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## **What Calls for Thinking in Business**

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**by Charles Spinoso, Matthew Hancocks, Billy Glennon**

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# What Calls for Thinking in Business: Consulting as a Heideggerian Philosopher

Charles Spinosa, Matthew Hancocks, and Billy Glennon

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## Abstract

For Heidegger, thinking focuses on what is most taken for granted in any domain and in its focus *transforms* the domain. In business, such thinking develops cultural innovations that change the factors of competition. This chapter introduces Heideggerian thinking for business transformation. We look at the concerns managers face in adopting such thinking, explain Heidegger's two breakthroughs: the turn to practice and the uncovering of radically different understandings of being. We show how to cultivate the thinker's mood of wonder and set out the five movements in Heideggerian thinking including bridging radically different ways of handling what is most taken for granted. We then propose that transforming mine into yours in exchange is the most taken for granted aspect of business and show how thinking about that transformation in cement (CEMEX) and commercial insurance (RSA) leads to cultural innovations that improve exchange for both buyers and sellers. We conclude by noting that such thinking tends to blend older practices like friendship with newer ones like networking.

## Contents

What Calls for Thinking in Business: Consulting as a Heideggerian Philosopher .....	2
Four Basic Questions .....	4
What Makes Heideggerian Thinking Remarkable? .....	6
Cultivating Wonder .....	8
Heidegger on Thinking from the Lectures Comprising <i>What Is Called Thinking?</i> .....	9
Radical Difference and Identification of Bridging Practices .....	10
Historical Review .....	10

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The Discovery of the Marginal .....	11
The New Thought Experiment .....	11
Habituation or Getting Used to How the World Looks Different .....	12
Summary: What Is Thinking? .....	13
Finding the Matter for Business Thinking .....	14
Thinking and Market Transformation .....	16
CEMEX and <i>Patrimonio Hoy</i> .....	16
RSA and Mid-Market Commercial Insurance in the UK .....	19
Conclusion: Saving Focal Practices .....	21
References .....	22

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## What Calls for Thinking in Business: Consulting as a Heideggerian Philosopher

This essay is about how to form innovative business strategies by using the philosophical thinking that comes out of the tradition of Martin Heidegger and Michel Foucault.<sup>1</sup> Earlier works by Heideggerian consultants have focused on producing changes in practices that lead to huge cultural shifts in our institutions and the way we deal with people and things in the way that Gillette’s development of the disposable razor has led to us seeing everything as more or less disposable.<sup>2</sup> The ambition here is narrower: to show how Heideggerian *thinking* in the domain of business reshapes the factors of competition and thus reshapes markets.

To put this Heideggerian thinking in context, most strategic thinking does not change the factors of competition in markets. It finds advantageous stable or fluid positions within markets (Porter 1980; Sull 2009). Kim and Mauborgne’s account (Kim and Mauborgne 2005) of blue ocean transformation does claim to change the factors of competition – to transform markets – and it is a remarkable achievement. But we believe that while the approach brings the practitioner close to the transformational insight, it does not go all the way. It fails because Kim and Mauborgne’s approach amounts to a logical reconstruction of genuine Heideggerian thinking. As a logical reconstruction, Kim and Mauborgne’s explains the if-then logic of

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<sup>1</sup>For brevity’s sake, we will speak about the “Heideggerian philosopher,” leaving out Foucault’s name. Heidegger originated the form of thinking, while Foucault turned it into a full-fledged discipline, especially in the lecture courses at the end of his life (Foucault 2001, 2011).

<sup>2</sup>The tradition of specifically Heideggerian consulting started shortly after the 1987 publication of Terry Winograd and Fernando Flores’ *Understanding Computers and Cognition* and the establishment of Fernando Flores’ Business Design Associates. A series of publications have followed including *Disclosing New Worlds* (Spinosa et al. 1997), “Taking an expanded view of customers” (Spinosa et al. 2001), “Developing productive customers in emerging markets” (Flores et al. 2003), “Promise-based management (Sull and Spinosa 2007), “Transforming crippling company politics” (Spinosa et al. 2014), and “Coping with time in organizations” (Spinosa et al. 2017). In the meantime, the field of Heideggerian Consulting has grown with VISION Consulting, Pluralistic Networks, STRATAM, Matthew Hancocks Strategic Thinking, Achieve Breakthrough, The Institute for Generative Leadership, and ReD Associates. ReD Associate’s Christian Madsbjerg has published *Sensemaking* (Madsbjerg 2017) and *The Moment of Clarity* (Madsbjerg and Rasmussen 2014).

Heideggerian thinking, shows its rationality, and thus explains the power of the market reconfigurations. But the logical reconstruction reasons away the truly generative and challenging insights that lead to transformations. Since Kim and Mauborgne use our case in their book, we will distinguish the Heideggerian thinking from the logical reconstruction as we go through the case (Kim and Mauborgne 2015, pp. 73–76).<sup>3</sup> We do not wish to quibble with Kim and Mauborgne’s claim that their own cases show that their frameworks can produce market-transforming results. In the right situation, explanatory insights will come close enough to generative insights to do the work (Kim and Mauborgne 2015, pp. 87–98). However, we write to show Heideggerian thinking in its boldest, sharpest form and how it leads to market transformation. Heideggerian thinking reveals the insight that generates transformative change. It does not just bring the practitioner close.

We will work through seven sections. In the section “[Four Basic Questions](#),” we answer the basic questions we generally face when suggesting market transformation and the seemingly preposterous notion that thinking like Heidegger would enable it. Then, in the section “[What Makes Heideggerian Thinking Remarkable?](#),” we will explain what is remarkable about Heideggerian philosophy and the discipline Heidegger asks us to undertake. In the section “[Cultivating Wonder](#),” we will turn to the cultivation of wonder, which for us is the mood that most often enables Heideggerian thinking. In the section “[Heidegger on Thinking from the Lectures Comprising \*What Is Called Thinking?\*](#),” our writing turns more philosophical as we bring out the steps of thinking from the first half of Heidegger’s *What Is Called Thinking?* We stay close to Heidegger and his use of Nietzsche as the exemplary thinker for two reasons. First, it is a basic good to follow the path of a thinker’s thinking, especially when you want to think similarly. Even more important, in identifying the steps of Nietzsche’s thinking, Heidegger shows how Nietzsche’s famous thought experiment has changed all our lives by landing us in postmodernity. Thus, we see at once how to think and how it changes the world. This section requires a smattering of knowledge of the history of the West. In the section “[Finding the Matter for Business Thinking](#),” we will work out what is most taken for granted in commerce and what is therefore the subject or matter of Heideggerian business thinking. In the section “[Thinking and Market Transformation](#),” we turn to two cases of Heideggerian business thinking that transformed a market, one of which Kim and Mauborgne helped make famous and one where most managers at the time thought the Heideggerian approach would not work. Last, in the section “[Conclusion: Saving Focal Practices](#),” we discuss the nature of the particular past practices that we blend with current practices in transforming markets and thereby show the remarkable culture work that Heideggerian strategists undertake.

