

THE VALUE OF CONSIDERING THE FULLNESS OF TIME IN STRATEGY MAKING

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ABSTRACT: *A greater understanding of the “content of time,” in terms of what happens within organizations, should assist scholars, researchers, and practitioners in their study of strategy making. To that end, this paper will examine what Scripture teaches us about time, specifically, the following aspects of time: (1) speech, (2) listening, (3) action, (4) life, and (5) intensifying forces. In so doing, suggestions will be provided regarding potential research directions.*

INTRODUCTION

“And of the sons of Issachar, men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do...” (1 Chronicles 12:32 NASB)

To remain viable in the present and create value in the future, organizations must pursue the right strategies in the right ways at the right time and over a certain period of time. Following Rumelt (2011), to arrive at these strategies managers need to correctly diagnose organizational situations, develop appropriate approaches to resolve problems or take advantage of opportunities, and coordinate a set of coherent actions.

To correctly diagnose a situation, the basic step involves conforming to reality (Godin, 2006; Sowell, 1993). In other words, good leaders must not build their strategy on a faulty diagnosis—one based on fantasy, exaggeration, or false premises. Logically, then, a major key to employing an effective strategy is the correct interpretation of the strategist’s total business reality.

Interpreting reality accurately demands that a strategist pay careful attention to what he or she defines as reality. Martinez (2003) and VanderVeen (2004) note that for Christian scholars and strategists this includes important interpretative concerns regarding the internal and external environments of the firm. Christians see reality through Christian lenses. Since reality also includes time (besides just the spatial, internal, and external organizational environments), we also need to consider what the Bible has to say about time. Doing so will potentially assist theorists and managers alike to diagnose their business situations more accurately and contribute to

creating effective approaches and coordinating coherent action.

The paper will begin with a review of the literature on time in strategy formation. Then it will focus on four key sources that explicate the “fullness of time” as mentioned in the Bible. Primarily, the idea of the fullness of time will clarify how God’s words through His prophets constructed time; how His prophets related the past, present, and future; what makes time (and specifically the future) have content; and what relation God’s words have with time and life. Furthermore, a conceptualization of time will be proposed that associates speech, listening, the future, action, life (or energy) in the organization, and event intensifiers. The intent is to provide Christian strategy scholars with new ideas about time that can be tested empirically and create practical frameworks for students and practitioners to form more effective strategies. Finally, there will be some concluding remarks and suggestions for further research.¹

LITERATURE REVIEW

Aspects of Time

In the academic literature we find three distinct concepts of time. The first, *chronos*, is chronological time or time in succession. It is measurable by clocks or chronometers (Brown & Herring, 1998). *Chronos* time is absolute and objective—meaning outside of us, linear, and irreversible. Conversely, the second, *kairos*,² is subjective time: a seasonal time of episodes featuring a beginning, middle, and an end. It is the human and living time of intentions and goals

(Brown & Herring, 1998). Philosophers have suggested that actors (or those taking action) shape *kairos*: "...any moment in time has a *kairos*; a unique potential that an actor can grasp and make something of" (Miller, 1992, p. 312, in Orlikowski & Yates, 2002).

The third concept of time in organizational research describes time as events with useful content, which then create other events in a stream of composite events:

An event must have an informative content in order to be noticed (sensed). In the event perspective, a strategist posits that events are connected, and that these connections are mediated by *pragmata* (associated acts of actors) and enactments. We cannot think of any event that is not connected to an antecedent event, in one way or another. These connections become an event trajectory, a cumulative sequence of linked events.

Composite events configure themselves linearly but also laterally through evolution (event variation, event selection, and event retention). In addition, each period of time may be seen as the latent period for a number of different and mutually excluding future event trajectories. It is like snowballs collecting events on their way down the slope of time. Only at the end of the slope will it be possible to determine which one of the snowballs at the beginning accumulated the most events on the way down or if the initial events caused an avalanche (Laurids & Tornroos, 2002, p. 42).

Five Observations about Organizations, Strategy and Time

Looking at the various aspects of time, five *observations* will be made. The *first* is that researchers such as Whipp, Adam & Sabelis (2002) conclude that time is a multilevel dimension and that a concentration on any one aspect implicates all others. At the structural level, humans are concerned with time frame and point of time; temporality (all change processes); tempo (speed and pace); and timing and synchronization. Additionally, we must consider duration and instantaneity; sequence and simultaneity; rhythmicity; and the past, present, and future. All these can be regarded as the interdependent,

mutually implicating, aspects of time or "timescapes."

