight which were eventually traced back to a number of design flaws, including the hull windows, which were square, causing dangerous stresses to build up in the corners. The oval windows we see in commercial jetliners today are the result of the lessons from these tragedies. Similarly, after the Subprime Mortgage crash that brought about the collapse of Lehman Brothers, the banking industry underwent systemic stress testing.

If strategic management is so integrally linked to the performance of organisations, then the discipline should be answerable to the lessons of the past. Yet, despite the increased interest in corporate governance, moral and ethical philosophy, no systematic strategic management mechanisms have emerged within the discipline to better insulate our corporations against the pitfalls of catastrophic collapse triggered

by a dangerous misalignment of performance incentives or an obsessive pursuit of narrow goals and self-interest. Indeed, there are a number of commitments that prevent such a comprehensive review within the strategic management discipline. Firstly, strategic management theory, as defined in the contemporary discipline has an increasingly decoupled practice and research dimension (Sanchez and Heene 1997). The disconnect could promote a narrative that excuses theoretical responsibility in the face of market crisis since the theory had no direct application to begin with. Secondly, there is an assumption in strategic management that strategy is the domain of a select few individuals. The full force of the idea of exemplary leaders and captains of industry might have been dulled over the past half century, however it's echo still remains in the underlying assumptions of our practices. CEO's are often given disproportionate credit for events that arguably required leadership and skill at multiple levels of the organisation (Stewart 2006). The picture brings to mind Brecht's poem from 1935 in opposition to exactly such a mental model, *Questions From a Worker Who Reads*:

> Who built Thebes of the 7 gates?
>
> In the books you will read the names of kings.
>
> Did the kings haul up the lumps of rock?
>
> Brecht 1935

Such a picture also has the effect of absolving the broader community of organisational members of responsibility. Thirdly, the commitment to a parsimonious financial result as the objective of the organisation, and even the rationale for its existence can be hard to square with the moral and ethical questions involved in the assessment of decisions that precipitate organisational collapse. There is no barometer for greed in the pursuit of sustained above average returns. Finally, the "soft", ambiguous, subjective nature of concepts such as ethics and morality are uncomfortable and suspicious to strategy practitioners trying to pitch the tent of the discipline on the hard rock of scientific reasoning and method.

Against this background of moral questioning, it could be said that Wittgenstein's grammatical method wears its ethics on its sleeve. Applied to strategic management, the ethical perspective of Wittgenstein's philosophy has profound implications for the way in which strategy practitioners approach the discipline. Firstly, to participate in

the language-game is to work on oneself; to reveal a person. There is no special type of person, or level in the organisation from whence the practice of strategic management becomes important. Instead, everyone, acting as part of the language-game, having mastery of a role in the language-game is engaging across the three perspectives of strategic management practices, including the reflection on their perspective of the grammar of the language-games of the organisation. The choice a person makes to be part of the practices of a language-game – a member of an organisational community – is an ethical one, and every action reveals the genuine commitment of the individual and their place in the community. Each person belongs to the tribe for which their language-games have meaning. And the meaning of being for each person is their role in the language-games of their society. When a person understands the language-games in which they have purposeful roles, and the way those language-games have functions in society, the morality of their position is undeniable. Each person belongs to a purposeful community. The pedagogical approach serves to constantly build greater understanding of the language-games of the community. This gives each person the following sense of purpose: that we are individually significant because of our role in the communities to which we belong. This has the impact of pivoting the discipline around the axis of its real need; that which gives the practitioners the courage to act in the service of the language-game, not to succumb to the pull of their own prejudices or successes, and to apply their knowledge in the shape of a more purposeful, more robust practice in fulfilment of the function of the language-game.

Wittgenstein's ethics is the foundation for the practice of strategic management viewed as a grammatical discipline. That foundation provides a mechanism to arrest the failings that leads collapses like that of Enron. That mechanism is the understanding of the language-games of the community; making connections between the role of individuals and the greater functioning of society. It is the role of strategic management to develop such connections in the practices of the organisation. The soul of the organisation is illuminated by the perspicuous representation of its language-games.

5.3. The anthropological perspective of strategic management

Why do some organisations fail while others succeed? One answer might be that organisations are different, but this is a tautology. A possibility might be that different practices exist in the organisations, and what brings these practices into being, makes them meaningful and evaluates effectiveness as the metaphysical commitments or grammar of the organisation. The metaphysical commitments of the discipline elevate certain changes above others, arguing that they are linked to the performance of the firm, and are caused by strategic attributes such as differentiated market positioning or superior core competences. But the discipline struggles to distinguish purposeful, guided changes from those that are no less significant but emerged rather than being planned. More importantly, it struggles to predictively determine what change could be significant in a given circumstance. *Wired Magazine* famously published an article called *101 Ways to Save Apple* (Daly 1997) which roughly coincided with Steve Job's return to the CEO role. Given the meteoric rise of Apple under his leadership, it is interesting to look back at the sentiment for what others thought needed to be done at the time. An article in *Business Insider* (Price 2015) does exactly this, pointing to some things that *Wired* got wrong which were diametrically the opposite of what Jobs actually did. The point here is that the field of possible strategic options, while not infinite, can be very broad with valid rationale, even for opposing action. So without some criteria for determining what type of action or change significantly affects performance, the discipline has no justification for the selective focus on specific types of activities as strategically significant. One might argue that there is an intuitive tacit understanding that what the janitor does has to be less consequential than the activities of the CEO. This might well be the case, but that amounts to a circular argument since the language-game of organisational roles and responsibilities that is based on management span of control is what is being referenced. As such, the roles are defined with an intention to confer more significance towards the one than the other. But that the language-game assumes such a bias, does not in itself make it practically the case. And the actions of the CEO still need to be graded in terms of their intentionality in comparison to the outcomes achieved, as well as in terms of their weighting compared to emergent strategic outcomes which point backward to actions of strategic significance which were unqualified at the time of their undertaking.

Getting clear on the grammar of the organisation is therefore a window into the way in which meaning is configured into the organisational activities. It embeds the possibility of particular types of successes and failures. The perspective offered here rests on three grammar shaping characteristics of organisational language-games. The way members of the organisation take action are constrained by these characteristics. They are summarised in the table below:

	Characteristic	Indeterminacy of Grammar
1	The purpose of the organisation in the societal language-game	The societal purpose around which the organisation coalesces around is characterised by an uncertainty of the ideal outcome, and an uncertainty about the field of possible alternatives including alternatives to the very societal language-game in question
2	The structure of the organisational language-games	Organisational language-games are constrained to varying degrees by their societal function depending on the extent to which the language-game contributes to the desired societal outcomes
3	The proficiency of the organisational language-game practitioners	Each language-game is subject to the varied level of practitioner proficiency and the potential differences in practitioner bias. Each practitioner's action is grounded on a loose bedrock of norms, resultant feedback loops, and personal preferences

Table 5: The grammar shaping characteristics of organisational language-games

The characteristics given in the table above have been introduced in earlier sections of this thesis. They are derived from Wittgenstein's later philosophy and stem from the investigation into the way in which language-games constrain the practices of society and organisations. The following sub-sections explain their criticality in further detail.

5.3.1. The indeterminacy of purpose

Language-games are purposeful constructs, and the organisation is a unique set of language-games which fulfils specific purposes in the society. These purposes have a degree of uncertainty associated with them, both in terms of the merits of the various possible approaches and the possible resonance of certain approaches with the grammar of other associated language-games of society, which are both currently in existence, or which would emerge as the society evolves. To make this point clear consider the following example given in the table below.

Purpose	Practice	Transactional function	Grammatical resonance
Local automobile manufacturing	Handcrafted vehicles	Exclusive, aspirational value-based differentiation	Local identity based on quality craftsmanship
	Outsourced global assembly production	Low cost, globally competitive mass production	Global supply-chain hub industries

Table 6: An example of different purpose linked practices and their grammatical implications

A society realises an opportunity for the production of automobiles, and two companies rise to meet this need. The first company produces hand-crafted vehicles which are designed and built in a local warehouse, while the second company is a mass production company with global production capabilities. They both fulfil the function required by the society. The companies are in this sense fulfilling a contract with society. The fit of this transaction is in one sense a measure of the organisation's effectiveness. However, the society's functions are all embodied in language-games, each governed by different grammatical norms, but the expression of these norms have in common a single community and so have reinforcing features which are shaped to fit the community's practices. These include such things as community rituals, religious practices, professional competencies and practices, social cohesion, cultural diversity or homogeneity, etc. Two practices, which fulfil the same transactional function could embody different grammatical perspective which impact the fit with the existing societal norms. It is therefore possible for one organisation to establish a better fit in the society in the sense that it is more easily assimilated into existing societal language-games. In Wittgenstein's words:

> The possibility of agreement involves some sort of agreement already… It is very difficult to describe paths of thought where there are already many lines of thought laid down – your own or other people's – and not to get into one of the grooves… It is as if our concepts involve a scaffolding of facts… I want to say then that certain facts are favourable to the formation of certain concepts.
>
> Wittgenstein 1967, p. 63

In this sense, the degree to which an organisation's practices have grammatical congruence with those around them is a measure of the extent to which the organisation's practices might assume functions in existing language-games, or develop new possibilities for the society based on its fit with other societal institutions

or changes in circumstance. Societal language-games do change over time, and aspects of grammar could have significance in one era, and be reduced to relics in another.

> Much seems to be fixed, and it is removed from the traffic… Now it gives our way of looking at things, and our researches, their form. Perhaps it was once disputed. But perhaps for unthinkable ages, it has belonged to the scaffolding of our thoughts.
>
> Wittgenstein 1969, p. 29

Such congruence, inasmuch as it is highly indeterminate, is none the less very important. Organisations cannot simply tend to their transactional propositions. They need to see themselves in the context of the surrounding scaffolding of societal grammar. Consider the example of a community which could form around an extractive resource or to serve an industrial boom. Over time the resultant business could become central to the community. Generations of family members could find employment within its structures. It becomes a player on a world stage and one of the largest companies on the local stock exchange. It expands globally but also begins to encounter competition. New generations of educated citizens are finding employment in newer, more cutting edge industries, and the once prized local competencies become harder to find. The government begins to divert institutional pension fund investments into new areas and the company no longer captures the national conscience as it had done in generations past. It is eventually bought out by a sovereign wealth fund and assimilated into a conglomerate. This story is about the decline in grammatical congruence of an organisation. Most people would mentally associate this decline with a corresponding transactional failure, but this example serves to point out that this need not be the case at all. Grammatical congruence on its own can be a force for organisational dissolution.

This is a degree of organisational performance that is largely absent from the prevailing theories of strategic management, and the perspective that is gleaned from considering the grammatical context of the organisation’s purpose, and therefore the possibility for deeper congruence should lead to new practices in organisations, which in turn should increase their societal relevance.

5.3.2. The indeterminacy of structure

An organisation is a partially closed system in that a large set of the language-games of the organisation are in service of the organisation itself. That is to say, the language-games of the organisation form the machinery by which it serves the purposes it does in society. Organisations also have a selective community in that there is a particular underlying skill set that is warranted for the various roles within the organisation. As such, any organisation is likely to have a demographic that differs from that of the society within which it is embedded in specific ways. Finally, while the function of the organisation is constrained by the societal need, and the practices that are active participants in the function have a grammar that is influenced by the society, the internal functions of the organisation have grammatical norms that are weakly constrained. The language-games of an organisation are constrained at a fixed point or points, which are given by its function in the language-games. However, beyond that, the structure and practices that govern the way in which the organisation exercises its function are increasingly subject to a variety of arbitrary influences. Some of these influences include personal preferences of executives, organisational HR policy, regional or cultural perspectives, resource constraints, etc. Organisations in this sense are conceived for purpose, and constituted on preference. The implications of this are that a large set of activities the organisation performs runs the risk of drifting away from its core purpose over time. Even if the organisation fulfils its transactional role and has grammatical congruence with the societal grammar, its practices remain subject to arbitrary transformative forces that could have negative consequences. The organisation runs the risk of becoming detached from the societal language-games. Over-burdened with practices that are disconnected from the needs of the society, the organisation is unresponsive to changing societal needs, and is eventually overrun by alternative societal choices.