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<sup>3</sup>We would make a similar argument for Christensen and Bower’s disruptions (Christiansen and Bower 1995).

## Four Basic Questions

First, “Do I really need to work on transforming my market?” The obvious reply is the wise, paranoid one. Someone is out there trying to transform your market. Are your shareholders content to have you bet their money that none will succeed? The Heideggerian answer is different and begins by asking, “What makes a life in business worth living?” It is making business history by finding a new way to create value for customers and shareholders alike, in short, by transforming competition in markets. You might be positioned so that you do not need to transform your market, but, if you do not try, you will miss opportunities for your shareholders and customers, and you will miss out on the joy of a life in business.

Second, “Is there some way to transform markets other than thinking like Heidegger?” Yes, there is the visionary approach to transformation. It involves inventing compelling contrary-to-fact conditions and then willfully pushing people to realize them. In creating the iPod and iTunes to transform the recording industry, Steve Jobs did this: imagine if there were a device for carrying 1,000 downloaded songs and that it was as cool as the music itself. (Remember the cool question iPod users had for each other, “What’s on your playlist?”) Then imagine that, by charging 99¢ per downloaded song, you have a more compelling offer than downloading for free and can thereby bring the contentious recording labels together in a single agreement. Even after we know that Steve Jobs did all that, it seems like a superhuman accomplishment (Isaacson 2011, pp. 378–425).<sup>4</sup> Heideggerian thinking requires distinctive emotional and intellectual virtues; it does not require superhuman genius and will. Ask yourself the question from the Dan Fogelman’s pop Hollywood movie, *Crazy, Stupid, Love*: “Are you the billionaire owner of Apple Computers?”

Third, “I was trained to think in economics, psychology, and management. Those disciplines make sense to me. What adjustments do I have to make to think about business from a Heideggerian perspective?” There are three basic adjustments: cultivation of wonder, listening for radical difference, and conducting research into the origins of practices instead of the origin of profit levers. Like any philosopher’s, Heidegger’s thinking requires cultivating a mood of wonder, because philosophers ask you to find what is truly odd or uncanny in our *ordinary* lives. Instead of the visionary imagining how things could be totally different, the philosopher looks at the way we are living and finds how it is totally different from the way we think it is. Soon, we will explore one such uncanniness: the meaning of being. It is quite mysterious that we say of things that they *are* in almost every other sentence we speak, but if queried what “is” means, we struggle. If you do not enter the exploration of what is in the mood of wonder, you are likely simply to get annoyed.

Heideggerian thinkers push this finding of mysteries further than other philosophers. They actively cultivate the skill of listening for radical differences. We

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<sup>4</sup>We note that Steve Jobs also could transform markets as a Heideggerian thinker and did so when he saved Pixar and made its films part of our diet (Spinosa et al. 2017).

generally think that we are all pretty much alike. The disciplines of economics, psychology, and management tend to reinforce that. We are all rational agents, beings with the same neurology, or producers and consumers. When we do find differences, say, among Baby Boomers, Gen-Xers, and Millennials, we shy away from making strong value judgments. We say Millennials want the opportunity to exercise creativity at work *more* than Boomers did. We do not say, Millennials think that Boomers lead enormously deficient lives because they stunted their own creativity. To find opportunities worth exploring, the Heideggerian consultant *has* to see the difference to the point where it is radical, where people behave in radically different ways, and would, if confronted with the fact, judge the other lives deficient and even as lives challenging their own good life.

When a Heideggerian consultant finds unusual differences, she clarifies them by diving into the history. Suppose a Heideggerian consultant finds her client's customers live in client-patron relationships, she would not, for example, hesitate to read Henry James Sumner Maine's *Ancient Law*. Suppose a Heideggerian consultant found her client's customers saw their lives epitomized in their homes, the consultant might find her way to Hegel's account of how the slave overcomes the master by realizing herself in the world. Suppose a Heideggerian consultant finds that women savers in their 40s in the UK conceive of the ideal future as being able to do what they want when they want to do it. The consultant might illuminate that seemingly narrow vision with reference to the liberation movements of the 1960s. Heideggerian consultants need have no more an encyclopedic understanding of history of practices than traditional consultants need to understand every lever of profitability in all markets. They learn as they go, but they turn to different sources for illumination. Once the Heideggerian consultant sharpens her vision by drawing on history, then the practical ways in which we cope with our deep differences stand out as wondrous and form the basis of market transforming practice.

Fourth, clients ask, "What would such consulting look like? In looking for radical difference, it sounds as though Heideggerian consultants promote strife. We have enough of that in the world." Let's take a simple instance of how finding radical difference leads to a bridge. It comes from a Heideggerian consultant interviewing a person seeking a mortgage. The goal of the interview is to come up with a market transformation for people in this customer segment.

Understanding that the interview participant liked roadside assistance to take care of emergencies, the consultant asked her if she would like a mortgage where she could miss a payment a month a year with no questions asked. "Absolutely not!" she snapped, showing that something was insulting. "You don't take on a mortgage if you think you might miss a month," she said. "It's about being responsible. You always keep a little savings." "Do you take pride in having a mortgage?" the consultant asks. Exasperation crosses her face. "Not at all," she says, again suffering indignity. "A mortgage is a ball and chain around my neck. I hate debt. I hardly ever use credit cards. I would do anything to get out of a mortgage other than give up my home." At this point, the Heideggerian consultant has been told that his assumptions are irritatingly wrong twice. He knows he is nearing a radical difference. "Let me see if I understand you. Suppose you have a mortgage for £400,000 at 2% interest and a

relative leaves you £400,000 in equities earning a 5% dividend. What would you do?" "Pay off the mortgage and celebrate," she replies immediately. "What if the dividend was 10%?" "You don't get it," she says with real impatience. "I don't really own my home until I pay off the mortgage. Of course, I'd pay off the mortgage." The radical difference is clear. This participant lives for absolute ownership. Her home is an extension of herself. She feels debt as a form of imprisonment. (Take her words literally.) The consultant and his bank clients are, of course, wealth optimizers. They seek the highest rate of return on a diverse array of holdings. The total value matters. Leverage (a mortgage) is a tool for optimizing value. The consultant knows that if he were to reveal his view of wealth, the participant would think him morally and disgustingly deficient. She would see him as purely money-grubbing. In turn, he acknowledges that he feels some pride in his own optimization. But most of all, as a Heideggerian, he looks at the difference with wonder that they can get on as well as they do with such radically different views on wealth and life.