The *second observation* is that broader themes have emerged from these studies of time. In studying the nature of time and its orientation, researchers have to wrestle with time as either subjective or objective; universal or particular; linear, cyclic, or natural (biological/ecological); having either closed or open-ended temporal orientation (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002). There is also the question of how to handle the concept of relational time (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). When researchers consider time as an event, they have to pay attention to pluritemporalism: the existence of multiple temporal modes of social time that exist side by side (Orlikowski & Yates, 2002; Clark and Maielli, 2009). They must also consider the form that trajectories take, based on their contingency path (Clark & Maielli, 2009) and the most effective time durations for organizational processes, structures, or teams (Mosakowski & Earley, 2000).

Further, when studying the connections between past, present, and future, researchers have identified various key issues. The strategist must first decide which concept of the future will be used, such as future infinitive or future perfect (Purser & Petranker, 2004); the extent of the present (do we view the present as including recent years or simply the duration of an event?); and how past commitments influence both the present and the past. Speaking to the overall method of studying time, Roe (2009) has also raised the issue of whether researchers should study time not as a variable (dependent or independent), but rather as a phenomenon. Finally, a Christian should note that since most of the studies about time assume that it is a social construction, a major assumption involved in all these theories is that humans create time or the future.

The *third observation* regards the *method* that researchers suggest humans use to create time or the future. It seems that theories about how to create the future, including change and transformation, depend heavily on how a person views time. The main stream of researchers and consultants—who apply both economics and evolutionary economics and assume an open future—suggest that we create the future by projecting the past into the future (e.g. Purser, 2011). We do this by predicting potential problems

and informing concerned persons before these problems arise, using mind activities (Jeseviciute-Ufartiene & Kvedaravicius, 2009); by gaining insight into opportunities for discontinuous innovation (Hamel, 2000); by creating sustainable value for the organization—which is created by internal processes (Kaplan & Norton, 2004); and by considering managers' representations and values and also the sensors that filter information (Gavetti & Rivkin, 2007).

For example, Purser (2011)—assuming an indeterminate future—suggests we create the future through real-time creative inquiry, imagination and improvisation. According to Purser & Petranker (2004), the true use of creativity means first the need to rethink our beliefs about linear time, and staying within the future energy of time, take the future on its own temporal terms. Other researchers, using sociological and anthropological concepts, suggest we create time and the future in a variety of ways:

1. Via sense-making or trusting those with the power to do it (Ackermann & Eden, 2011);
2. Through personal or group desire (Schlesinger, Kiefer & Brown, 2012);
3. Through emerging events that are disconfirming and result in actors taking unexpected cues from the environment (Szulanski, Porac & Doz, 2005; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998);
4. By selecting certain specific events (sequences or trajectories) over others (Clark & Maielli, 2009; Orlikowski & Yates, 2002); and
5. By using communication as a critical component of “agents” processes, distancing agents from their present schemas (Ballard & Webster, 2008; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998).

Key to all these researchers' worldviews -- of which religious beliefs are a constitutive element -- because worldview moderates the manner in which groups become engaged with specific social practices, thus creating the future (Ballard & Webster, 2002).

The *fourth observation* is that time influences strategy formation because of its nature. Key to this influence is how strategists view time and how others in the organization respond to time.

What is it about time that makes it important for strategy formation? As much as time both constrains and enables actions, it organizes our life, and it creates, shapes, and orders the world. It does all this by determining the frequency, pace, location, duration, sequence, and periodicity of actions, while also determining distinct patterns of human social interaction (Ballard, 2002). In short, time regulates human behavior by cyclical, oscillatory, and rhythmic processes (Ballard, 2009).

The *fifth observation* is that temporal social structures help us make sense of, regulate, coordinate, and account for the activities of an organization (Orlikowski, & Yates, 2002). Explained differently, since events occur at specific moments, it is time that connects us from one event to another. Therefore, events, the sequence of events, the relationship of simultaneous multiple events, their trajectories or patterns, what happens in these events, and their self-reinforcement and feedback mechanisms come together to form organizations. So, if organizations are composed of interconnected events, then organizations themselves can be tentatively understood as events (Laurids & Tornroos, 2002).