The more organisational practices are directly in contact with societal language games, the more connected the organisation to its purpose. This connection can be more tightly coupled in two ways. The first is in terms of the specific language-games which are active in the societal function. Organisations can do more to increase the number of touch points and flow of information across these touch points. This can take the form of customer fora, but increasingly it is possible for companies to embed

real-time feedback into their products and services through big data and analytics (Bharadwaj, Sawy, Pavlou and Venkatraman 2013). Digital products collect information on how their products are used, when and in conjunction with what other services (e.g. through web browser cookies). Non-digital products are increasingly being connected to the cloud infrastructure for analytics and “over the air” software upgrades. This constant connection to the product and its usage throughout the lifetime of the product holds as yet untapped potential to ensure the intimate connection between the organisation and its societal purpose. Developing language-games to improve this engagement has societal value. The second practice is in terms of deepening the organisation’s grammatical congruence with that of the society through multiple engagement touch-points. The most obvious of these is community work, but this need not be the focus of such language-games. There are also business practices that achieve the same objective. One such practice is the development of business platforms. Platforms are environments on top of which other businesses connect and create additional value. Technological platforms include Microsoft’s operating system or Apple’s App Store. But platforms need not have technological manifestations. The shared economy works on platforms such as Uber or Airbnb, and brings non-technology savvy service providers to market, connecting them with transient customers. Where businesses can innovate in the direction of creating new service platforms, they extend the reach of their business into society, participating in language-games that would not have otherwise been possible. Organisations should be wary of carrying a heavy set of internally determined language-games. Strategy practitioners need to work to cull such unconnected practices, replacing them with grammars that are more closely coupled to societal purposefulness where the possibility arises to do so.

From the perspective of the prevailing strategic management paradigm, the question of the cost of such practices as described above, and their potential for success arises. After all, the above sounds like a general recommendation to all companies with no regard for differentiation. But this critique is born of a misunderstanding. To borrow a term from Heidegger, organisations are *always already* different. When organisations coalesce around societal purposes, the three types of indeterminacy under discussion here drive them towards different practices. They choose to serve the societal purpose differently, or they choose to structure themselves in different

configurations of alignment with society, or they choose different practitioners with different interpretations, biases or proficiency levels. The question of differentiation does not arise because it is always there. Typical strategic management practice only focuses narrowly on the choices associated with serving the societal function, i.e. in the example above, the difference as a result of one product being hand crafted while the other is mass produced. But this is just one aspect of the differences of organisations, and all these differences have a common effect in that they produce a unique outcome for the societal language-game. They act in concert and define the community that is the organisation. The question about cost is really a question about utilisation of scarce resources. It asks how to weigh up the costs and benefits of such endeavours. Here we have a narrow definition of practice and outcomes. The expectation is still of a strategic choice to invest in a platform, for example. But this is not what is being proposed. From the grammatical perspective proposed here, there are no strategic business choices, unless by strategic one means that there is a practice that adequately justifies organisational decision making. Such practices, inasmuch as they have a function within the organisational language-games need not be discontinued. But strategic management, from a grammatical perspective, has no function in the language-game. It brings about a change in orientation of practitioners, and gives them the perspective to act in ways that affect and change the language-games of organisations, making them more attuned to new possibilities. Strategic management allows practitioners to see the broad landscape of grammatical practices, and to understand, compare and connect. Strategic management gives practitioners the courage to act on their convictions, not just in accord with a language-game, but in the creation and curation of language-games. All action has to have meaning within the context of the organisational language-games. The action is an expression of the mastery of the language-game by the strategic management practitioner.

5.3.3. The indeterminacy of meaning

It is worthwhile here to give an overview of the perspective of organisational language-games that is given above. It has been argued that language-games are in some ways arbitrary and are fixed not by any necessary anchor, but by the norms of

the practice itself. The bedrock of justification consists in that which the practitioner has been apprenticed into. The apprentice is not learning simple rules for doing things, but is instead learning a system which is a reference for action. Justification for action is indeterminate and would likely be missed by a stranger to that community. But a practitioner knows how to find validation based on a number of different inputs. The first is the practice of others, the normative actions that provide empirical justification for what is acceptable practice. Our behaviours form a system of reference by which we interpret language (Wittgenstein 1953).

> In such difficulty always ask yourself: How did we learn the meaning of this word?... From what sort of examples? In what language-games? Then it will be easier for you to see that the word must have a family of meanings.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 36e

The second is the practitioner's interpretation of the desired outcome of the action, which is more often than not linked to the purpose of the organisation in society. It is possible for practitioners to hold a picture of the outcomes of their activities and the contribution to the desired fulfilment of the organisational purpose. Where does the practitioner get this picture? From the period of apprenticeship, during which the practitioner is indoctrinated into a way of seeing meaning in activity outcomes. The practitioner also derives or refines this picture from experience. From the feedback associated with their actions and the observable activities of others.

Lastly, the practitioner is inclined to a preference for the grammar of a particular practice, and would tend to interpret events to fit such a picture. And these validations provide sufficient impetus for action. But in what way can a practitioner be said to have achieved mastery of their role in a language-game? Perhaps in this way: that the way the practitioner validates their actions produces activities that accord with the practices of others in the community which are vindicated by the empirical existence of the organisation, i.e. its existence validates its purpose. Being a practitioner can be likened to being a participant in an epic dance performance with the twist being that the conductor is also a performer. The combined movements of the dancers create the dance routine, and each dancer works to play their intended part in the routine. They could all look to the conductor-dancer for guidance, but not all dancers would have clear sight, and the conductor-dancer is also partially focused

on sensing his or her own performance, prioritising where to give instruction without breaking the routine. As such, performers form a chain of information and experience, and work off one another and off feedback from previous actions and previous instructions. The skill of mastery is that of participation with imperfect information. The information that is available to each practitioner about the resultant outcome of practices, the depth of their interaction across the organisation, and the manner in which they receive and interpret feedback concerning the continued purposefulness of the organisation. The table below summarises these considerations:

Aspect	Considerations of Mastery	Levers
Purpose	How do I interpret the purpose of the organisation and to what extent is this in concord with the practices of the organisation	1. Alignment of purpose 2. Assessment of practice outcomes
Structure	What activities do I influence or have influence on me, and how does that influence impact activities that are required for an effective functioning in fulfilling the organisational purpose in the societal language-game	1. Network of influences 2. Potential scale of impact 3. Proximity to organisational purpose
Meaning	To what extent do outcomes of activities under my control or influence align with my perception of the needed results based on my interpretation of the organisational purpose?	1. Own performance 2. Sphere of influence 3. Perspective of purposefulness

Table 7: Key considerations for mastery of organisational language-games by practitioners

A practitioner is thus navigating a number of complex considerations and affecting their own practice as well as those around them in terms of a number of key levers which they learn to gauge.

This brings us back to the question: why do organisations fail? The daisy chain that links an organisation's practices with the roles it plays in society has been shown to have multiple points of ambiguity. As such the fit is mostly somewhat imprecise. This imprecision has a function. The societal language-games are changing over time influenced by an even broader set of associated communal language-games. These changes mean that the society that negotiates the purposeful activities of the organisation is, in some respects, different from the society that harvests the outcomes of the language-game. The roughly tailored practices provide an efficient way of creating an actionable bounding between society and organisation without creating too heavy an investment in precision. Wittgenstein's comments on precision in language are relevant in this regard. The passage below is one of the more well-known of these:

> 100. “But still, it isn’t a game, if there is some vagueness in the rules” – But does this prevent its being a game? – “Perhaps you’ll call it a game, but at any rate it certainly isn’t a perfect game”. This means: it has impurities… we are dazzled by the ideal and therefore fail to see the actual use of the word…
>
> 107. The more narrowly we examine actual language, the sharper becomes the conflict between it and our requirements.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 45e-46e

And earlier, in *Philosophical Remarks* he writes:

> The moment we try to apply exact concepts of measurement to immediate experience, we come up against a peculiar vagueness in this experience. But that only means a vagueness relative to these concepts of measurement. And, now, it seems to me that this vagueness isn’t something provisional, to be eliminated later on by more precise knowledge, but that this is a characteristic logical peculiarity.
>
> Wittgenstein 1975, p. 263

Our language-games are not the permanent monolithic edifices that they seem to be. They are like tectonic plates, drifting in an ocean of possibility. They erode, collide, submerge, divide, change shape, dissolve etc. And they can also remain adrift unchanged for an indefinite period. Mintzberg et al. suggested, in *Strategy Safari*, a third paradigm they referred to as the configuration school characterised by periods of stability punctuated by periods of unrest. There is some sympathy with the arguments made in this thesis and that of the configuration school. The following text refers:

> The thesis of this research is that both process and content dimensions of strategy intervene… Context usually represents a broad field of constraints, opportunities, and possibilities. Executives will therefore choose from among a number of viable strategies and strategy-making processes within any context… adopting those that not only suit their environments but also reflect their personal motives, predilections, and capabilities… But having chosen from among the set of suitable and comfortable strategic and process options, executives may find that the range of structures that can be used to support and implement those options becomes limited. Different strategies require different structures… Indeed structures respond to the particular control and coordinative problems created by the strategies and strategy-making processes that are ultimately selected… There are many relationships between

> environmental uncertainty and strategy… Its indirectness and the indeterminacy that strategic choice confers upon its component links will weaken it. As firms can survive in the same environment with different strategies.
>
> Miller, Droge and Toulouse 1988, p. 545, 549

It is tempting to characterise Wittgenstein's grammatical approach as falling within the configuration school, mapping Wittgenstein's notion of grammar to the configuration school's notion of context and Wittgenstein's language-games to the configuration school's strategy-making processes. However, there are fundamental differences in the conception and approach to strategic management. The configuration school shares with all the other schools the preoccupation with economic performance, and the focus on a sub-set of activities within the organisation which have been defined as strategic. However, it is the case that this thesis shares with the configuration school its preoccupation with the motivations and activities of members of the organisation. If there is an existing framework for the voice of Wittgenstein in strategic management, Mintzberg's configuration school is one of the most likely candidates.

Periodic changes and transformations in industries are well studied by the configuration school. Consider the changing strategies in retail over a number of decades as represented below:

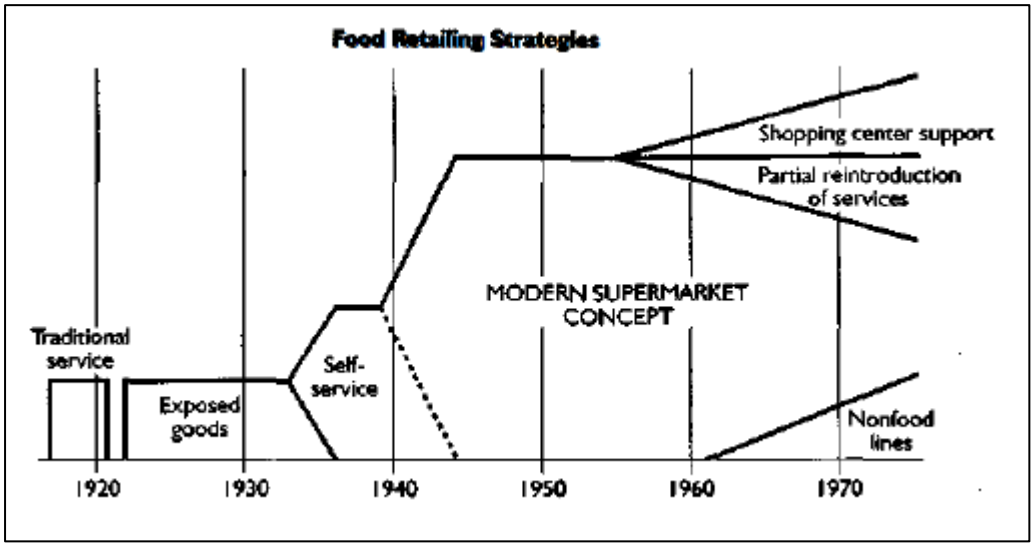


Figure 2: Steinberg Inc. Retail Chain Strategies (Mintzberg et al. 1998, p. 311)

Transformations seem to emerge at a certain point. A changing set of circumstances build up a tension within society. At a critical point, a slight variation in practice could create a cascading change across the entire societal landscape. Anticipating these changes or even scanning for them pre-supposes a level of information availability that is arguably not always given in practice. An organisation need not stake its existence on guessing what the future holds. What it can do is prepare itself for a continuing and evolving role within the societal language-game, interacting in new ways and re-interpreting existing purposes to remain effective role-players in the community.