Once the consultant sees this much, he also sees that there is a simple bridge between his and his client's wealth-optimizing ways and the participant's love of absolute ownership. Since she grudgingly uses wealth-optimizing tools like savings and credit card accounts, why not enable her to use them to help her pay off her mortgage faster? Her response to such an idea: "If 1% of my credit card bill went to pay off my mortgage each month, I'd use my credit card for everything." The story is a miniature version of Heideggerian thinking. Finding radical difference shines a light on the bridge across the difference. We now work through Heideggerian thinking's background and key elements before turning back to business.

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## What Makes Heideggerian Thinking Remarkable?

In the last century, Martin Heidegger (1962), followed by Wittgenstein (1958), Merleau-Ponty (1962), and Bourdieu (1992), overturned 2,500 years of wisdom about how human beings made the world intelligible to themselves. Before Heidegger, most people thought that we made sense of the world by means of conceptual cognition, which was a free, mental, concept-forming activity directed only by the rules of reason and the nature of things it examined. Heidegger showed that we made things intelligible mostly through our nonconscious, skillful ways of dealing them. We do not distinguish, for instance, men from women because we have clear definitions in our heads but because we have lots of different micro-practices for dealing with different genders. For instance, we stand different distances on different occasions in different cultures from people with different. No one has ever been able to devise a system of beliefs that could prescribe the distances we stand even in one culture. Our distance standing varies according to situation, relationship, and occasion and is therefore too subtle for a system of beliefs. Nevertheless, we notice when someone is standing too near or too far. Practices like these are the root of how we make sense of ourselves, other people, things, institutions, and so forth. Hence, Heidegger initiated a practice turn that has since spread to parts of philosophy, the humanities, and social sciences.

However, Heidegger has bequeathed us another gift that follows from the practice turn. Michel Foucault has expounded it most effectively (Foucault 1979, 1985). Not only are practices foundational but also there are radical differences in practices that tend to get covered over by rational cognition. Heidegger shows us these radical differences by showing that *being*, a seemingly universal, ahistorical phenomenon, has a history. If being changes, then we too are not a stable kind called human beings who march through history *acting* as heroes or slaves in one set of circumstances and then as saints or sinners in another. Heroes and saints are radically different beings and do not mix. The hero's willfulness is the saint's sin. Though our mortality remains constant from epoch to epoch, it is not rich enough to account for the huge differences. As we change, so does how we see and deal with all other beings. Heidegger's three most distinctive epochs are touchstones for illuminating radical difference. For the Homeric Greeks, things like emotions, or animals in the forest, just appeared and disappeared, whooshed up, as Richard Rorty said. Being was whooshing up. The beingest being would be the emotion channeled by the hero – Achilles' wrath – or the emotion uncontrolled by the slave. The serious differences would be between hero and slave. With Christendom, beings *were* so far as they showed or failed to show the glory of God. Accordingly, people were saints or sinners. The creatures of the world were ordered as a text to show God's order: the king as God's representative, the lion as king of the jungle. Being was the manifestation of God's glory, and the beingest being was the cathedral where God's glory shone even in the cathedral's interior stone. In modernity, beings appear as abstract essences systematically related to each other as with the elements of the periodic table. The beingest being would be the ordering subject (us) who creates tables of the essences of objects. Nietzsche, as we shall see, opened a new, joyful, postmodern epoch in the history of being where we are yet again radically different from heroes, who manage their emotions, saints, who give up will to follow God's ways, or orderers, who arrange everything according to universal rules.

To become a Heideggerian business consultant requires not only accepting Heidegger's gift of seeing radical difference but also staying in constant practice. Try it. What are the beingest forms of human being, thing, and institution in your postmodern world today? Look at your everyday life. What is the thing that you deal with that exemplifies how you deal with other things? (To get a feel for this, consider that in the eighteenth century, the beingest thing would likely be a horse, which a rider trained and managed, not built and controlled, not wondered at and mastered.) How do you most typically get to know and project yourself in today's world (as opposed to worlds of the past where family or tutors were dominant)? In dealing with others, what virtue is the one most generally admired? What new institution (it might not yet look like an institution) best enables you to deal with yourself and is typical in today's world? Answer these questions before you read Heidegger's account of Nietzsche in section "[Heidegger on Thinking from the Lectures Comprising \*What Is Called Thinking?\*](#)."



## Cultivating Wonder

If thinking starts by seeing radical differences between people, things, institutions, and sometimes within oneself, then wonder is one of the best moods for noticing the difference and then for seeing a way to bridge the difference. In a mood of wonder, everything is minimally amazing in that it *is* at all. Leibniz spoke out of wonder when he asked, “Why is there something rather than nothing?” In the mood of wonder, we are ready to be surprised. We are ready to see things that are different from how we would expect them to be. We do not feel defensive or challenged when things thwart our expectations. In today’s age, a few people are naturally in a state of wonder. We are too critical for that. To take an example, we walk into a call center and see huge numbers of unhealthy people sitting in cubicles, eating chocolates and chips, nervously looking back and forth at clocks, other KPI monitors and their computer screens. If we get close, we hear a strain in their voices as they try to sound happy and remember the discipline as always talking with a smile on their lips. Within our critical mood of suspicion or skepticism, we see economic victims talking to other economic victims. There is some truth in this. In interviews with call center agents, especially those who handle the complaint lines, agents will regretfully say, “I feel as though I have to justify a wrong a customer has suffered.”

Now, suppose you are a consultant who walks into a call center in the mood of wonder. It is as though you are putting, “It’s wonderful that. . .” in front of everything you see. Then you see that the company leaders have hired an enormous number of people in order to make sure that every customer gets to speak to an agent. Agents are eating chocolate and chips to get more energy so that they can take more calls, and they look at the KPIs because they do not want any callers to go unanswered. When they feel let down, it is because they could not answer a caller the way they think the CEO could have answered the caller. Wonder sees things as they are at their best but does not preclude seeing how things fall off from their best. Criticism thinks itself clear-sighted. But on the critical (frequently smug) view, we see the agents as versions of ourselves when we are harried by phone calls. With wonder, we see the agents as extraordinary human beings who are quite different from us and the customers they talk to. The agents give their working lives to taking care of individuals in distress. Wonder naturally reveals a difference that opens a space for management innovation. Criticism leads elsewhere.

To get into the mood of wonder for doing consulting, we ask consultants to take stock of their situation and the narrative they would tell about it and then, while staying true to the facts of the situation, to adjust the narrative until they can make the four following claims:

1. There is no place I would rather be.
2. There is no one I would rather be with.
3. There is nothing I would rather be doing.
4. And this I will remember well (Borgmann 2007, p. 1).

When people can honestly make the four assertions, they are in wonder (or another equally serviceable mood). Using these questions as guidelines leads to seeing the call center as the Heideggerian consultant does. In wonder, seeming victims genuinely become extraordinary caregivers, and that shows a distinctive way forward. We advise entering into wonder now as we plunge into the philosophical interpretation of the next section.