Why Understanding Organizations as Events is Important

Understanding organizations as events helps managers gain insight into making sound decisions and urges them to consider future possibilities. To understand organizations as events, the world of static time must first be considered: capabilities, motivation, routines, actors and their autonomy, and stability. But the world of dynamic time must also be considered: opportunity, timing/luck, surprises, networks, heteronomy (actions outside the individual) and velocity (Laurids & Tornroos, 2002).

Time binds human beings to a beginning and an end—moving us on a trajectory through its dynamism (Roe, 2009). These pathways or trajectories guide our lives in certain directions. They affect how we interpret and prioritize certain past moments over others, while also influencing our present choices and how we envision the possible effects of these choices impacting the

future. In other words, time creates culture; or rather, culture is time (Hall, 1989), as it shapes and conditions all of our social actions. In this regard, it is useful to consider that God created time (Gen. 1:14), while He himself dwells in eternity.

The strategist's view of time also affects strategy formation. When strategic thinkers view time as *linear*, Noss (2002) proposes that they assume time as a connection between intentions in the present and actions in the future—an interval of sorts between present and future. Understanding that time progressively moves forward, irreversibly and without meaning, managers may more easily project and rationally organize all activities, while also controlling the future through detailed plans, milestones, and the like. Mosakowski & Earley (2000) add that strategists who assume linear time may view this flow of time as novel, where each day is “relatively new, with a capacity to reinvent itself and events only loosely influenced by the past” (p. 800).

When strategists view time as *cyclical*, they expect events to recur in expected cycles. To know these cycles, strategists emphasize knowing the past (Noss, 2002). Managers may further interpret these cycles as either short or long cycles between certain or uncertain events (Mosakowski & Earley, 2000). However, as Mosakowski & Earley (2000) point out, just because people assume a cyclical perspective of time does not necessarily mean they reject a linear view of time. After all, time may progress linearly in recurrent cycles.

An *event* view of time, as shared by some strategists, assumes that organizational stable time patterns are broken through with short eruptions of transition and dramatic shifts, or punctuations (Noss, 2002). In this case, strategists view the relationship between the past and the future as loosely coupled because of punctuating events (Mosakowski & Earley, 2000).

[A] manager with a punctuated view of time may focus on long-term planning around hypothesized past critical events in an effort to predict and plan for the punctuated change. More importantly, this manager will create institutional practices, select key personnel, and implement decisions that further reinforce a “wait for the event” approach (p. 806).

In addition, how others within the organization view time may influence strategy implementation.

Brown & Herring (1998) discovered that employees at various levels of the organization perceive time differently. For example, some recognize a difference between “work time” and “private time” while others do not. Employees at certain levels perceive longer planning time horizons than others; and there appears to be a correlation between age and gender in these differences.³ Lang & Carstensen's (2002) research also suggests that a person's future-time perspective is related to his or her social motivation, and to the composition of perceived quality of personal networks. To complicate matters further, organizational cultures themselves tend to have a past, present, or future orientation. These studies raise the question: What happens in the strategy-formation process when employees at various levels are not synchronous with the strategists' perception of time?

Finally, it will be valuable to mention two popular organizational theories that use time—at least partially—as a strategy component. Time value (which includes time competition, time compression, and real time) uses a variety of time-based methodologies to create value throughout the organization. These time-based methodologies include just-in-time, material requirement planning, optimized production technologies, flexible manufacturing systems, time to market, high-speed management, and both concurrent and simultaneous engineering (Demartini & Mella, 2011).

Another popular theory states that new paradigms create time trajectories that we can identify and exploit. The trajectory is begun by a “shifter” who radically changes the paradigm, thus creating or founding a new future—the potential for innovations (Barker, 1993). Barker explains how then “explorers” could discover—in the trajectories of these futures that shifters have set in motion—possibilities to create innovative products and develop them, working out or advancing the new future. At the end of the trajectory, “settlers” can then take these innovations that explorers have invented and commoditize them or make them commonplace. Determining how best to exploit the possibilities revealed in the trajectories thus becomes a strategic issue. It's worth noting that each type of individual in this theory—shifter, explorer, and settler—is dependent upon the other types to complete the trajectory. Therefore,

strategists might consider that they may only play one role in a much larger plan. After all, a strategist might begin a plan dependent upon others to complete. Likewise, that same strategist might instead act on a plan or strategy already set in motion—furthering it or, perhaps, completing it.