Organisational practitioners are managing a complex array of considerations without accurate or consistent information. Further to that, the very feedback systems that allow for corrections of course are themselves subject to this indeterminacy. There is, in the nature of the practice, a high risk of failure. The very purpose the organisation serves represents a degree of uncertainty within society, and practices within society are working to eliminate that uncertainty. This is one of the ways in which the society is changing constantly. The organisational construct has to constantly validate its purpose. That it gets it wrong from time to time should not be of the greatest concern, but that the organisational practitioners grasp the critical dimensions of uncertainty that they are working with and work to improve their understanding in these areas and their alignment with the broader field of societal practices.

5.4. The ethnographical perspective of strategic management

5.4.1. The embodied organisation

As a young boy I learned about South African apartheid from my parents. They brought home a videotaped copy of the play *Woza Albert!* written in 1981 by Percy Mtwa, Mbongeni Ngema and Barnet Simon. In the play, two actors, Siyabonga Twala and Errol Ndotho play a number of different characters, using satire, physical comedy, dance and political commentary to bring to light the trials of an apartheid South Africa. As they move through different skits, each role brings different contexts of power, history and conversation.

The metaphor of the organisation as performance art is not new, but the picture that *Woza Albert!* provides is different from one that would come to mind through considering the stage performance of *Othello*. The fluidity in form and roles is a useful picture for thinking about the variegated landscape of language-games that embody organisations. The picture allows for a conception of organisations as dynamically orchestrated constructs. The roles individuals play is key to the nature of the practices and it is as a result of the efforts of individuals through a number of differing exercises, that the organisation achieves its various outcomes and objectives. The embodied organisation is strategically democratic. The timely fastidiousness of a janitor might have as much of an impression on a would be customer as the polished presentation of an executive. This is not because the customer is necessarily interested in the janitorial duties in supplier establishments, but that the act reinforces a picture that includes a set of various engagements with the organisation. The point is not that janitors are strategically important, but that the way roles play out in organisations are circumscribed by the grammatical framework of the organisation. Therefore, to single out activities as critical contributions to future organisational performance would imply a prejudice rather than a conviction.

But is strategy not simply about aligning plans to resource distribution? Strategic management units often feel confident in being able to influence organisational results through budget allocation. This might not be as strong a force for influence as it initially seems. Consider the following example:

> Our favourite story about how strategy really gets made comes from a visit [that was] made to a large company's headquarters. The company controller was concerned and confused about a capital project proposal he'd recently received from one of the company's most important divisions: a request for a large chimney. Just [author's italics] a chimney. Curious, the controller flew out to visit the division and discovered that the division managers had built a whole plant (minus the chimney) using work orders that did not require corporate approval. The chimney was the only portion of the plant that could not be broken down into small enough chunks to escape corporate scrutiny. The divisional managers, it seemed, were eager to get on with building a new business and had despaired of getting corporate approval within a reasonable time frame. Convinced that the new capacity was necessary, managers had found a way to build the plant but still needed the chimney. In the end, the division managers were proven right about the need for new capacity and also about

> the need for speed. The chimney was, ultimately, approved. But who (the controller wondered) was running the company?
>
> (Bower and Gilbert 2007, p. 73-74).

Who does run the company? The consideration being made here is that such a question is misleading, and gives a false picture of what is going on in organisations. It is a useful part of a particular set of language-games but also provides a metaphysical construct that is problematic in other instances. The organisation that can be "run" is a tool in the hands of an operator. Like a motor vehicle, the operator is able to switch it on, to command, through various input switches and pedals, its precise functionality. Instead, language-games are constructs in which people participate to achieve specific objectives. And the objective constrains the actions of participants into a set of complementary activities, which only have meaning within the context of the language-game.

> An intention is embedded in its situation, in human customs and institutions. If the technique of the game of chess did not exist, I could not intend to play a game of chess. In so far as I do intend the construction of a sentence in advance, that is made possible by the fact that I can speak the language in question.
>
> 338. After all, one can only say something if one has learned to talk. Therefore in order to want to say something one must also have mastered a language
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 108e-109e

Practitioners master these language-games through engagement, and it is in these interactions that outcomes are created. Positions are stated, choices are debated, actions co-ordinated, etc. Strategic management can have an impact, not by direct contribution to the actual engagements but by setting the context within which the engagements take place. Arguments have been made for the spatial design of offices to encourage more chance encounters. The context envisioned here is a different type of design. Practitioners in the organisation have differing levels of proficiency at different aspects of the various language-games of the organisation. The task of strategic management is to broaden their perspective enabling them to see new connections between language-games. This is the type of perspicuity Wittgenstein's philosophy seeks to enable. Thus the objective of the ethnographic practice of strategic management is twofold. Firstly, to broaden the perspective of

organisational practitioners by exposing them to different language-games. These can be language-games within their organisation, with which they have little contact, or language-games from other organisations that can serve as objects of comparison. The language-games need not be real or existing. They can be imagined or historical practices. Secondly, as a result of the broad exposure, practitioners would be able to make new connections. That is, see similarities and differences that they had not considered before. They become aware of new possibilities and are either moved to act on this awareness or are able to see a future course of action that would otherwise have remained obscured from their vision.

5.4.2. Connecting conversations as strategic management

How then can these new connections be encouraged? A practitioner, in the course of their normative activities, need not be disturbed. After all, those practices are the activities by which the organisation achieves its function. However, not everything a practitioner does are operational activities. There are periods for relaxation, planning, feedback, etc. The task of strategic management is to utilise these periods to create conversations that bridge language-games. So strategic management entails the effective use of non-operational time in organisational constructs. This was briefly discussed in chapter 3.3 above. Here, that discussion would be expanded on, to provide examples of the uses of non-operational time in the grammatical method of strategic management.

5.4.2.1. Rituals of performance

Of the three tools of strategic management cited here, rituals of performance are the most widespread. Almost all businesses have such rituals. They are structured fora that allow individuals to share information about their practices that has societal significance. Another way of thinking about rituals of performance would be that, similar to the restaurant with the exposed kitchen, these are activities that would enrich the understanding of societal recipients of organisational outcomes, were they able to observe them. One of the clearest examples of this is the organisational

annual strategy session. These sessions function as placeholders for the comparison of notes. Typically, managers of business units are busy with the task of driving towards their business objectives. They are following a plan, but also invariably making unexpected choices and acting on new information. The annual strategy session allows her the non-operational time to compare notes with other business unit heads; reassess the political climate and understand how colleagues have positioned themselves; compete for resources or find common cause for collaboration. It might not always be the case that the annual strategy session, is able to convert plans into action, but it is always a ritual for performance that creates connections. Knowing that such fora can function as tools for strategic perspicuity, there is an argument to be made for a shift in emphasis towards learning. The argument here is for as minimal time as possible to be spent on budget and target setting. See the contrast between a typical strategy session and that which is being advocated here below.

Typical strategy session	Strategic perspicuity session
Welcome and meeting objectives	Welcome and meeting objectives
Market overview	State of the organisation
Current performance review	Business unit achievement awards
Workshop: SWOT Analysis	Workshop: Intent vs Action
Corporate strategy presentation	Corporate strategy presentation
Financial and scorecard targets	Workshop: Managing uncertainty
Business unit target cascade	Business unit target cascade
Workshop: Business priorities	Workshop: What success looks like
Feedback and action plans	Feedback and action plans
Final remarks and closing	Final remarks and closing

Table 8: Contrasted example agendas for annual strategic management meeting

Managers should have the time to review and introspect on choices made, and to highlight critical uncertainties on the horizon. Typically, this can be done by creating themes for breakout sessions and structuring them to immerse the participants in the room on the topic. The above agenda is not intended to be a template. There is no standard format. However, the strategic perspicuity meeting is meant to highlight the intended focus areas that can be injected into the meeting. Notice firstly that the form

and function of the ritual has been preserved. This is still a strategy meeting with the same typical intent. Only here, sometime has been taken to allow different types of interactions. There is an award session. This need not have any pomp or ceremony attached. Its aim is to signal what performance looks like; what outcomes remain important to the organisation; and to influence political dynamics. Also, all the workshops have been annexed for the purpose of comparative conversation. The format of these workshops could take creative forms. There could be a hot seat; teams could be asked to express themselves creatively; multimedia could be used to provide context, etc. As part of the feedback, the critical thing would be to assess what participants learnt from each other, and to follow up on what actions resulted.

There are other rituals of performance in organisations: Annual General Meetings (internal); Unit Review Meetings; Periodic governance, budgeting and forecasting meetings, etc. All of these meetings can be partially co-opted for the purpose of strategic management.

5.4.2.2. Communities of purpose

Communities of purpose are similar to rituals of performance mentioned above with one key difference. Where rituals of performance have broader societal significance, communities of practice do not. Instead they are an aggregation of practitioners from across the organisation (sometimes potentially multiple organisations) due to a common interest. Because their purpose is less constrained, such communities are freer and more given to experimentation. They are more likely fertile ground for the type of learning that is necessarily multi-disciplinary, experience based and enriched by a diversity of perspectives and experiences. Organisations can encourage the formation of such communities, and have a minimal set of rules for their existence. There can be normally open communities (anyone can join) or curated communities (selected or restricted membership). The community of purpose has no function in the organisation. In this sense, it is a language-game built purely to investigate specific types of language-games through the experiences of its participants. It is contextually defined within the grammar of the organisation and its sympathies are those of the organisation. Participants share experiences and interrogate organisational practices to gain a broader understanding of the field of potential

language-games and to be more acutely aware of similarities and differences. One such difference is that the same language-game in different organisations is capable of having a different grammar (conveying different meaning), and different language-games could very well be employed to a specific purpose in different organisational contexts.

Communities of purpose can be valuable tools for external language-game scanning. A community could, for example, have practitioners from other industries present about the way they manage similar challenges such as competition, regulatory uncertainty, talent retention, etc. It could also be used for internal scanning. A survey based community of purpose for example, could collect and present topical survey data for discussion. Another community could highlight hidden talents in employees by staging performances. The versatility of this tool should make it the most important asset to strategic management within an organisation.

5.4.2.3. Organisational games

An example of an organisational game could work as follows: Imagine a company that has its business review meetings on the first working day of every month. The meetings last all day and are followed by a few drinks in the company canteen. While the review meetings are only attended by unit management, the social evening extends to a slightly broader set of middle managers and specialists (most of whom are involved in the process of creating the reports and presentations for the event). The Business Controller moderates a game in which every month, participants make a bet on next month's sales figures. The process has no financial impact for individuals (if a small wager is allowed it is donated to a charity associated with the company). The participant with the closest forecast is symbolically handed a cup, while the one with the most inaccurate forecast is given a carrot.

The setup has multiple layers of value. The lightness of the event cuts what would typically be an intense day of business reporting. It also allows for reflection and council. The broad nature of the invitees breaks down hierarchical barriers and allows individuals that would otherwise not typically have conversations. The bet encourages knowledge about the sales volumes across various units, and that in

turn should increase the understanding of the way the business and the market works.

This type of practice is not for every organisation. Concerns about information leaks, governance or codes of conduct issues for listed companies might forbid such practices. There are other more conventional ways of structuring games, most notable, simulation exercises on specific topics. War Gaming has become increasingly adopted. In an *Economist* article on the subject, the following description was given:

> Such games have two chief characteristics. First, players break into teams and take on the roles of fierce competitors (and sometimes other constituencies, such as customers). Second, the games involve several turns, allowing competitors not just to draw up their own strategies but to respond to the choices of others. Their popularity is rising. Booz Allen Hamilton (BAH), a consultancy, is running 100 war games a year, up from around 50 three years ago.
>
> (The Economist 2007)

These types of games are used because of their predictive power in terms of understanding potential outcomes. They do however have the added advantage of exposing practitioners to vantage points that they would not ordinarily consider. Many such games ask practitioners to assume the role of competitors or other stakeholders. The *Economist* article makes the same point in its conclusion:

> The secret of successful war-gaming does not simply lie in mathematics, however. Interaction, not algebra, is the best way to win support for a new strategy. Game-players must be senior for the same reason—although having the top boss on a team can stifle feedback. Strategies also have to capture competitors' hard-to-quantify corporate cultures: when designing a game, BAH seeks out employees at its clients who have actually worked at competitors for that reason. But perhaps war games' greatest value lies in the way they encourage managers to think differently about the consequences of their actions.
>
> (The Economist 2007).