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## **Heidegger on Thinking from the Lectures Comprising *What Is Called Thinking?***

Whatever he thought earlier in his career, by 1952 Heidegger saw thinking as a skill like a craftsman's skill. He saw too that such thinking had the power to change the way we conceive and deal with the world. To see the connection of thinking with craft, we turn to Heidegger's account of a craftsmanly skill. Then to see how thinking changes the world, we work through his account of Nietzsche, whom he calls the last thinker. For craftsmanship, Heidegger uses the example of a master cabinet maker who draws the shape out of the wood (Heidegger 1968, pp. 14–17). We are to imagine that when the cabinet maker sees that her wood has a curve in its grain, she is drawn to make a cabinet with a curve in its shape. Thus, the cabinet maker starts (1) by discerning the shape in the wood and does that with reference to "all the different kinds of wood" she has experienced (Heidegger 1968, p. 14); then (2) she brings the shape out of the wood and to our attention (mostly by removing what obscures the shape); and finally (3) she habituates us to the shape by making it so appealing to our way of living that we might say: "That cabinet brings out the true feeling of kitchens."

Thinking too responds to its material and draws out the shapes slumbering in it (Heidegger 1968, pp. 14–15). What is thinking's material? It is what we take most for granted, and what we take most for granted, according to Heidegger, is that we say of everything that "it is" and that we deal with everything as beings.<sup>5</sup> Since we deal with each thing as a being, philosophers say we make things *intelligible* with reference to being. Being is the ground of intelligibility. But what makes something intelligible? As a first approximation, its presence makes something intelligible as a being. But presence is different in different epochs in the history of being: whooshing up, revealing God's glory, orderable. Thinking's job in general (not in business) is to draw out the hidden shape emerging now that enables us to attend to and then appreciate being and the beings revealed in its light.

To draw out the hidden shape of being, or the meaning of being, the thinker runs through a series of propositions directed toward being, much as a prepractice turn

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<sup>5</sup>In the 1960s, Heidegger comes to think that the matter of thinking is the concealing aspect of making things intelligible or *Ereignis*, and not being. However, the other elements of thinking remain largely the same. The one other difference is that thinking focuses more on saying (poetry) than on dealing with things (Heidegger 1972, pp. 22–23 & 70–71). See Wrathall ([forthcoming](#)) on mystery.

philosopher would. Heidegger calls it “idea formation” (Heidegger 1968, p. 55). However, while the prepractice turn philosopher uses the propositions to sift through our intuitions or concepts, Heidegger’s thinker uses the propositions to draw us into an exploration of our practical ways of coping with ourselves and with particular things. For Heidegger, thinking is a way of pointing out and thereby dealing with things as much as manual manipulation. Heidegger explicitly tells us that thinking “is . . . a ‘handicraft’” (Heidegger 1968, p. 16). For Heidegger, when we think of the old Heidelberg Bridge, we are at the bridge and dealing directly with it, not some concept or intuition; indeed, he says, we might be dealing more directly than someone indifferently walking across it (Heidegger 1971, pp. 156–157).

To see how thinking deals with and transforms things, we turn to Heidegger’s account of the path of Nietzsche’s thought. We mark the central steps, which are the same as the Heideggerian consultant’s thinking in business. To avoid confusion, note that Heidegger has an ambivalent relationship with Nietzsche. Nietzsche is the last thinker who thought us into a whole new way of being: postmodernity. Heidegger shows how Nietzsche did it. Nonetheless, Heidegger thinks postmodernity a wasteland and spent his career trying to think us beyond it.

## Radical Difference and Identification of Bridging Practices

Thinkers discern hidden shapes of being by looking for radical differences in the way we cope with people and things. The pre-Socratics, for instance, emphasized the radical difference between the constant change of the world and the stabilities we find or create in making sense of things. On Heidegger’s account, Nietzsche primarily looked at the radical difference between the supersensible (thoughts) and the sensible (stuff) or rationality and animalness (Heidegger 1968, pp. 61–62, 91), but also at the difference between, as he put it, Caesar and Christ (Heidegger 1968, p. 69). Since it is easier to understand, we will focus on that difference. Nietzsche looked at the radical difference between the classical, domineering, heroic life and the Hebraic law-abiding or loving traditions. He asked, What is the way of coping that bridges the two different traditions? For Nietzsche, it was willing or imposing. Romans imposed Roman law. Christians imposed antiwilling in meekness and love. Nietzsche *discerned* the hidden meaning of being as *will*. It is easy enough to see will as the basis of human being; we will have to work through Heidegger’s account of Nietzsche to see how will can be the being of all things.

## Historical Review

After the initial identification of a difference-bridging practice, the thinker uncovers what keeps the practice hidden, or why it is disbelieved, by ripping “away the fog”

(Heidegger 1968, p. 89). Why should we disbelieve that being is will? As Nietzsche looked at the history of the West, he saw that the strongest reason had been that we cannot will the past. We cannot undo it. We cannot change it. *Note: since Nietzsche, we do not feel this intransigence so strongly.* Accordingly, before postmodernity, our tradition always sought ways to overcome the inertness of the past. Both the Hebraic and Greek traditions focused heavily on law (Heidegger 1968, p. 93). The point was to put the past in its place in the present. With Christian redemption and various successive secularized versions, we sought to free ourselves from the obligations of our lifeless past. Thus, Nietzsche depicts our history as one where we have been revolted by the pastness of the past and have sought unsuccessfully to revenge ourselves upon the past, even the simple passing of time (Heidegger 1968, pp. 85, 92–96).<sup>6</sup>

## The Discovery of the Marginal

Once Nietzsche shows us that his contemporaries and their ancestors were continuously trying to remove the hold of the past, then, according to Heidegger, what shines clearly is the stance of simply letting-things-and-people-be as found in the words of Heraclitus and Parmenides (Heidegger 1968, p. 107). Heidegger's lectures in the second half of the course take up letting-be in Parmenides. But for Nietzsche himself, another letting-be marginal practice shone: the ancient Stoic thought experiment to decide whether to commit suicide. It was a practice in which Stoics *accepted* and hence *willed* the past.

In contemplating suicide, a Stoic would bring to mind the story of her entire life, the good and the bad, and then ask whether she would choose either that life with all its marvels *and* shames or no life at all (Foucault 2001, pp. 283–285). If the Stoic chose the life, then the Stoic willed and affirmed the past along with everything else.<sup>7</sup>

## The New Thought Experiment

Of course, in Nietzsche's day this marginal Stoic thought experiment would not convince many that they could will the past. To give the marginal practice resonating power, Nietzsche blended it with a dominant practice.<sup>8</sup> Heidegger names the dominant practice with the unfortunate expression, "the steadily rotating recurrence of the same" (109). What would such a practice look like? Nietzsche noticed that we

<sup>6</sup>Note that in calling attention to the Hebraic, Greek, and Christian traditions, Nietzsche calls our attention to practices we still participate in, justice and redemption. (Hence, the bridging practice does not supersede (and replace) past practices in the Hegelian sense. Rather, it shows how the different practices belong together.)