So what does the Bible add to this conversation about time and strategy formation?

THE FULLNESS OF TIME

Though the “basis of the Hebrew measurement of time was the day and the lunar month” (Porter, 1939), the description of time in the Old Testament typically emphasized the content of an event (Marsh, 1952). Regarding this, Marsh suggests that Biblical event time is filled with its own content, and is meant for a specific purpose. See, for example, Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. Although we find the Greek time concepts of *kairos* and *chronos* in the New Testament, the Old Testament features other words for time. Mainly, the Hebrews expressed a variety of ideas about time using the word *eth*—which refers to its content, and includes the idea “that time happens, because an opportunity presents itself to man (the ‘time’ has come), and man responds to it with appropriate action” (Marsh, 1952, p. 23).

To extrapolate from this, we suggest that in the Bible, time and social reality are actually created through words, as people listen and—at the right time—respond to them. In fact, because of God’s words, such as the promises He made to the patriarchs (e.g. Gen. 22:15; Gen. 25:23), Israel became a distinctive tribe. Later on, God’s words through the prophets created the social reality of Israel as a nation. Among all the different primal people-groups that lived in different types of times, Israel emphasized the future and history (Porter, 1929). No other tribe, so far as is known, interpreted its past while looking toward the future as Israel did (Marsh, 1952; Rosenstock-Huessy, 1954; Muilenburg, 1961a, Wright, 1996).

Following on from these scholars’ work, it appears that the Bible validates some of the current thoughts of time as events. However, the Bible also has much to say about time that can help business scholars better understand time and strategy formation. Specifically, the Bible speaks about how people create time and the future, what areas of time’s content we need to pay most attention to,

what the future means to God, and what must happen for new times to form.

The Fullness of Time

A key to appreciating what the Bible has to say about these topics is in the words “the fullness of time.” From Mark 1:15: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (ESV, 2001). Luke 1:20: “And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.” Luke 21:24: “They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” Galatians 4:4: “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law.” Ephesians 1:10: “...making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.”

The phrases “fullness of time” and “the time is fulfilled” suggest that God creates time, that He has a good sense of timing (Maier, 1991), and that He appoints a beginning and an end to periods of time for His own purpose (Calvin, 1854). God appointed the time when Christ was to come, but it seems that He first intended for many other seasons to come and go (Abbott (1897/1964). When those seasons were complete, or filled to the brim, Christ came at God’s appointed time (Spurgeon, 1884; Stark, 2004). Christ came to end one time and begin another time (Barth, 1974), when the Kingdom of God was to be near those who belong to Him (Weborg, 1981). Moreover, this new time exuded novelty (Henry, 1960). Also, Christ in Himself fulfilled the time that was ending (Barth, 1974). See Is. 60-63.

Paying attention to the language and grammar of words used to express time in Biblical Hebrew and the narrative behind them, Marsh (1952), Muilenburg (1961a), Rosenstock-Huessy (1954) and Wright (2012) shed further light on how the Old Testament Jews and early Gentile Christians could have understood the phrase “the fullness of time.”⁴ According to them the Israelite tribes received their distinctive sense of time and of

history from their experience of the Exodus: “There is hardly a book in the Old Testament that does not directly mention the Exodus, and it is the constant theme of all those who are in any way concerned with the quality and the integrity of Israel’s life and responsibilities” (Marsh, 1952, p. 44). For this reason, it appears that history for Israel was God-in-history and history-in-God. To the Israelite, life had meaning because of what God had done during the Exodus—which was also the period when God began expressly leading His people *as* a people. The Jews throughout history also believed that God both determines and appoints time, and He also represents the eternal time. It is God who wills the specific time for us to respond.

Based on these four scholars’ interpretive perspective, for the Hebrew tribes, time embodied content. Events like the Exodus created a body of time that had a beginning and a purposeful end. Time was marked by some specific action or event usually involving God. They could compare their current time against their history because the events shared so many similarities. For instance, times of captivity, times of war, times of peace, and so on—regardless of when they happened chronologically—were each regarded as the same time, when ordered categorically by their content. It was important for them to recognize these times and act on the opportunities each time afforded. In sum, “Time in the Bible deals more with the content than with the form of time. Time is not an empty category; instead, time is filled time. It is granted by God, and it is oriented toward a goal” (Jackelén, 2005).