5.4.2.4. Immersion exercises

South Africa is a country with a troubled racial history. As the new millennium began, FNB, one of South Africa's four major banks, found itself still facing diversity challenges. Its response was a program called VUKA (Wake up in Xhosa). In their case study on the subject, Hargarter and April (2007) describe the program:

> Employees went through two interventions. The first VUKA session was a two-day workshop session… The second session was called Immersion and represented a two-day event, where managers spent time in a township… The goal of the programme was to create a workplace community of real new South Africans from different backgrounds. At the same time, it was supposed to bring about a better understanding of cultures.
>
> Hargarter and April 2007, p. 31-32

The significance of building a shared culture from such a difficult past necessitated a committed exercise. Of all the tools listed here, the immersion can be a particularly profound experience. That would be the case for business executives interested in innovation visiting Silicon Valley or university graduates building schools in Soweto. Immersion removes all formal boundaries leaving experiences to speak for themselves. Managing immersive experiences is also therefore a significant responsibility. Firstly, the considerations that are necessary for human beings in unfamiliar contexts, but also, and perhaps most importantly, the responsibility to be non-exploitative, and respectful of communities. Many immersive experiences bring executives to inner-city, impoverished or distant communities. It is the responsibility of the management of the immersion to ensure that the interaction yields mutually desired positive outcomes and that undesirable outcomes (such as dependency or exploitation) are mitigated.

5.4.2.5. The criteria for strategic management action and justification

The tools listed here are by no means comprehensive. Perspicuous engagements can be designed around art, sport, community projects etc. What has been attempted here is to illustrate the nature of the strategic management intervention. The next set of logical questions include how to know when to apply the tools, what tool to apply when and how the success of strategic management is measured.

Firstly, there is no toolbox for strategic management in the way that such would be the case in the industry based view. Instead the tools listed above are examples. Each strategic management activity is crafted for purpose based on the language-games of the organisation in question. That tools can be used from other contexts is a function of grammatical similarity rather than theoretical consistency. The strategist is in a sense always in the garden of organisational language-games, using tools continuously to improve the resilience of the organisation. That analogy leads to a useful picture of the significance of the endeavour (arguably a better way of thinking than considering what to measure). The result of the time tending the garden is a harmony of foliage, in congruence with its environment. So too with strategic management. The internal consistency of the language-games, and the grammatical fit for societal function are the driving forces for action. Organisational language-games are riddled with inconsistencies, and many practices can be completely divorced from the societal context of the organisation. One can measure how well non-productive time is utilised by strategic management; the number of strategic engagements ongoing or over a given period; the perceived impact or quality of engagements, etc. And some of these measures might be useful for guiding practice, but the significance of the discipline is simply the following: organisations with a consistent set of grammatical practices, in sync with the societal context for which it functions is less susceptible to shocks, more attune to opportunities and aware of the responsibility that exist as possible outcomes for the various stakeholders of its language-games.

Strategic management offers the route to a broader perspective for organisational practitioners by which this goal becomes feasible. It also asks something different of strategic management practitioners. It should be evident that very little of what is in the current practice of strategic management would be sufficient for the engagement that describes the discipline according to this Wittgensteinian interpretation. The partial alignment of current practice to that which is advocated in this thesis would also likely be the case for much of strategic management research. The concept of strategic management proposed here provides no room for theoretical model formulation and testing. The organisational construct, with its grammatical norms and practices is already given. As such, research has two functions. The first is to catalogue organisational grammars making them available as objects of comparison.

The second one is experimenting with and creating new tools for strategic perspicuity. Researchers can focus on methods of efficiently utilising non-operational time, showcasing new ways for practitioners to engage with strategic management tools.

5.5. Strategic management as reminders for a particular purpose

Wittgenstein's philosophy insists that it leaves everything as it found it. Wittgenstein's method does not give language its foundation or framework (section 124), it does not make discoveries, it does not explain anything (section 126), it does not advance a thesis (section 128). Given all these constraints, one might ask what philosophy does actually do. Wittgenstein's answer:

> 127. The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 50e

It might be equally prudent to ask what practitioners in the strategic management field do, and what would count as a strategic management function in a grammatical perspective of the discipline. Many companies have strategic management functions that engage in the process of creating lengthy presentations at the beginning of a financial period, that then fallow for the year before the cycle is kicked off again. The grammatical question is to ask what the practices exist in which such strategies have a use? And the unsatisfactory answer might be that it is used in the next year's strategy process. So is strategy then emergent? Again the grammatical question is to ask what practices exist in which that distinction is meaningful? These questions are meant to draw attention to the actual grammar of the practices of the organisation. Here choices are being made based on the practitioner's mastery of the grammar of their language-games. These choices are often made without asking questions about the form of the strategy of the organisation, or the source of competitive advantage. The choices are sometimes tacit, sometimes considered, sometimes made by omission, sometimes heavily constrained, sometimes arbitrarily determined, etc. From a grammatical perspective, what gives them life is that they contribute to a language-game; they have use in the practices of the organisation,

and ultimately of the society. And that use is therefore bound up in the grammar of the language-games.

The strategy practitioner cannot be involved in every activity of the organisation. In fact, typically, there is no function for the strategy practitioner in the operational activities of the organisation. But one might say that the strategy does define these practices. But here we mean two different things by the word “define”. A strategy might buy a factory, make metrics for the production of goods, and even create activity flows to be learnt by the factory workers, and that might form part of the language-game of the factory processes, but the language-game could also be informed by the unionisation of the plant using their power to manage production across a range of facilities in an effort to maintain jobs; it could be informed by market forces, skill levels, supply shortages, etc. The day to day reality of being a member of the tribe in that factory might not be fully considered by the strategy. In that reality, factory workers juggle a number of indeterminacies (some of which were discussed earlier) as they learn to be, and continually validate their role in the tribe.

The role strategic management can claim is that which sets reminders for what the purpose of the organisation is and can be in the language-games of society. Strategic management academia and research can share cases, describe connections between language-games, create group therapy sessions, etc. The organisation can make the choice to have a strategic management function that creates reminders in a similar way to the above, but also works with the non-operational time of the organisation to create specifically topical types of language-games and related exercises. The purpose of this would be to create engagements that speak to the specific need of the organisation.

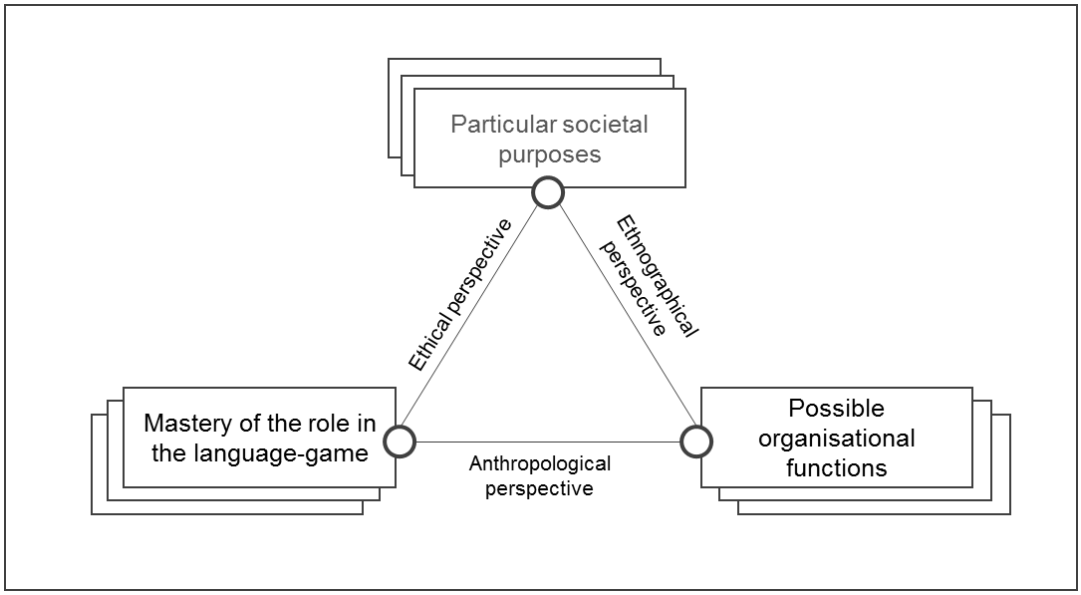


Figure 3: A schematic depicting one possible perspective of the purpose of strategic management in improving the internal consistency of the organisational grammar

One way of thinking about strategic management is that it works to improve the internal consistency of the organisational grammar, making it more robust over time. This perspective is illustrated in Figure 3 above. In the schematic, the function of strategic management is to tend to the links between the language-games of society, the language-games of the organisation, and the language-games that represent the activities of individual practitioners (and of course these would overlap in function and time periods). Strategic management works to make practitioners more attentive to how their roles in the various language-games is purposeful in creating possibilities for the organisation; it serves to remind practitioners of the various purposes entrusted to the organisation of which they are a member and the societal importance therefore; it serves to make clear the different possible language-games that are complementary or incompatible with the grammar of the organisation.

5.6. Summary and conclusions

The objective of the above section was to use Wittgenstein's methodology to provide a pedagogical critique of the theories of the strategic management discipline. The objective of Wittgenstein's grammatical investigation is a perspicuous representation of the landscape of our language.

> In PI [Philosophical Investigations section] 122, Wittgenstein introduces the notion of a ‘perspicuous representation’ in connection with this task of achieving ‘a clear view’ of our practice of using words. There is no suggestion that the clear view of our words is something that Wittgenstein intends to use to curb the philosopher’s linguistic excesses. Rather, the clear view of our use of words that Wittgenstein’s investigation aims at is associated with ‘the understanding that consists in “seeing connexions”’. Wittgenstein’s grammatical enquiry aims to produce a kind of understanding which consists in seeing a pattern or form in what is there before our eyes, but which we had previously neglected or overlooked. It is through an emerging sense of this form that the essence of language, meaning, understanding, etc. is gradually revealed and understood.
>
> McGinn 1997, p. 24

While the purpose of the therapeutic method is to bring a person to change their style of thinking, the purpose if the pedagogical method is for a person to use their new style of thinking and achieve a new perspective of the subject matter. Here, again one might be tempted to see in Wittgenstein’s method a systematic theory-like construct in the pedagogical method. However, even in this aspect of his grammatical investigation, nothing like a theory emerges. There is no framework or construct in Wittgenstein’s approach. The reason is that the use of the approach has a function in that it is called upon by a practitioner of the language-game in response to a real need. In sections 108 and 109 (quoted earlier), Wittgenstein makes the point himself by suggesting that the nature of his investigation turns the way investigations works to pivot around a real need. That is to say that it “gets its light” from the problem it seeks to solve. The critical point is made in the following section:

> 132. We want to establish an order in our knowledge of the use of language: an order with a particular end in view; one out of many possible orders; not *the* order.
>
> Wittgenstein 1953, p. 51e

The implication for strategic management is that a strategic management investigation is constrained by the context in which the problem arises. And that context includes the very individuals involved. A new problem cannot automatically be resolved using the old strategy. Put differently, every strategic problem requires a new discovery of the landscape. An analogous statement would be to say that the map of the landscape is built anew with each strategic investigation. The picture of

strategic management that is suggested is not one in which a strategy is created as a monolithic record of the firm, and is a locus of activity for the organisation for years until a new one is developed. Instead, strategic management problems arise all the time in the activities of the practitioner. In the above section, this thesis has given three possible perspectives (see Figure 3 above) that are areas where such problems could arise: in understanding the role of the individual in the organisation and the role of the organisation in the language-games of society (the ethical perspective); in understanding the grammar of the organisation and achieving mastery of the language-games that is a requirement for fulfilling a person's roles within the organisational language-games (the anthropological perspective), and in understanding the possibilities for the organisation in that it holds the promise to achieve a number of purposes in the current and future language-games of society (the ethnographic perspective).

There is no suggestion that this is comprehensive, but that it represents a potential set of strategic management perspectives, and allows for a clearer understanding of Wittgenstein's grammatical method of investigation. The strategic management organisation (in as much as such a functional unit forms part of the organisational practice) creates spaces (so called "strategies") in which practitioners are able to resolve their problems. As such the strategic management function is characteristically ethnographic. It works on language-games for the purpose of robustness in the practices of the organisation.

The function of strategic management is, in the arguments of this thesis, removed from that which initiated the crisis of theoretical perspectives in the discipline. Such issues do no longer occur in the picture proposed here. The temptation to theorise gives way to a focus on the actual practices and practitioners of the discipline. Strategic management as a discipline works in and amongst the language-games of the organisation, encountering them, as a person tending a garden encounters their plants; in their nature environment, and in their way of life and a strategic management practitioner can be said to be tending the field of language-games in situ. By Wittgenstein's method, the discipline curates the language-games of the organisation in a manner that is similar to tending a garden: persistently over periods of time; with great care and ownership for what is planted and what is discarded; and with a vision of the possible futures that is the promise of the organisation.