<sup>7</sup>We surmise this origin of Nietzsche's thought experiment because Nietzsche very clearly read Seneca. Heidegger does not give this detail.

<sup>8</sup>"Blending" is cross-appropriation from *Disclosing New Worlds* (Spinoza et al. 1997).

had become obsessive critics. It was an everyday way of coping with ourselves, others, and things. We could take nothing seriously. We always found a way to criticize, and thereby reduce, authority. Ultimately, we lived with the dawning sense that nothing really mattered. We *recurrently* criticize with the *same* result. In doing this Nietzsche said we killed both God and serious meaning (Nietzsche 1974, §122, §307, §125). Inserting the Stoic thought experiment inside our incipient sense that nothing matters intensifies its revelatory power. Hence, Nietzsche asks us to think not just of our lives but also of the history of the universe repeating eternally in all of its great and shameful details, not just once as in the Stoic exercise, but over and over again. The endless repetition removes seriousness just as constant criticism does. Thus, the thought experiment puts us in our familiar place of sensing a coming meaninglessness. Then Nietzsche inserts the Stoic exercise. Nietzsche asks whether we can affirm *our* endlessly repeated lives with both triumphs and shames (Nietzsche 1974, §341). In responding at all – and we do feel obliged to respond – we have to affirm our lives. Anything less – trying to return our ticket, contemplating suicide – would simply be something we will have done over and over endlessly, and hence it would be meaningless. But in the name of what do we affirm life? Nothing meaningful or serious! We simply affirm and experience ourselves as will, willing the affirmation and in affirming our endlessly repeated lives, we are also affirming the past and thereby willing it. Hence we no longer feel that the past is beyond will. Thus, we are captivated by the thought experiment.

Nietzsche's thought experiment brought out the meaning of being that was emerging at his time. It was the hidden shape of his time. Intellectuals were captivated by the experiment, and as they changed their lives and wrote with it shaping their words, others came to see life in the same way. But why say that this willing is the experience of being in general as opposed to just human being? Nietzsche's habituating answers that.

## Habituation or Getting Used to How the World Looks Different

Heidegger points out that at the end of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche called for habituating us to his experiment: “We did create the heaviest thought – *now let us create the being* to whom it will be light and blissful!” (109).<sup>9</sup> He had already started that task in *The Gay Science* (Nietzsche 1974, §341). There Nietzsche turns to the light, joyful style of self-affirming (Heidegger 1968, p. 109). Without meaningful choices, we experience everything – as we mostly do today – as options soliciting us to express ourselves. Nietzsche famously describes such a life as a kind of expressive artistry:

*One thing is needful.* – To “give style” to one’s character – a great and rare art! . . . Here a large mass of second nature has been added; there a piece of original nature has been

<sup>9</sup>Nietzsche calls his experiment his “heaviest thought” (Heidegger 1968, p. 109).

removed – both times through long practice and daily work at it. Here the ugly that could not be removed is concealed; there it has been reinterpreted and made sublime. (Nietzsche 1974, §290)

Every aspect of ourselves, even our original nature, solicits us to bring it into our own design. That goes too for galaxies and DNA. We take pride in our attitudes toward them. Being is will in general because *everything solicits us*. Thus, Nietzsche's thinking transforms everything by thinking us into postmodernity. If the mood of wonder still prevails, you will now see that the world we take as hard, everyday reality and which solicits opinions grew out of a philosopher's thought experiment. What then would be good answers to our question about postmodernist beingest beings? We feel ourselves engaging in the greatest optionality when we are online. Our favorite tool for connecting to the worldwide web is our beingest being. The worldwide web is likely our beingest institution. We are designers treating ourselves as resources so that we can be all we can be. Our chief virtue is flexibility (Heidegger 1977).

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## Summary: What Is Thinking?

Thinking first focuses on what is most taken for granted in a domain and then identifies the radical difference between practices for dealing with what is most taken for granted. Then, thinking finds the marginal practice that bridges the difference and looks at the place of the marginal practice in history. Thinking blends a form of the marginal practice with a dominant practice to form a thought experiment that brings out the power of the marginal practice. Last, thinking habituates people to the marginal practice that comes out in the thought experiment. The main differences between Heideggerian thinking about being and Heideggerian business thinking are that what is taken for granted in business is something other than being and instead of a thought experiment, business thinking comes up with a new product or service.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Would Heidegger countenance the claim that genuine thinking could be called by the taken-for-granted of a particular domain of activity such as business? In his "Origin of the Work of Art," (1971, pp. 32–37), Heidegger claims that art and thinking are essentially both versions of establishing a regime of truth and that works of art can manifest what is essential to a particular domain (reliability for equipment). Thinking can do the same. Hubert Dreyfus brilliantly illuminates Heidegger's distinction between the widely shared public world, with which thinkers are concerned when they think being, and special or subworlds like business, where thinkers think what is most taken for granted in the subworld (Dreyfus 1991, pp. 89–91).

## Finding the Matter for Business Thinking

What in business is most taken for granted? It will likely be some practice that has been a core part of business since its beginning and whose complexity found early expression but its meaning was mostly lost on later codifiers of business practice. We might consider division of labor or the practice of laboring to make things serve our purposes. But these practices need not develop into commerce. We might consider the practice of an open market place, the *agora*. But business has occurred in restricted marketplaces as well. We *propose* exchanging value for value even in barter as the most taken for granted practice in business. Heideggerian consultants therefore ask, what is the meaning of exchange? What is its hidden shape?

The question might seem perverse. What is plainer than the meaning of normal exchanges? In 1602, the common law settled its understanding of exchange. It went from a possessory process (you take this, and I take that) to a contractual one (we make a mutually beneficial agreement exchanging the right to a thing) (Spinosa 1994, pp. 370–385). Both understandings assume that what is mine can easily become yours. But how can what is truly mine – part of how I recognize myself in coping with the world – become yours? That was a live question before Roman lawyers in 450 BC started to codify their tradition in the famous XII Tables (Jolowicz and Nicholas 2008, p. 13). The XII Tables show that Romans distinguished exchanges between Romans from exchanges with non-Romans, and then, for exchanges between Romans, they distinguished two kinds of property, *res Mancipi* and *res nec Mancipi*. *Mancipium* means simply a taking in hand and seems likely to have indicated a possessory understanding of exchange. *Res Mancipi* included land subject to Roman ownership (generally Italian land), slaves, beasts of draft, beasts of burden, and rustic servitudes (mostly rights to take goods from or use someone else's land). *Res nec Mancipi* was any other kind of property (Jolowicz and Nicholas 2008, p. 137). Roman law demanded a special form of exchange for *res Mancipi* called a *mancipatio*. To exchange a *res Mancipi*, the transferor and the transferee had to appear with five adult Roman citizens, a pair of scales, a sixth Roman citizen to hold the scales, and a brick of bronze. To effect the exchange, the transferee grasps the thing to be transferred and says: "I assert that this [item] is mine by Quiritary right, and let it have been acquired by me with this piece of bronze and bronze scale." Then the transferee strikes the scales with the piece of bronze and gives it to the transferor (Jolowicz and Nicholas 2008, p. 144). In his institutes, Gaius (161 CE) called the *mancipatio* a symbolical sale (Jolowicz and Nicholas 2008, pp. 137–138, 146). But what does it symbolize? To understand the symbolism of the *mancipatio*, we need to look not at the transfer of goods but at the transformation of yours into mine.