Specifically, the fullness of time primarily means that the body of time, beginning with God’s revelation during the Exodus, ended at the coming of Jesus Christ.⁵ Christ came to end one body of time and begin another. The purpose for Israel had been completed, and God was beginning a new time to address the whole world. The story of God’s people ended when their God became king and came to rescue and liberate them. After that time, God would no longer work with Israel as before, so He destroyed the temple in AD 70 and Israel as a political body disappeared in AD 135 after the last Jewish-Roman war. Like an act in a play, the third act of Israel’s history ended only to begin a new act or body of time, where God as King begins to rule (Wright, 1996).

How did God begin this body of time or any other time? In the same way God created the heavens, the earth, and everything under the earth: through His word (Gen. 1:3; John 1:1-3). God’s words—spoken through His prophets and heard by the people—created events that formed a body of time to fulfill God’s purposes (Wolterstorff, 1995). The speaking and hearing, as both created times, defined the way of life for the Hebrew tribes: “the realm of maximum reality was that of speaking-hearing” (Mullenburg, 1961a, p. 39). Words came to be thought of as possessing identities and potencies of their own, and in particular, it was held that God controlled events by His words.

For the Israelites, knowing the times meant that they were harking, listening, hearing, giving ear to words (especially God’s Word), and then responding in time (Isa. 1:2; Deut. 32:1-2b; Amos 3:1; Jer. 1:4; Jer. 1:12). Sometimes, the prophets spoke to the people about their times by interpreting their past—urging them to remain faithful to the God who had brought them out of Egypt—but always pointing ahead to “that time” when God would reveal His deliverance once more in the future, like He did during the Exodus: “Prophecy is thus, by its very nature, a conscious interpretation—the interpretation—of history. The profound conviction of the prophets is that history consists of a continuum of times—each time being filled with its own specific content by God and so demanding a response (according to God’s will) from those who profess to live in history as God’s chosen people” (Marsh, 1952). Israelites believed that although they had lived and would live through a series of times, all these times would end when the Messiah—the ultimate deliverer, of whom Moses was only a prelude—would come to fully fulfill the promises of the Exodus, at the fullness of this time.

The Purpose of the Fullness of Time: Life and Shalom - Jesus

These promises pointed to the purpose of this body of time: life or shalom. God brought His people out of slavery to give them life. God promised to deliver them out of death and the chaos brought about by Adam’s sin and to give them shalom (Brueggemann, 2001). Although God-in-history would accomplish His will by His Word, words not only required that people listen

and respond but also required hope, faith, and love. People had to respond in hope that God's past promises would one day be fulfilled. They had to respond in faith by acting on these words, knowing that although they could not see exactly how it was going to happen, this qualitative future was assured. And they had to respond in love as they lived with others in the present and settled their disputes in an amicable, hopeful, faithful fashion.

The body of time that began at the Exodus also displayed fathers sharing their wisdom with their sons, who listened and learned (Deut. 6:4-9; Malachi 4:6). This passing on of wisdom demanded sacrifice. Listening and then responding in action demanded that they die to themselves, their own wishes, and their own words. This dying to self potentially revived the words that started the body of time, giving sons the opportunity to hear and respond. But there also had to be a unity between the father and son. Without this unity, the speaker and the hearer could never be synchronous.

Jesus, then, came as the deliverer greater than Moses—the one who would become King, to fully deliver His people from the captivity of sin, and bring about shalom, just as He promised at the Exodus (Marsh 1952; Leithart, 2010; Wright, 2012).⁶ He came to do the will of His father as the living, breathing Word of God. And He initiated the new time by sacrificing Himself for His own people. In doing so, it was the will of God that at this time, eternity would break into the temporal time to bring about freedom—the Sabbath of sabbaths, the jubilee, or the fullness of times (Leithart, 2009). Marsh (1952) suggests that the idea of fulfillment can be understood by the words in the Old Testament coming to fruition. Jesus, who incarnated the Old Testament words, understood and culminated what was spoken about the Exodus, the suffering servant, and the kingship of David.

According to Marsh (1952), as Jesus internalized the words, the words came to fruition in His actions and words. Jesus understood His baptism and His whole life in terms of the Exodus and taught His disciples what His life meant in these terms. Jesus believed He was fulfilling the words about the suffering servant. The words came to life in Him. Jesus created history and gave meaning to events by living as the fulfilled,

incarnate Word of God. By doing this, Jesus initiated a new age, or perhaps more precisely, He brought eternity into temporariness.