Chapter 6: Synthesis and conclusion

6.1. A Wittgensteinian perspective of strategic management

A picture of strategic management has been developed in the preceding sections. The schematic below (Figure 4) provides an illustration of the picture of strategic management as a grammatical investigation, as developed in the above sections of the thesis.

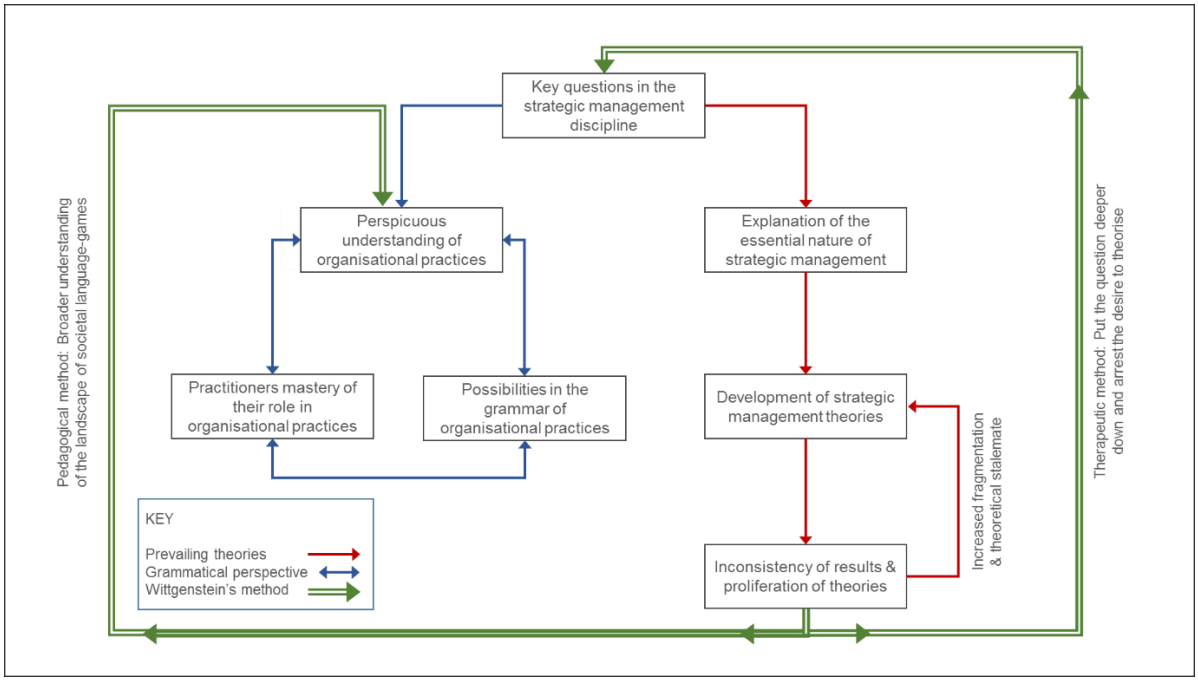


Figure 4: The picture of strategic management developed in the thesis

The above picture has been built up over a number of sections of the thesis, so it might serve to provide a synthesis of the picture at this point.

The beginning of the investigation into strategic management is a type of question. This type of question draws a person into thinking they should answer through theorising. In strategic management these questions include “what is strategy”; “why do some companies outperform others?”; “what is the company’s competitive advantage?” etc. It seems as though there should be an explanation of the phenomenon that satisfies the question in the way one might do for an empirical question such as “How does heat cook food?” But something happens when an

attempt is made to answer the question in this way: the answer is less than satisfactory, and so a further theoretical explanation is sought. In this way a vicious cycle of fragmentation and inconsistent results is initiated and now the discipline runs the risk of abstracting so far away from the actual phenomenon such that the theory can no longer do justice to the intricacies of the practice, and yet still has achieved only limited explanatory powers.

In the thesis, it has been suggested that there are three typical approaches to resolving this problem. The first is to create better grand theories; the second is to create narrower theories that answer only a subset of questions; the third is to examine the philosophical assumptions and commitments of the discipline. This thesis contributes to the latter approach, bringing the approach in Wittgenstein's later philosophy to bear on the problems of the discipline. Wittgenstein located the problem, not in the type of theories, but deeper down at the root in the temptation to ask and answer the questions in the first place. Instead his method asks that the discipline focus on the grammar of the language-games of the organisation, grounding itself by specifying the use of strategic management concepts in the language-games of the organisation.

Wittgenstein's method aims to accomplish two objectives. The first is to equip the practitioner to effectively resist the urge to theorise about the problems of the discipline. He does so by providing the practitioner with tools of thinking, such as reminders to focus on the grammar of the actual practice, and to seek a perspicuous view of the language-games; a capability to use intermediate cases to surface differences and similarities in the grammar of different organisational practices. Strategic management plays a role here by mediating the application of these tools within the context of the organisational language-games; the discipline creates spaces for the therapeutic process that organisational practitioners need to undergo in themselves.

The second is to make the practitioners more aware of the scope of the language-games in which they play a role. Thus each practitioner gains a broader perspective on the grammar of the organisation, its function in the societal language-games, and the meaningfulness in their roles in the various language-games of their immediate practice. Organisational practitioners learn a sense of belonging, as a resting place

from the vexing questioning that began their therapeutic journey towards a grammatical way of thinking. In this mode, they are now aware of the grammar of their practices, and its similarities and differences to other adjacent practices. Strategic management plays a role here by working to continually broaden the perspective of the practitioners in purposeful ways (an example might be towards possible future functions of the organisation), by exposing the organisational practitioners to different and new types of grammars and language-games by different means.

Strategic management is in this way pictured as a language-game about language-games. Strategic management practitioners are those individuals whose practices contribute to the robustness and future possibilities of the organisation; Strategic academics and researchers encode and disseminate information about language-games in different contexts. Strategic management also in this way, is about the internal consistency of the organisational language-games, since broader and broader exposure of practitioners, makes them more aware of possibilities, baking in improvements into their practices as they continually learn a mastery of their roles in the organisational language-games. In this picture, the original questions of prevailing strategic management theory no longer have meaning (they have no use in the language-games of the organisation), and dissolve away as a result, leaving everything in its place, wherein the practitioners of the organisational language-games express themselves by their actions.

6.2. The arguments of the research

The broad arch of the research makes the following arguments. Firstly, it develops a picture of Wittgenstein's philosophy, and specifically his later philosophy. Interpreting Wittgenstein's philosophy is not without controversy and some discussion about the interpretation given here is warranted. Secondly, it applies Wittgenstein's philosophical method to a critique of the prevailing theories of strategic management. Finally, a perspicuous representation of strategic management as a discipline is developed. These last two steps need to be interrogated to check that the approaches applied would stand the test of a Wittgensteinian investigation, in that

they employ the methods that Wittgenstein himself might employ or approve the employment thereof. Finally, the consistency of the arguments would be assessed.

6.2.1. The interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophy

Wittgenstein's philosophy forms a scholarship of its own. Besides the original German text there are at least two English translations of both *Tractatus* and *Investigations*. With the recent availability of Wittgenstein's *Nachlass*, scholars are now able to gain access to his large library of notes and manuscripts, tracing the history of his ideas from one text to the next. Because of his style and unique perspective, Wittgenstein's arguments have not always been understood clearly, and a significant amount of scholarship is dedicated to providing sufficient context in which his ideas can be understood. Sometimes this leads to many different interpretations.

This study could not possibly do the weighting of these various arguments justice. There are no doubt significant scholars on Wittgenstein that were not read or quoted in the study. This need not necessarily be seen as a weakness of this research. Here, the aim has been to provide the most succinct and coherent picture of Wittgenstein's philosophy as was necessary for the purposes of the arguments of the thesis. As such, while undoubtedly more valid insights could have been brought to bear, this study would ask that its assessment of Wittgenstein's philosophy be based on the purpose for which it was compiled. The purpose was to prepare the reader for the further chapters of the thesis, in which the method of Wittgenstein was to be used. The aspects of Wittgenstein's philosophy thus detailed; his family background; his philosophical development; the detailed assessment of the method of *Philosophical Investigations*; and his subsequent further contribution and enduring legacy; all this was done in order to demonstrate an understanding of the philosophical tradition in which this thesis was developed.

6.2.2. The nature of a Wittgensteinian investigation

Does the investigation adequately apply an approach that would be recognised as Wittgensteinian? The text made an explicit link between the approach highlighted in

Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations, and that employed in the subsequent chapters of the thesis. In this regard, it is necessary to highlight the following.

Firstly, like Wittgenstein, the purpose of the study has been to dissolve problems of a particular discipline. The orientation of the thesis has therefore been towards putting concepts in the right perspective, whereby the misunderstanding can be seen and the temptation to ask the question released.

Secondly, the thesis takes seriously Wittgenstein's stance that philosophy does not contribute to science. It is not that strategic management is a philosophical discipline, but that organisations are family-resemblance concepts, similar to Wittgenstein's concept of language. By Wittgenstein's account, language is the subject of philosophy; and for the strategic management discipline, the performance of organisations has traditionally been the subject of the discipline. As such, the subject of study for strategic management and philosophy have similarities that allow them to be studied in a similar manner. The thesis therefore applies Wittgenstein's grammatical framework to organisations, in much the same way Wittgenstein applies it to language.

Third, the thesis follows Wittgenstein's therapeutic and pedagogical method, firstly critiquing the tendency towards theorising in the discipline of strategic management before offering a grammatical perspective for the discipline.

Finally, Wittgenstein's ethical perspective, it is argued, is an integral part of his philosophy, and therefore the two are inseparable. Wittgenstein's ethics is therefore baked into the grammatical perspective of the discipline of strategic management.

6.2.3. The intended contribution

The aim of the thesis is threefold, as set out in the first chapter of this thesis. Firstly, it seeks to introduce Wittgenstein's method to the discipline of strategic management. Secondly, to demonstrate the therapeutic approach of Wittgenstein's grammatical investigation, in the context of strategic management. Finally, to demonstrate Wittgenstein's pedagogical approach in the context of strategic management. To the extent that the arguments of the thesis, summarised below, are

valid, they represent a coherent introduction of a grammatical approach to strategic management which is, in its style of thought and practice, significantly different from the prevailing theoretical perspectives.

6.2.3.1. Introducing Wittgenstein's method

The thesis makes the following arguments for the validity and applicability of the perspective to the discipline of strategic management:

- The discipline of philosophy that Wittgenstein entered into was one with a stalemate of competing, mostly incompatible, philosophical perspectives, each with valid claims, but none being able to firmly unseat all others. The thesis argues that the state of strategic management today is similar in this respect.
- Wittgenstein's philosophy was specifically developed to break through the stalemate of philosophical positions by putting the question "deeper down", that is to say, he was willing to address deeper commitments, such as our desire to engage in a theorising way of thinking.
- The indirect, grammatical approach advocated by Wittgenstein in his later philosophy represents a unique method of doing philosophy. As such, Wittgenstein's grammatical approach provides a new method for the discipline of strategic management which is different from that with which the discipline is presently engaged.
- Wittgenstein's concept of language was broad, and encompassed not just spoken word but activities as well. Wittgenstein used the term language-games to refer to all normative rule guided activities in which there are multiple human agents. It has been argued by others (Shotter 2005) and it is argued again here, that organisational practices fit Wittgenstein's definition of language-games.

A final point on this section is worth noting. Discussing Wittgenstein's philosophy is not new to the discipline of strategic management. Scholars have even pulled from Wittgenstein's theory in defining and testing hypothesis. What is shown, and argued for in this thesis, is that the discipline can conceivably adopt Wittegnstein's

grammatical approach holistically, across not just academia, but also with strategic practitioners in organisations.