Consider the slave who has learned how to anticipate and deal with all of your whims. Consider the field that you have cultivated in various ways until you have found the best pattern of cultivating and irrigating, whose paths and slopes are a part of your daily routine. Consider the horse you have trained and who responds to your gestures as if its instincts were your own. It turns out that *res Mancipi* are all items that a *bonus paterfamilias* (the reasonable paterfamilias) has nurtured to suit his way

of life. Are any of these really mine as soon as I pay you for them and carry them off? The nurturing has made them deeply yours. That does not simply rub off.

Still, the Roman *paterfamilias* had the power to sell his slave and even his child using the *mancipatio* (Jolowicz and Nicholas 2008, pp. 118–120). Romans invented absolute ownership, which follows from a strong sense of mine and yours and enables an equally strong sense of the capacity to sell or give away (Jolowicz and Nicholas 2008, pp. 140–142).

But what would such a sale look like? Why should the sale need five mature witnesses instead of one or two? The Romans believed in counsel as much as absolute ownership. A *paterfamilias* could put his child to death but only with the agreement of the family council (Jolowicz and Nicholas 2008, p. 119). The five witnesses were the council. They needed to confirm and allow (by serving as witnesses) that something hard to believe was indeed taking place: the owner is making something deeply his into yours. Such taking would look like violence, and so it is in the ceremony. If I am to have your horse, I need to grab the horse with my own hand to show that I am in fact *taking* it, as I would in violence. But I also must hit the scale (the measure of rightness) with the bronze and then hand the bronze to you to show that I am peacefully purchasing the horse. The person, animal, land, or right is so markedly yours that it seems quite inalienable and thus the *mancipatio* is required. The shape hidden in exchange – the meaning of exchange – is the bridging of a radical difference between buyer and seller. The purchaser grabbing the horse with one hand and passing the bronze brick with the other himself represents in that action the bridge that brings buyer and seller close enough to transform yours into mine. Trading value for value, which is how we normally think of exchange, only arises out of acknowledging difference and bridging the difference.

Today, we acknowledge the difference through a kind of disavowal. We use big data and algorithms to find the moment when a customer is appraising the seller's product in a fashion close to the seller's own. Say we are looking at a new suit online. We click on it and accessories that suggest we are preparing for an important meeting, perhaps a Board Meeting. Suddenly the algorithm picks up that our cursor movements are those of an aspirational mood directed at the garment, and suddenly we receive an enticing offer. Thus, we recognize the difference between the buyer and seller by acting on those moments when it is the narrowest. Old-fashioned advertisements usually tried to narrow the difference between seller's and buyer's appraisal of the goods. That is the past. We can easily foresee the day when the buyer's algorithm interacts with the seller's algorithm. When that happens, we believe the transformation of mine into yours will become a central issue again.

We are now ready to look at the two contemporary cases of Heideggerian consulting and see them as instances of Heideggerian thinking about transformation of mine to yours. As a simple reminder before we begin, Heideggerian business thinking works by (1) bringing out the ad hoc bridging of the radical difference between buyers and sellers, (2) finding a blend between that marginal bridging practice and a dominant practice, and then (3) finding a way to habituate people to the newly developed bridge. Business thinking follows the same path as thinking in general except that business thinking generates a new product or service concept



rather than a new thought experiment. Because this thinking blends and strengthens cultural *practices*, we call these offerings cultural innovations.

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## Thinking and Market Transformation

We will show how Heideggerian business thinking works in a much-noted case CEMEX's *Patrimonio Hoy* (Kim and Mauborgne 2005, pp. 73–76; Prahalad 2006, pp. 219–240; Flores et al. 2003, pp. 77–103) and one other recent case where most would think there was no difference between the suppliers and customers. We will also take time out to distinguish Heideggerian thinking from Kim and Mauborgne's logical reconstruction.

### CEMEX and *Patrimonio Hoy*

Francisco Garza, CEMEX's Senior Manager in charge of Mexico started with a simple strategic goal: find a way to sell more cement to Mexico's poorer, mostly do-it-yourself builders. He saw that the class differences between these do-it-yourselfers and middle-class Mexicans were huge and therefore asked for help from Heideggerian consultants.

*Radical difference:* The consultants started looking for radical difference between sellers and buyers and found the biggest difference within the buyers themselves. Poorer Mexicans lived in a status culture where God or fate determined their places in the community; planning was seen as arrogant; and a good life came from accepting one's place, maintaining conviviality in warm community celebrations, and holding others to account if they got ahead (presumably by taking something from someone). However, these Mexicans also had one foot in the more contractual, middle-class culture of Mexico. Accordingly, they understood that one could plan and organize to create things good for the community such as public gardens. One could even do this to get ahead a little. However, they rationalized their use of binding agreements and planning to get ahead by believing that God or fate ultimately determined if you actually got ahead and by not planning too far in advance. Since the mark of fate's or God's blessing was a good attitude, those with good attitudes had more flexibility in getting ahead (Flores et al. 2003, p. 84).

*Identification of a bridge practice:* Without planning, with many convivial duties, and with a strong suspicion about getting ahead, how could poorer Mexicans make any large purchases at all? Certain members of the community with good attitudes took to organizing *tandas*, which were informal associations of ten neighbors who contributed 100 pesos to a pool each week, and each week, one – determined by lot at the first meeting – took 1,000 pesos. The institution combined fate – the drawing of lots – with a little planning – planning to pay 100 pesos for 10 weeks. It combined a little bit of neighborhood conviviality – the *tanda* generally comprised people who had neighborly relations – and organizing for a nonconvivial good. The self-motivating optimism of the organizer and the neighborly warmth generally stood

against distrust of getting ahead (Flores et al. 2003, pp. 83–85). Thus, the *tanda*, once we discovered it, shone brightly as the bridging practice on which to build the market transforming innovation.