Most important for present purposes, the eternal gives meaning to the temporal. The life to come or the age to come is not a chronological time that comes after this age. The life to come is a time when we understand fully or history is fulfilled. The fulfillment is in the meaning of historical events. When Scripture says that Jesus came in the fullness of time, it means that Jesus came in a specific type of time...a time that gives meaning to all other times...a time of fullness of meaning.

The eternal broke into the temporal, which means it is here already, giving meaning to our lives, actually giving life to our existence and revealing not only the teleos of our existence, but what all of life is all about. In Jesus Christ, the time, the kairos had come. The content of this time is the atoning Life, Death and Resurrection of the Son of God, which bring to man his greatest opportunity, and demand from him his most significant decision (Marsh, 1952, p. 24).

In summary, let us review the keys points of this study. First, it appears that God's words created the time of the Exodus and all other times as well—thus, the future. As N.T. Wright (2011) states, the Israelites would have found the philosophy of speech-acts⁷ familiar to them. More specifically, God's imperatives created the future; His imperatives, spoken at the Exodus, began a period of time that ended primarily when Jesus—who listened to and acted on the imperatives—did what the Father told Him to do.

Second, we can say that God encouraged Israel to listen to His words; He gave them hope, faith, and love to increase their intensity to stay connected to Him and to complete His words or imperatives. Third, we can suggest that God spoke to His people so they could live and receive shalom. His Word gave them life, as the people listened and obeyed. For Israel, the future meant shalom, a better tomorrow, a redeemed time. The future in this sense means better days, as when someone says, "I want my children to have a future." Fourth, we can conclude that the fullness of time initiated a new time once Jesus redeemed His people through His death and resurrection.

What does this mean for strategy formation?

THE CONTENT OF TIME AND STRATEGY MAKING

This brief study of the fullness of time suggests that God's declared words create a body of time. This body of time forms as the listeners respond to the words, dying in some way to allow for the words to spring to life. With hope, faith, and love, the listeners sustain the time as they move through it or through the event that eventually yields the fruit the words intended (life or shalom)—and God's words would never return to Him empty (Isaiah 55.10-11); they will do what God intended.

If we assume that the Bible speaks about what actually happened in the times of ordinary people, then we can draw implications about the reality of time from the study of the phrase "in the fullness of time." When powerful words are spoken (by God or others), and listeners hear them and respond, the two parties can create a body of time, and depending on the faith, hope, and love attached to those words, they can improve the social aspects of life. This body of time would have a determined life span, until the words are fulfilled. Muilenburg (1961b) explains:

The word can mean thing and event as well as word; word and event, indeed, have an interior association. Thus the word happens, and in the event the word is spoken, the [word] is alive because it is born within the self of the speaker, and bears within it the vitality and power of the speaker. ... The [word] contains the will and intention of the speaker. The will is made concrete and present in the immediacy of the word spoken. It is through the word that the speaker extends himself, as far as the word is heard and remembered. It is not merely the influence of the personality of the speaker, but rather the power of the spoken word of the particular speaker that is important. Thus, the word has a direction, a goal, and a destiny. Through the word, the event is grasped and appropriated. The word has both noetic content and dynamic force, the content of knowledge, and the power and drive of the speaking self. The self meets the other self in the word spoken. Time is appropriated in hearing. The word is pre-eminently the symbol for action in time (p. 32).

With these considerations duly noted, it seems that organizations must deal with the following inter-related aspects of time: language, listening, action, life, and forces that intensify. For instance, language is subject to time, time to language, and so on (Guitton, 1966).⁸ From a review of the literature in organizational research, it appears that scholars have already associated some of these elements with time. If accurate, these associations might be able to assist strategists in diagnosing the bodies of time in which they live, which may be helpful to consider when forming effective strategies, and coordinating their necessary coherent actions.