6.2.3.2. The therapeutic method

The therapeutic method arrests the temptation to theorise. The following arguments were made as to how it is applied in the strategic management discipline:

- Wittgenstein characterised his philosophical method as a type of therapy. This emphasises the degree to which this approach is a personal process, requiring a change in the style of thought of individual strategic management practitioners.
- The text demonstrated the method of using intermediate cases or primitive language-games in the process of a grammatical argument. Here such cases include the shoe salesmen in the Kalahari, and the competing lemonade stands.
- The argument against theorising which Wittgenstein makes for language, is applied to strategic management. Here the argument is made that strategic management includes the kind of questions to which we know the answer when no one asks, but fail to give a good account when approached for an explanation. These arguments are about the meaning we ascribe to language, and are part of the way our concepts are evaluated. In the context of the organisation, the types of practices that concern strategic management such as organisational metrics, organisational objectives, etc. are exactly these types of elements of language.
- Arguments were made militating against arguments of strategic management theory that are at odds with a grammatical approach. These include the performance heterogeneity question, the necessity of metaphysical concepts of the discipline, and the commitment of the discipline to a particular perspective of the organisation and organisational attributes as universals.

6.2.3.3. The pedagogical method

The pedagogical method develops a broader perspective and understanding of the language-games of the organisation. The following arguments were made as to how it is applied in the strategic management discipline:

- A mapping of Wittgenstein's ethical, anthropological and ethnographic perspectives of philosophy to strategic management is provided.
- The ethical perspective is described in terms of individuals gaining a broader understanding of their roles in the language-games and the link between their role and the function of the organisation in their society. It stresses organisational belonging as a key attribute of strategic management, and provides the strategic management function a tool in the form of providing reminders for practitioners of the significance of the functions of the organisation.
- The anthropological perspective is described in terms of the way a practitioner functions in the language-games of the organisation and gains mastery in their roles. This includes learning to function across three indeterminacies that are part of the organisational construct. In other words, organisational language-games lack precision, and the practitioner is given to act despite this imprecision in the grammar of the organisational language-games.
- The ethnographical perspective is described in terms of the ways in which the strategic management discipline can use the "engine idling" time or non-operational time of the organisation to provide opportunities for practitioners to experience the broader landscape of related organisational language-games. In this sense, practitioners broaden their perspective of the practices of the organisation, and learn to see connections; both similarities and differences between different organisational grammars.

6.3. Methodological review

This study is interpretive and works to establish a broader epistemological foundation for strategic management. The research takes seriously the criteria for

rigour as integrated by Whittaker (2004). The following is a brief assessment of the methodological rigour of the study.

6.3.1. The fundamental principle of the hermeneutic circle

The hermeneutic circle is fundamental to how research is understood and interpreted. There is a circularity of understanding which means that there is no objective reference point, and no understanding of phenomena in and of themselves is taken for granted. In this sense, Wittgenstein's concept of grammar is fundamentally a hermeneutic circle. Practitioners are enculturated into it and have the grammar of the organisation as their basis for asking and answering questions. The research is also hermeneutic in the sense that it does not claim a definitive knowledge of the organisation or strategic management. Instead it sets up pictures and these pictures can be used as tools or objects of comparison, to illuminate certain aspects of the subject of investigation. The research is also structured as a developmental process of understanding; firstly the understanding of Wittgenstein's philosophy, then the understanding of how it can be used to argue against the prevailing approaches to the discipline; and finally, how it can be used to provide an alternative perspective of the discipline of strategic management. The perspective offered here is not definitive. It holds the possibility of other interpretations, potentially available, given further iterations of the process of understanding.

6.3.2. Principle of contextualisation

The following questions must be answered with regard to contextualisation rigour (Whittaker 2004):

6.3.2.1. The question must be one of importance

The importance of the performance heterogeneity question in strategic management has been shown by the context of strategic management, and the amount of research dedicated to this aspect of the discipline. Further, the study showed three

different approaches to the problem and located the work in the least developed branch, thus ensuring the validity of the contribution of the study.

6.3.2.2. The theoretical basis should not prevent recognisable explication

The thesis links the discipline of strategic management with that of philosophy. While a large body of literature exists in both fields, it was necessary for the study to focus and give a specific account of the philosophical method and strategic management theories under investigation. Thus chapter 2 is a broad overview of the philosophy of Wittgenstein as explicated for the purposes of the study. Sections of chapter 3 also explain the theoretical frameworks of strategic management as a discipline, and provide a mapping towards strategic management as a grammatical investigation.

6.3.2.3. The theoretical basis should provide understanding appropriate to the problem

Because of the large body of work in both strategic management and philosophy, there is a sound basis for understanding the appropriateness of the problem. Both bodies of research are easily available, and references or arguments from this research can be checked against the broad body of work that make up the literature in both disciplines.

6.3.3. Principle of interaction between research and subjects

This principle is not applicable in this case.

6.3.4. Principle of abstraction and generalisation

In one sense, the study should be broadly generalisable in that the study deals with the broad range of strategic management theoretical models. It is widely sourced, with reliance on primary Wittgenstein text where possible. It also attempts to focus on seminal authors in the discipline of strategic management.

On the other hand, being a Wittgensteinian interpretation, the picture of the organisation developed here is a picture and might not be the most applicable picture in all circumstances. However, it is likely that significant similarities exist between organisations such that the picture given here can be used as a tool or object of comparison in many different organisational settings. It is also the case that the method of Wittgenstein's investigation developed here for investigation of strategic management contexts, would allow for the relevant interrogation of the organisational language-games for a given set of strategic management questions.

6.3.5. Principle of dialogical reasoning

The nature of the way in which the research is presented is necessarily dialectic, developing from an understanding of Wittgenstein's philosophy to a picture of strategic management based on Wittgenstein's later philosophy. The thesis also makes the argument that learning is enculturated and that strategic management should be seen as an ethnographic practice.

6.3.6. Principle of multiple interpretations

The thesis addresses multiple interpretations, especially as pertains to Wittgenstein's philosophy in that it has explained the interpretation given and its references. While alternative interpretations might exist, the thesis argues for a coherence between the interpretation given and the nature of the investigation undertaken. With regard to strategic management, much of the work cited is by seminal authors, however, the thesis has also chosen to show some examples of conflicting view points in the literature of strategic management such as critiques of Porter's industry based view, or differing metaphysical foundations between strategic management theories.

6.3.7. Principle of suspicion

This principle examines the possibility of distortion in the sources of the research. Since this is a purely textual study and multiple research studies were used, it is

believed by the researcher that the likelihood of this problem is very low. Most of the literature used was sourced from peer review international journals.

6.4. Research implications and recommendations

The performance heterogeneity question dominates much of what is strategic management research and practice. In that sense, the efforts of this study provide an opportunity for the discipline to reconsider the foundational tenets of the field. In doing so, the discipline would do well to heed Wittgenstein's advice in terms of the following. Firstly, the discipline could be more attentive to neglected aspects such as the perspective of the practitioner. It should look at the phenomena under investigation and let the description of the activities that form the grammar of organisations be the foundation on which the discipline is built. Wittgenstein's philosophy helps us see differences. Specifically, it should make the discipline attentive to the multiple forms of epistemological validity that could be possible across different organisations.

Some of the implications from the research are more applicable to researchers while other implications are more relevant to practitioners in the organisation. These are considered below.

6.4.1. Implications for researchers and academics

The type of research suggested by this study is fundamentally different from that which is done today. The study suggests research that is more ethnographic and descriptive. One example was the cataloguing and comparison of organisational language-games. Research need not attempt to construct theoretical frameworks for the discipline, since this would be unnecessary; the grammatical structure of organisations are already given, and no analysis of them is required since it is clear enough to see what the grammatical structure is. Research, instead, should guide the practice of strategic management by making materials for these practices widely available.

In the way academics teach strategic management, a change of aspect is also suggested. Tools and methods should be taught as objects of comparison, not as definitive practice of the discipline. Strategic management, it can be argued, should be a creative discipline, less focused on templates and more on connecting different organisational conversations in different ways. Since strategic management is deeply experiential, the style of instruction might need to change. Rather than a lecturer speaking to a class, it might need to be more intimate, with students and staff sharing and comparing organisational experiences around loose strategic themes. Instead of tests and examinations, students should be encouraged to document their language-games and share them with other students.

6.4.2. Implications for practitioners

The foundation of a practitioner's activities should be their ethical commitment to the purpose of the organisation. This connection should be a focus and people should be arguably encouraged and supported in finding better fit within and external to the organisation. Communities of purpose should be set up within organisations to support practitioners in their ethical introspection. Organisational practitioners should accept that the performance of the organisation is the fit between the accumulation of their tasks and the nature of societal need they address. While it might seem strategic to analyse performance and define structural co-ordination, it should be remembered that the predisposition for specific types of language-games is part of the grammar of the language. Rituals of performance can have important roles to play in the organisation, but the role is circumscribed by the grammar of the organisation.

Instead, strategic management practitioners should be more attentive to non-operational time, seeing this as the canvas from which robust organisational language-games are built. Strategic management practitioners need to have a spirit of incremental experimentation, learning by doing, and spreading effective practices via new strategic management tools.

Appendix A: Mintzberg's Ten Schools of Strategic Management

School	Attributes	Assumptions	Advantages	Disadvantages
Design (a process of conception)	Prescriptive / Deliberative / Objective	1. Strategy should be a deliberate process of conscious thought 2. The CEO is responsible for strategy formulation 3. The strategy formation model must be simple and informal 4. Strategies should be individualised 5. The process is complete when strategies are fully formed – a definite end 6. Strategies should be simple and explicit 7. Implementation should occur only after the strategy is completely formulated	1. Applies best to an organisation coming out of a period of changing circumstances, and into a period of stability 2. Useful to new organisations that need a clear sense of direction to compete with more established rivals 3. Provides a prescriptive approach 4. Assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT)	1. How accurate / effective are assessments of SWOT 2. Can't be sure in advance whether established competence is a strength or a weakness 3. Strengths are often far narrower, weaknesses far broader than expected 4. Structure follows strategy; promotes inflexibility 5. Thinking often detached from acting
Planning (a formal process)		1. Strategies result from a controlled, conscious process of formal planning, decomposed into distinct steps, each delineated by checklists, and supported by techniques 2. The CEO is responsible for the overall process, but actual planning is done by staff planners 3. Strategies appear full-blown from the process. They are made explicit through detailed attention to objectives, budgets, programs and operating plans	1. Permits control over strategic planning 2. Provides the comfort of a pedagogical process: objective setting; external audit; internal audit; strategy evaluation; strategy operationalising; scheduling 3. Enables scenario planning	1. Inflexible, not responsive to changing environment 2. Plans can be outdated before the ink is dry 3. The course of the environment is not predictable 4. Planners / strategists are usually detached from implementation 5. Hard data is not always useful 6. Formalisation transfers the strategy process from individuals to the system 7. Treats strategy as analysis, not synthesis
Positioning (An analytical process)		Same as design and planning schools, except for two key additions: 1. There are only a few key strategies – positions in the marketplace – that are desirable in any given industry. There are ones that can be defended against existing and future competitors 2. Strategy selection is based on analytical calculation	1. Provides substance missing in design and planning schools 2. Limits potential strategies to a "manageable" number 3. Strategies need not be unique or tailor-made 4. Statistics and analysis support strategy	1. Not relevant to government agencies, non-government or non-commercial organisations 2. Bias toward traditional big business 3. Too dependent on analysis and calculation 4. Ignores "soft" or non-quantifiable, non-economic factors
Entrepreneurial (A visionary process)	Descriptive / Emergent / Subjective	1. Strategy comes from the mind of a leader as a sense of long-term direction, vision 2. A semi-conscious process, at best 3. Leader promotes vision single-mindedly, maintains close personal control 4. The strategic vision is malleable 5. The organisation is malleable 6. Strategy is "niche" type	1. Includes non-quantifiable factors often missing in traditional schools 2. Unity of focus, inspiration 3. Constant in ends, flexible in means 4. Fast transition to "pursuit" [of strategic ambition] 5. Small organisation oriented	1. Heavily dependent on "great leader" 2. Possible to be too tightly locked in one direction 3. Heavy burden on the leader
Cognitive (A mental process)		1. Strategy forms in the mind of the strategist 2. Strategies emerge as perspectives – concepts, maps, schemes, frames 3. Inputs are filtered, distorted, and interpreted before modelling 4. Strategy is difficult to attain, less than optimal, difficult to change	1. Accommodates cognitive psychology 2. Less deterministic than positioning, more personalised than planning schools	1. Characterised more by potential than by contribution 2. Doesn't really address how strategy concepts form