*Thinking in contrast to a logical reconstruction of thinking:* The *tanda* is precisely the key discovery that Kim and Mauborgne's logical reconstruction of thinking would most likely miss. Kim and Mauborgne wisely ask strategists to start by looking at difference. Only, instead of looking at radical differences that emerge in actual customers' lives or in the differences between customers and sellers (or others in the value chain), Kim and Mauborgne direct strategists to the six most common sites of difference: the difference (1) between the benefits your industry gives customers and those of a potential substitute industry, (2) between the benefits of one product group and another in the same market, (3) between the financial buyers and end-users, (4) between products and complementary products, (5) between the functional and emotional reasons to buy, and (6) between the reasons customers buy today and buy tomorrow. They prescribe a blend of the benefits that crosses the difference and hence produces a new value innovation and transformed market space (Kim and Mauborgne 2015, pp. 51–82).

In the case of *Patrimonio Hoy*, Kim and Mauborgne saw that the communal warmth of the convivial status culture opposed the functional coldness of the contractual culture and identified a blend of the two in order to make cement into something that had emotional resonance: *Patrimonio Hoy* (Kim and Mauborgne 2015, pp. 73–76).

As a logical reconstruction that classifies the nature of the innovation, Kim and Mauborgne do well. But one could work for years trying out ways to blend the emotional status culture and functional contractual culture and never hit on the *tanda* or find a successful blend. The strategist would find that most of the do-it-yourselfers' practices already blended a little of the emotional with a little of the functional, as do most of ours. The Kim and Mauborgne practitioner will have to get very lucky to hit on the *tanda* as the premier practice for the blend that makes cement emotional. However, once one gets clear about the radical differences as they are lived – fear of planning and seeing getting ahead as arrogant while wanting to get ahead – then any practice that enables people to do some planning within a convivial context that honors fate leaps out as a wondrous bridge that blends the best of each side. That is just what the *tanda* did for us. That is the advantage of finding radical, lived differences. The bridge practice leaps out at you. But its leaping out does not make it appealing.

*Historical review:* Neither poor Mexicans nor CEMEX's managers wanted to take *tandas* seriously. Most *tandas* failed. People ended up spending their 1,000 pesos on emergencies. *Tandas* were still clearly instruments of fate not regular commercial exchange. CEMEX's managers saw them as shameful.

*Discovery of the marginal and dominant:* What could make the *tanda* solid? A few practical and cultural things were clear. A CEMEX *tanda* would be for cement and other associated building materials. Unfortunately, a cement-and-building-materials *tanda* just did not seem real to these customers. It was too close to the ordinary *tanda* for people to see why they should bother. However, there was a marginal

practice of moving out of one's home to accept a government-built home. Most considered such a move anticonvivial and would not do it, but recognized it as a practice to get a whole home. The team drew on this practice to create a *tanda* for getting a whole room, which did seem different and real.

*The new product or service concept:* The new reality of a whole room had to be fitted in with the values of the community. The first problem was planning. It would take about 70 weeks to pay for enough material to build a room. That required far more arrogant planning than any was accustomed to. To mitigate the sense of arrogance, CEMEX saw to it that supplies were delivered as needed so that building could take place during the same 70 weeks of the *tanda*. Also, CEMEX instituted the role of a construction advisor who, with a good attitude, would talk the builder through a building plan, mentioning all the things that generally go wrong, and then create a design for a simple, standard room. The conversation and written design made the room more real than other objects sought with conventional *tandas*, and although the *tanda* lasted for 70 weeks, participants did not have actively to plan for 70 weeks (Flores et al. 2003, pp. 89, 92). Thus, the blend of the marginal practices of the *tanda* and getting a whole something and the dominant practices foregoing planning and having a good attitude offered a new bridge for exchange.

*Habituation:* Though the early participants built their rooms on time, they did not overcome the resentment toward getting ahead. To habituate the new practice, the team decided that the *tanda* would have to be embedded in something larger than building a room. Since *tanda* members had spoken about the planned room as patrimony for their children, the team named the cement *tanda* *Patrimonio Hoy*, Patrimony Today (Flores et al. 2003, p. 88). Passing things down to your children fitted well with the dispositions of a status society. Adding "today" made it something participants could feel proud of right away. The team, then, made *Patrimonio Hoy* into a club that included all the cement *tandas* in a region. As members in the club, participants received not only the credit and savings mechanism of the *tanda* but also warehousing, friendly delivery, technical assistance and a plan, construction classes, masonry certificates, and additional group sessions to talk over the feelings around seeing the *tanda* through (Flores et al. 2003, p. 86). Last, the *Patrimonio Hoy* club instituted block parties, newspaper reports, and other celebrations in the convivial community to celebrate the success of people who completed their rooms. At these celebrations, club members gave testimonials on how they saved. The *Patrimonio Hoy* community became a sister community to the traditional one (Flores et al. 2003, p. 94).

This cultural innovation worked. It transformed the basis of competition, and poorer Mexicans built better quality rooms for 51% to 80% of the previous cost and did so in one-third the time. In *Patrimonio Hoy* regions, cement sales rose by 2–3 times (Flores et al. 2003, p. 99).

Like other market transformations that come out of Heideggerian thinking, we call *Patrimonio Hoy* a cultural innovation because the exchange found a better way to blend the status and contractual cultures for both poorer Mexicans and CEMEX managers. The poorer Mexicans found themselves in a *tanda* that did not emphasize fate or suspect getting ahead as much as their status culture did. CEMEX managers

grudgingly accepted *tandas* of poorer Mexicans for whom extending middle-class credit would not work.

## **RSA and Mid-Market Commercial Insurance in the UK**

CEMEX might seem like a special case because it sought exchanges between two quite different classes of Mexicans. Of our second case is one where most would say that the buyer and seller were culturally *identical*: UK commercial insurance underwriters and independent, UK commercial insurance brokers. They are mostly men from the same social class. Many brokers spent a part of their careers as underwriters. Both brokers and underwriters developed a sophisticated understanding of insuring commercial risk. Though the brokers are independent, they are the insurers' sales channels to end-clients. Thus, they are closer to the sellers than are most buyers. Technically, they were the buyers' agents. Yet, for all this similarity, RSA had to find and bridge the difference between underwriters and brokers to turn its mid-market business around.

Founded in 1710 and headquartered in London, RSA provides insurance to 17 million customers in 140 countries. RSA UK senior managers believed that RSA had the best commercial underwriters in the industry; yet RSA had been losing market share in its mid-market commercial insurance area for seven years. The mid-market commercial team tried numerous solutions, in particular, various versions of step-like commission schemes where, with higher sales volumes, brokers would earn higher commissions. But with severe price competition, the schemes made little difference. Worse, it looked as though having RSA's sophisticated underwriters, who could craft individual terms, did not matter either.

*Radical difference*: The mid-market leader hired Heideggerian consultants to find out how to obtain the lion's share of broker business where end-customers cared more about insurance terms than price. The team sought first to identify the radical difference between brokers and underwriters. Unlike underwriters, brokers were avid networkers. Even brokers who started out as underwriters made themselves into networkers. Brokers valued being liked above anything else. They constantly worried that their customers, staff, and insurance company underwriters did not *like* them. In contrast, underwriters lived to analyze and write risk. They were proud that their analytical abilities were so strong that brokers *needed* to form relationships with them.

Brokers were lovers. Underwriters were analyzers. They could not be more different. But they saw little of the difference. Since underwriters saw brokers as slightly lazy calculators, underwriters assumed that brokers would pit insurance companies against each other for the lowest price. Hence, as more disciplined, smarter calculators, RSA underwriters developed the tactic of sending in their quotes at the last moment so that the broker could not ask other insurers to underbid RSA. Consequently, brokers saw that when they made requests to RSA for insurance quotes, the requests would go into a black hole. Brokers thought that if the RSA underwriter liked the broker or the broker's client enough, then *maybe* the RSA

underwriter would issue a quote on time. Since brokers saw underwriters as like themselves, the brokers could only assume that most underwriters' behavior showed that the underwriters disliked the brokers. To make matters worse, the underwriters felt hurt because brokers did not seem to appreciate the careful craftsmanship of the terms. In both cases, exchange was a grudging act of will.

*Identification of a bridge practice:* Once the radical difference became clear, a bridging practice leapt out. Because brokers were always trying to cultivate warm relationships, every once in a while, a broker would manage to cultivate a warm relationship with an RSA underwriter. It would be warm enough that the underwriter would not play the waiting game, but move any request from that broker to the top of his pile, work out the best quote he could, and then call the broker immediately. The underwriter felt the broker appreciated his underwriting, while the broker thought the underwriter appreciated the friendship.

*Historical review:* The long tradition of underwriters as aloof judges stood against friendships between brokers and underwriters. Virtually everyone worried that such friendship would drive underwriters to underprice risk. Thus, such relationships were discouraged and remained rare.

*Discovery of the marginal and dominant:* While friendship was marginal, senior management did expect underwriters to exchange pleasantries. Thus the Heideggerian consultants joined the dominant practice of pleasantries with some of the key marginal practices of friendship.

*The new product or service concept:* First, RSA promised that an underwriter would respond to brokers within 3 hours of their submitting a request. The underwriter would vet the request for risk but also ask the broker what the underwriter could do to help the broker close the sale. The underwriter would then promise to deliver the quote at a time the broker wanted. In the quote call, the underwriter would enquire about the end-client's situation and mood and deliver a quote with an explanation of why it benefited the end-client's. In short, the underwriter did a little of the broker's work. Then the underwriter would ask if he could call the broker just before he presented to the end-client in order to see if the broker needed a last minute change. In that follow-on call, the underwriter spoke in an upbeat mood, wished the broker the best of luck, and said he would like the business. Win or lose, the underwriter would seek a feedback call. Brokers loved the collaboration and attention. Underwriters felt their terms appreciated.

*Habituation:* Underwriters, however, hated the all-important follow-on and feedback calls. To align underwriters emotionally with these calls, underwriters were put into teams to listen to each other's calls weekly, make recommendations to each other, and join together to meet team financial goals. The underwriters supported each other in making the all-important follow-on and feedback calls. In these calls, brokers would frequently identify a new, non-price-sensitive risk for the underwriter. To sustain the practice, the regional manager would hold a weekly review meeting.

With this new bridge between underwriters and brokers, revenue increased by 30%, renewals increased by 6 percentage points, and RSA did that while raising the prices of its premiums. Michael Lawton, the mid-market leader said, "This achievement went beyond what anyone could have expected."

## Conclusion: Saving Focal Practices

As part of thinking like Heidegger, Heideggerian consultants blend homely marginal practices with dominant ones. With *Patrimonio Hoy*, the communal conviviality of the *tanda* remained and had to remain for the market transformation to work. With RSA, friendly acknowledgment had to remain for the new service to work. We consider innovations that preserve these older practices good in their own right because they preserve a way of life and kind of practice that our dominant postmodern, technological way of living tends to co-opt and eliminate. We follow Albert Borgmann in calling these older practices focal practices, “focal,” because they take us away from the life of infinite options and center us (Borgmann 1987, pp. 196–209).

To make the distinction between postmodern technological and focal practices clear, we start with technological practices. Consider using Google as an exemplary technological practice. It gives us efficiency, convenience, flexibility, freedom, and reduced risk. Technological practices generally do not take cultivation but involve simple actions like tapping a keyboard or screen. Technological practices also take over and co-opt other kinds of practice. Consider how technology has changed camping. If we used to camp to get in touch with both the difficulties and beauties of nature, we now use technological practices to enjoy the beauty and mostly avoid the difficulty. We have super-light, all-condition sleeping bags, tents that pitch themselves, kits for taking care of water, snakebites, and so forth. We have super-nutritious packaged food, satellite guidance, and, of course, mobile phone coverage. At night we are free to listen to the sounds of nature and look at the night sky or to watch a movie on our tablets. By and large, we only have to experience the exigencies of nature and cultivate skills to handle them as we wish. The exigencies have become options.

Focal practices are quite different. They require the *cultivation* of skills such as cooking good food at a campfire. They generally require *others* with different skillful roles such as gathering dry wood or pitching the tent. To take a less co-opted example of a focal practice, consider playing music with friends. It requires the skills of playing saxophone, piano, guitar, bass, and drums. Because in exercising focal practices we are bound to acts of cultivation and particular communities of people, focal practices generate relationships that *bind* more than they free. And last, because of the particularity of the skill and the community, focal practices even simple ones like creating a family dinner are full of *risk* that one does not want to mitigate. If people around the table feel grouchy, the focal practice demands working it out or absorbing the misfortune, not carrying your plate into a private space and texting a friend or watching a movie. In short, focal practices require cultivation of skills, others in various roles, binding relations, and risk. Technological practices do the opposite.

Visionary market transformations do not tend to include focal practices. A visionary starts with a world that looks impossible, as did Steve Jobs when he created the iPod and iTunes. He knew he was creating a kind of fantasy world and knew some of its costs. He loved the Beatles’ concept albums, but beloved playlists

would have little room for whole albums. A life without focal practices would be one with only the delights of infinite optionality, in short, of fantasy, not the blessing of a brilliant, live, risky, skillful performance. When we think about the life of infinite optionality, we are with Yeats: “We had fed the hearts on fantasies, / The heart’s grown brutal from the fare” (Yeats 2008, p. 174).

Though we think focal practices are goods in themselves, using Heideggerian thinking in consulting will drive market transforming results whether you care about focal practices or not. Heideggerian thinking will focus on finding the radical differences that let the truly generative, transformational practice leap out. Thus, it lets people in business engage in the joy and greatness of commerce.

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