Learning (An emergent process)		1. Complex, unpredictable environment and diffusion of knowledge precludes deliberate control 2. Collective systems do the learning 3. Learning is emergent 4. Leadership doesn't preconceive strategy 5. Strategies appear as patterns from the past	1. Admits flexibility, acknowledges chaotic nature of the environment 2. Advantageous for organisations facing a truly novel situation 3. Has an acknowledgement of reality lacking in other schools	1. May result in no strategy, lost strategy, or the wrong strategy 2. Groupthink and distraction are possible 3. Waiting for strategy to emerge may not be practical in a crisis
Power (A negotiation process)		1. Strategy formation is shaped by power and politics 2. Strategies are emergent and are ploys and positions more than perspectives 3. Internally, strategy-making is done through persuasion, bargaining, and confrontation 4. Externally, strategy-making is done through controlling, or cooperating with other organisations, or through alliances	1. Accommodates the real world – an environment of power and politics 2. Useful in complex, highly decentralised organisations of experts with power to further their own interests or work	1. May miss emerging patterns because of over attention on divisiveness, fractioning 2. Can be a source of waste and distortion 3. Creates a risk of collusion in large organisations
Cultural (A collective process)		1. Strategy is a process of social interactions 2. Acculturalisation / socialisation is tacit and nonverbal 3. Beliefs are hard to articulate 4. Strategy is perspective and deliberate, if not conscious 5. Culture and ideology perpetuate existing strategy, or shifts, but not strategic change	1. Culture provides needed stable foundation in a time of constant change 2. Integrated consensus on ideology, perspectives	1. Promotes consistency, but discourages change in strategy 2. Old logic must be "unlearned" before strategic learning can occur 3. Can blind managers to changing external conditions
Environmental (A reactive process)		1. The environment is the central factor in the strategy-making process 2. Organisations must respond to organisational forces or be "selected out" 3. Leadership is a passive element in the strategy-making process 4. Organisations "cluster" together in distinct ecological-type niches or positions, where they remain until they die	1. Recognition of the constraints that external environments place on strategy	1. Organisations have no real strategic choice – they can only play the hand the environment deals them 2. Emphasises conformance to external conditions; reactive, not proactive
Configuration (A transformation process)		1. Strategies emerge from organisational configuration 2. Periods of stability are interrupted by some kind of transformation process 3. A cycle of stability and transformation approximates the lifecycle of the organisation 4. The objective is to sustain stability, but periodically transform 5. Strategy can be deliberate or emergent, as the situation warrants 6. Strategies last until the next change cycle	1. Promotes continuity / stability between intervals of major change 2. Accommodates key aspects of other schools	1. May oversimplify structure, bureaucracy 2. Narrow view of change: static or rapidly changing (no allowance for incremental changes) 3. Constructive configurations become destructive eventually

Table 9: Mintzberg's ten schools (Dettmer 2003, p. 5-9)

Appendix B: An overview of the major theories of strategic management

For the purposes of providing an overview, the theories of the discipline have been categorised into deterministic and description theories. The difference in respect to the scientific method of each type of theory was given in chapter 3 above.

The deterministic theory of strategic management

In the deterministic approach, the influence of economic theory has yielded three different theories of strategic management (Teece, Pisano and Shuen 1997): the industry based view, the resource based view, and dynamic strategic management based respectively on Industrial Organisation (IO) economics, Chamberlianian economics and Schumpeterian economics.

The industry based view of strategy

Industrial Organisation economics was developed for policy making and government regulations.

> By focusing on the structural characteristics of industries, policy makers could anticipate those industries where firm returns will be greater than a social optimal fully competitive level.
>
> Barney 1986, p. 792

Porter's generic strategies and five forces are based on IO by effectively reversing the perspective of the theory. Where IO was developed to help regulators ensure a healthy competitive environment, Porter uses it to help firms select positions in the competitive landscape where they can protect a competitive asymmetry.

> In their attempt to use IO thinking to develop a normative theory of competitive strategy, strategy theorists have turned the original policy objectives of this model upside down. For instead of seeking to assist policy makers in reducing returns of the firm to a fully competitive level, strategy theorists have sought to develop models to assist firms in obtaining greater than normal economic returns on their business investments… Firms seeking to obtain high returns on their strategic investments should focus on creating and / or modifying the structural characteristics of their industry to favour high returns.
>
> Barney 1986, p. 792

Left to its own devises, an industry's pressures force equilibrium and perfect competition. But firms can take action to ensure a sustainable competitive advantage and obtain higher economic returns by understanding the nature of the competitive forces in the industries they operate or are considering operating in, and modifying the structure characteristics of these pressures in their favour (Porter 1981).

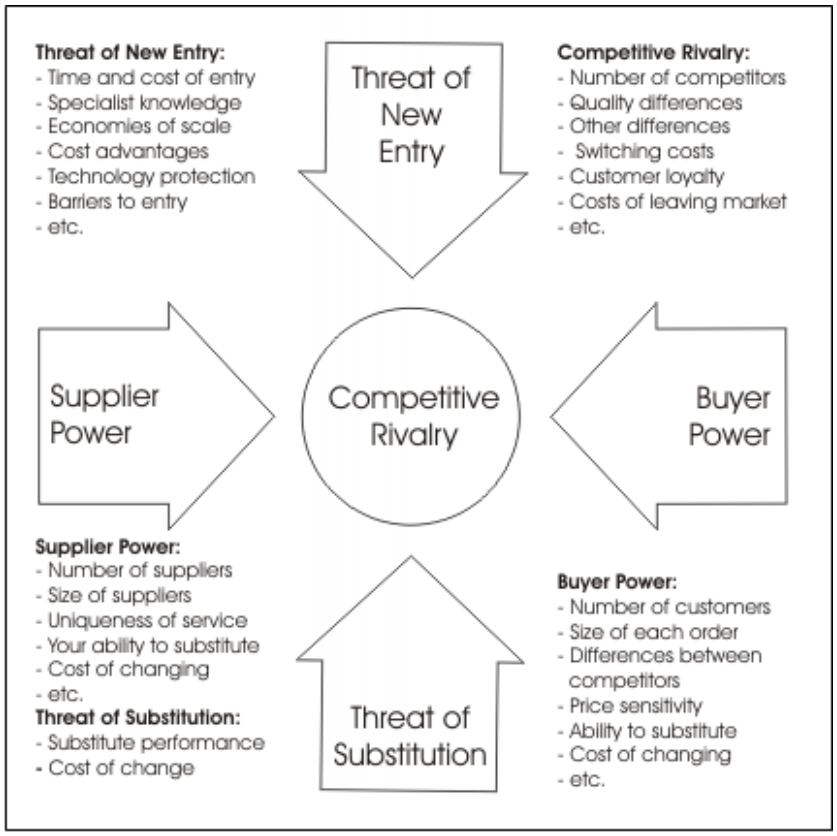


Figure 5: Porter's five forces (Porter 1979)

Porter's analysis suggested that there were only a limited number of strategies, called generic strategies, that an organisation could adopt to defend against competitive pressures (Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel 1998).

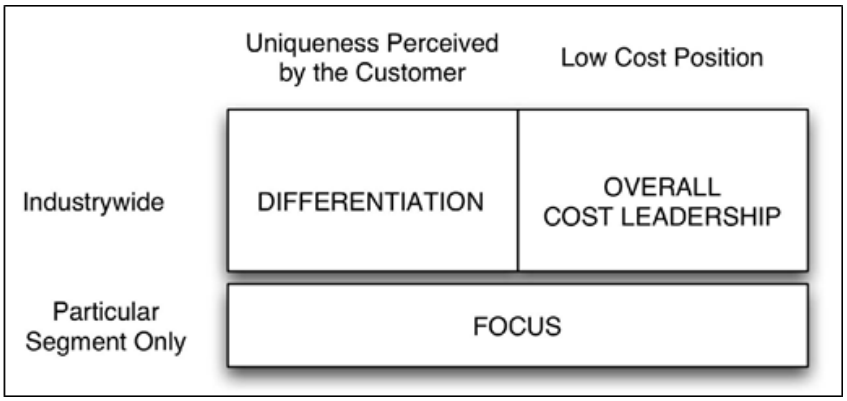


Figure 6: Porter's generic strategies (Mintzberg et al. 1998)

This realigned the practice of strategic management.

> Porter shifted the focus of strategy research outward… Porter's approach yielded sharply defined tools for understanding why some firms (and industries) were likely to be more profitable than others.
>
> Cockburn, Henderson and Stern 2000, p. 1126

This approach became the dominant approach to strategic management through 1980–1990. It is referred to as the industry-based view or market-based view of strategy, because the critical factor for defining business strategy is the relationship between the organisation and the industry. Porter also attacked the preoccupation of organisations with operational excellence (Porter 1996). He argued that operational excellence is easy to imitate. As such, it provides an absolute productivity threshold, but not a relative one, which is what is required for a competitive advantage. In his view, most operational excellence practices were fads and were not well integrated into business processes. That required an assessment of how to co-ordinate the business to compete in the future; it required a rejuvenation of interest in strategic management, based on the industry-based view.

The industry-based view represented a single coherent theory of strategic management. It also had the main hallmarks of a scientific theory: it was simple and

elegant, falsifiable, and based on a solid foundation of micro economic theory. This allowed it to be subject to empirical testing. The results suggested that industry accounted for a relatively lower variance between firms. Porter himself admitted that the industry accounted for 19% of the variance between firms (McGahan and Porter 1997) but that the effects were complex and differed by industry group, i.e., between manufacturing and services sectors. Others, such as Rumelt put the figure at closer to 8% (Rumelt 1991). Research also pointed to the influence of other elements such as business specific factors, which could explain more variance than industry factors. The influence of such research eventually shifted the focus of strategy back to business specific factors. Thus a conflict developed between factors of concern for strategy. Were external factors, which can be viewed as opportunities and threats, more critical than internal factors, a business's strengths and weaknesses? (Black and Boal 1994; Sanchez and Heene 1997). Classic strategy theory of SWOT analysis broke down into factor-driven theories in the post-1980 era of strategic management theory. What emerged was research grounded in economic theory that sought to explain more of the variations in business performance parsimoniously. Out of this effort emerged the resource-based view (Powell 2001).

The resource based view of strategy

Chamberlinian economics, like IO, seeks to explain market competitiveness over time. However, Chamberlinian economics starts by examining monopolistic idiosyncrasies in individual firms. An example of such an idiosyncracy would be that spectators can only watch a sports superstar by buying a ticket to a match where their team is playing. That unique property provides the firm (in this case the sports team) with a monopoly in the sense that there is no alternative channel to watch that player. However, Chamberlinian economics also shows that with greater competition, the substitutive value of other firm's assets reduces the monopoly power of each individual firm. Using the sports analogy above, it is possible to watch equally good players on many other teams.

> Because firms in an industry or group typically have unique, but overlapping, resources and capabilities, competition within an industry has many of the characteristics of perfect competition… as well as many of the characteristics of a monopoly. Chamberlin called this type of competition monopolistic competition. Chamberlin was able to show that industries characterised by monopolistic competition also will be characterised by competitive equilibria… some firms in these industries can obtain sustained periods of superior financial performance by exploiting their unique assets and capabilities.
>
> Barney 1986, p. 793

The resource based theory of strategic management is rooted in Chamberlinian economics. Resource is a generic term for financial, human, intangible, physical, organisational or technological factors or capabilities (Thomas, Pollock and Gorman 1999). Resources are considered the building blocks of the firm's growth and competitive success. Resources are of strategic importance where they are valuable, such that a customer is willing to pay a premium for the factory's output; imperfectly imitable, such that the resource cannot easily be copied by a competitor, thus eroding the resource value; rare, thus increasing the value because of limited availability; and exploited by the organisation for economic rents (Oliver 1997). These characteristics of resources are commonly referred to as the VIRO framework (*V*aluable, imperfectly *I*mitable, *R*are, and exploitable by the *O*rganisation). The resource-based theory is arguably the leading complete theory of strategic management (Rumelt 1991; Powell 2001). The resource-based perspective has developed from the basis of an economic theory to a paradigm intended to unite rapidly diverging trends in strategic management (Conner 1991). The resource-based approach is not a contrary perspective to IO economics; in fact, it can be considered within the IO framework (Mahoney and Pandian 1992). While the resource-based view might spring from a particular view of economic rent, it allows for various ideas of rent generation; resources can be land or patents generating Ricardian rents, or entrepreneurial capabilities for risk taking that generate Schumpeterian rents (Mahoney and Pandian 1992). The resource-based view is traditionally seen in opposition to the industry-based view in that the latter focuses on factors external to the firm to explain competitive advantage while the resource-based view focuses on factors internal to the firm. However, resources are obtained from strategic factor markets (Oliver 1997), which allows the resource-based view to

explain the industry from the 'inside-out' (Connor 2002). The advantage and rents derived from resources also depend on the environment of the firm; valuable but common resources are a source of competitive parity, not competitive advantage (Rouse and Daellenbach 1999). As such, the resource-based view also uses relative notions between firms to incorporate external factors into the paradigm (Peteraf and Bergen 2003).

The resource-based view of strategic management continues to develop; an impressive body of literature exists and numerous researchers are reviewing almost every aspect of strategic management relating to this theory. It is rooted in Taylor's notion of scientific management, and has evolved as a response to criticism of earlier strategic management theory. In practice, strategic management has evolved into identifying and managing key resources.

The dynamic based view of strategy

The most recent of these theories is based on the dynamism of competition in modern business environments (McGrath 2013). This paradigm is finding an anchor in Schumpeterian economics. Schumpeter's focus was on the role of innovation and entrepreneurship in fuelling creative destruction, his term for the revolutionary process that can be triggered by innovation, which destroys an established model and replaces it with a new, arguably better system. A relatively good example of this is the impact of the Apple iPhone on the smartphone, and the communication industry at large. Given the rapid pace of technological innovation and the competition between mega-technology companies like Google, Apple, Microsoft, Facebook etc., much of modern strategic management thinking is concerned with capturing value in this new rapidly changing business environment.

Game Theory is increasingly having an influence on strategic management. One example is the Value Capture Model (VCM) which is advocated as a refinement and synthesis of the key attributes of other strategic management frameworks. It condenses Porter's Five Forces into a single force – competition – which all actors or agents face for their position in the value network (Ryall 2013). There are a number

of advocates for the application of Game Theory for specific strategic decisions (Shapiro 1989; Camerer 1991; Saloner 1991). Camerer makes the case as follows:

> Game theory is best used to work out the logical implications of rational players thinking hard about what each other will do, as part of their decision process. Those logical implications should certainly be of interest to strategy researchers, since many aspects of strategy formulation (and implementation) fit the game theoretic templates.
>
> Camerer 1991, p. 149

The work of Christensen (1997) on disruptive innovation has arguably been the catalyst for the modern focus of strategic management on the dynamic nature of competition. He has been ranked as the top most influential thinker in business management in 2011 and 2013[1]. What Christensen says about industry dynamics cannot but cause alarm for industry incumbents. The opening of his seminal article in the *Harvard Business Review* is given below:

> One of the most consistent patterns in business is the failure of leading companies to stay at the top of their industries when technologies or markets change… a more fundamental reason lies at the heart of the paradox… Using the rational, analytical investment processes that most well-managed companies have developed, it is nearly impossible to build a cogent case for diverting resources from known customer needs in established markets to markets and customers that seem insignificant or do not yet exist.
>
> Bower and Christensen 1995, p. 43-44

Disruptive innovation, the term coined by Christensen, is a consequence of firms being blindsided paradoxically by their own successes. When new technologies or market conditions come along that do not easily fit their previous formula for success or seem to have no value for their existing customer base, these firms ignore these factors, allowing other, nimbler organisations to capitalise and disrupt the industry, eventually leapfrogging the previously dominant incumbents.

[1] Thinkers50 is a global ranking of management thinkers started in 2001, and published every two years. It is published by the consulting firm Crainer Dearlove, and since 2011, also included the Thinkers50 Awards, widely recognised as the Oscars of Management Thinking (based on information from the McGraw Hill Business Blog).

The descriptive theory of strategic management

The descriptive paradigm is characterised by more fragmentation, as is borne out by Mintzberg's schools (see Appendix A). There are definitely too many strands of research ongoing to subsume under a few theoretical frameworks. Instead, this thesis would highlight two key streams of research: the culture school which is arguably the dominant contemporary theory; and the learning organisation movement, which is one of the most influential theories of the paradigm.

The learning organisation

Senge's *The Fifth Discipline* (1990) popularised the idea of learning organisations, but research and findings on the importance of learning for the strategic management of organisations is probably as old as the discipline itself (Fiol and Lyles 1985). Organisational learning is associated with Mintzberg's concept of emergent strategy (Mintzberg and McHugh 1985). Emergent strategy refers to strategies that are formalised in retrospect rather than being deliberately pursued. It allows for factors other than the rational choices contained in the strategic planning process to influence the strategic determination of the firm. In as much as this is frequently the case, the concept has merit, and organisational learning is one of such factors whereby the tacit knowledge required for success might be outside the strategy process, instead is embedded in the lifelong learning practices of individuals and teams within the organisation. Senge describes a learning organisation as:

> [An organisation where people are] continually expanding their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together.
>
> Senge 1990, p. 3

While scholars differ slightly in their definitions, the central idea of new thinking that is made possible through organisational dynamics is constant (Garvin 1993; Gino and Staats 2015). Senge's five disciplines are echoed in much of the research concerning the fundamental tenets of a learning organisation. The point is illustrated

by mapping Senge's disciplines to the building blocks advocated by Garvin, Edmondson and Gino (2008):

Senge (1990)	Garvin, Edmondson & Gino (2008)
Personal Mastery	Supportive learning environment
Mental Models	
Team Learning	Concrete learning processes and practices
Shared Vision	Leadership that reinforces learning
Systems Thinking	

Table 10: Comparative learning organisation frameworks

From the early 1970's until its maturity in the early 1990's, the learning organisation began the reorientation of organisations towards the social constructs that they were. The machine metaphor and rigid Taylorism needed a counter balancing force. In the Royal Dutch Shell company, a new form of planning developed using learning principles that would come to be known as Scenario Planning (de Geus 1991; Wilkinson and Kupers 2013). The success of Scenario Planning in helping Shell weather the oil crisis made it a force to be taken seriously. Elements of probability analysis can be added to Scenario Planning making it similar to or complementary to a Game Theory approach.

The focus of learning organisation is on creating plausible future narratives. The rich descriptions of futures prompt the organisational management to more broadly consider the possibilities and in so doing create either more robust strategies or build greater flexibility into existing strategies.

The influence of organisational culture

While the learning model of organisations popularised the descriptive school of strategy, it is the idea of organisational culture as a source of competitive advantage that has been its enduring legacy thus far (Barney 1986; Marcoulides and Heck 1993; Franklin 2000). One of the influential works that contributed to this movement was Peter and Waterman's *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best Run Companies* (1982). In it, they established through analysis of a number of companies, eight practices that seemed to consistently contribute to success.

Organisations ignore these “soft factors” at their peril. The cultural school has unlocked a wave of interest in the more emergent aspects of strategy. This much is acknowledged in the following passage by Franklin (2000):

> In recent years, especially since the publication of In Search of Excellence (Peters and Waterman 1982), attention has shifted to the importance of “soft systems” in the development and implementation of strategy. This has led to an emerging school of thinking which prioritises leadership over management… which emphasises the importance of rhetoric and identity over structure and authority… and at one extreme, takes an ideological position which encourages “revolution” and “strategy innovation” as the impetus for growth.
>
> Franklin 2000, p. 129

The tenets of the cultural school as summarised below based on Mintzberg et al. (1998):

- Strategy formation is a process based on shared beliefs and understanding between interacting members of the organisation.
- Individuals are enculturated into organisational beliefs and norms, mostly through tacit feedback. As such much of strategy remains as unspoken, unconscious competence.
- Strategy is thus best understood as perspective, through consideration of patterns of collective intentionality.
- Culture is ideological and typically encourages strategic inertia.

Culture is to the dynamic, post-modern science of strategic management what resources are to the rational, deterministic science of strategic management. Both concepts have proven durable due to their malleability. All strategic factors can be cast as resources; similarly, all strategically significant action can be traced back to culture. As such they are able to cast the type of net that strategic management theory seeks.

Strategy-as-Practice

It has been argued that strategy theory has lost touch with the realities of practitioners within an organisation requiring a reorientation back towards the action

of doing strategy (Jarzabkowski 2004). The Strategy-as-Practice movement is concerned with the activities that encapsulate strategic management.

> The thrust of the practice approach is to take seriously the work and talk of practitioners themselves… the practice perspective on strategy shifts concern from the core competence of the corporation to the practical competence of the manager as a strategist… Practice is concerned with the work of strategizing… Getting things done involves the nitty-gritty, often tiresome and repetitive routines of strategy. Here craft is as important as technical facility; essential knowledge is as much tacit as formal, local as general; and persistence and detail may win over brilliance and inspiration.
>
> Whittington 1996, p. 732

The routines of strategy, and the mastery thereof are given precedence over corporate or industry attributes. This is the focus of Strategy-as-Practice (hereafter s-as-p). There has been some attempt to cast s-as-p within the resource based view and especially in terms of dynamic capabilities in strategic management (Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009; MacLean, MacIntosh and Seidl 2015). In a sense, categorisations are a tool for understanding, and this study categorises the s-as-p view with the descriptive theories of strategic management for two reasons. Firstly, the framework has its origins in sociology rather than economics. It can be seen as a constructivist interpretation (Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009). Secondly, the framework is focused on examining practice and drawing inferences from seeing how strategy is done. It is therefore arguably more descriptive than deterministic. But herein lies part of the appeal of s-as-p. It might be able to provide a bridge between the deterministic and the descriptive theories of strategic management given the scope of the research agenda (Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009).

In “Strategy-as-Practice”, the practice has multiple social levels. The first is what is done by individuals (micro), and the next is the different socially defined practices that individuals draw upon in their daily tasks (macro). The conceptual framework for s-as-p is composed of praxis, practices and practitioners as defined in the diagram below:

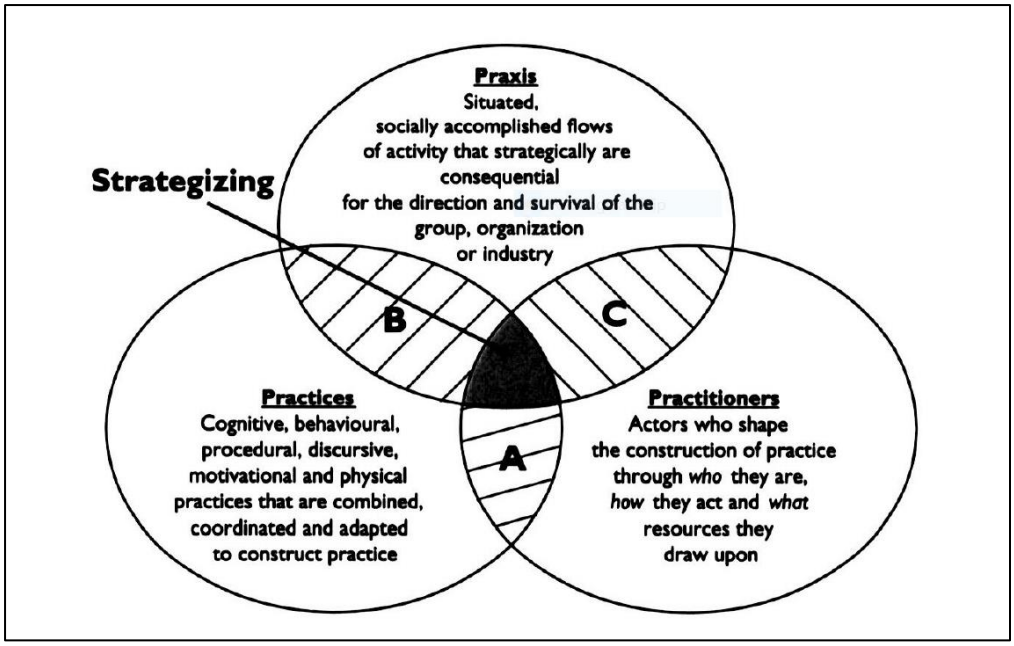


Figure 7: The conceptual framework of Strategy-as-Practice (Jarzabkowski, Balogun and Seidl 2007)

There is much of what is investigated as part of the s-as-p research agenda which resonates with the Wittgensteinian approach advocated for here. Both approaches are drawn from social theory; both emphasise the social context of strategic action and the practitioner as the unit of investigation. While some of the questions and preoccupations are not totally aligned, it is possible that some of the work done here could be seen as a contribution to the practice perspective. Wittgenstein has after all been suggested in the literature as an origin of the practice perspective from whence Strategy-as-Practice developed (Vaara and Whittington 2012).

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