In his speech-acts philosophy, Austin (1962) associates language, listening, and action. Words take action as the listener behaves according to the intentions of the speaker, but only when there is a right relationship between the speaker and listener (i.e., when the speaker uses articulate speech, addresses a specific listener, or uses serious language). According to Austin, when there is this right relationship between the speaker and the listener, words create memories, intelligence, feelings, and actions.⁹

An example of how these associations work is shown by a team leader directing another team member to create a project timeline. The directive creates an action because the listener now has to do something with that directive. He or she can refuse to do it; in which case he or she will have to answer at some point for his or her noncompliance. Alternatively, he or she can follow the directive. The directive creates not only an action or a set of actions (and perhaps a structure to manage the project timeline) but also a period of time or event. Also, depending on the relationship of the team member with his or her team leader and other team members and the importance of the project, various motives could also affect his or her overall decision and/or the intensity of his or her action. Once he or she finishes the directive and notifies the speaker (i.e., leader) of its completion, that time period ends. Directives, then, are subject to time, the relationship between speaker and listener, action, and motives or intensifiers.

Another perspective on time in organizations occurs when individuals in the organizations formulate strategies. Drawing on Rosenstock-Huessy's work,¹⁰ the "timescapes, or the multilevel time landscapes, framework" focus on five

different event situations¹¹ or changes that define time: mechanical, organic, purposive, affectionate association, and catastrophe. It then considers five questions that describe these times—integrating time together with the other elements. This framework is a rudimentary sketch, however. It suggests how these associations may help strategists diagnose the time that is most constraining and also time that enables actions in the organization—assisting strategists in creating the right strategies at the right time. But more work will have to be done to fully flesh it out, validate it, and make it practical. As it stands, the framework admittedly raises more questions than it answers, but it nevertheless seems to suggest applications for the constructs/aspects of time. Some of the questions considered in the framework are:

- What happens in these situations in terms of time, velocity, and duration?
- What happens in these situations in relation to life or energy?
- What language does the speaker use in this situation?
- How is time kept in this situation?
- What kind of future does the situation define?
- What creates this type of future, as defined by the situation?
- What drives the intensity of the time trajectory's attributes in this situation?

The five events, according to Rosenstock-Huessy (1954), define the five primal changes found in reality.¹² The five changes are mechanical, organic, operative, affectionate association, and transformative or catastrophic.

Changes define a time. Since organizations can be understood as events, they live in all five changes simultaneously. However, there are times when leaders in organizations pay greater attention to one over the other or demand that they live more in one of these times rather than the others. However, organizations can never completely escape all other times. As we describe each of these changes, we will limit our description to the integration of language, listening, action, life, time, and the intensifying force.

Mechanical change is first, not because reality requires it but because it possesses the least amount of life. In fact, all mechanical systems are without life. In organizations, engineers typically

set up mechanical work systems meant to work perpetually, without breaking. Objective chronos time rules in this case—measured quantitatively, and broken into short periods of time. Since only a few people set up the system for the majority of other people to follow, the listeners depend on the speakers for proper directions, or they rely on their narratives and work traditions to know how to do the work. In this type of time, managers define the future as the extension of their present. After all, the system must work as well today and tomorrow as it did when it was first set up.

There are times when businesses must strategically pay more attention to these systems to compete. In terms of strategy, much has been written about how to analyze the situation in these cases and what types of strategies apply to gain a competitive advantage. For instance, according to Sinofsky & Iansiti (2010), although Microsoft must pay attention to many areas simultaneously (including its culture), the company's success depends on the integration of engineered systems. Thus, at this time, Microsoft's strategy is what Sinofsky & Iansiti call "one strategy."¹³

The second type of change is *organic*. An example of this type of change can be found in businesses that emphasize their culture. Relying only on culture promotes limited life, since people in the culture "rely on patterns of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that have worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way you perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (Schein, 2004, p. 36). This time is cyclic time, with a greater variety of pace and tempo than mechanical time. When living in this time, organizations follow many cycles, including monthly cycles, product cycles, or culture lifespan cycles. In this time, the culture understands the future as recurrent cycles—created by work or other cultural rhythms—and the synchronization of all their work and culture. In this case, harmony rules as the speaker(s) and the listener(s) are unanimous or have become one spirit. Because of this, the subjunctives predominate in the language they use.

What intensifies this time is the collective memory of how unanimity became the norm and the collective commitment to this norm. In terms of strategy, the story of Zappos (Michelli, 2012) is

a good example. Tony Hsieh, its CEO, explains how he made a decision to emphasize culture strategically, and it has created a significant competitive advantage.¹⁴

Third, the operative, purposive *action time* requires the willpower of one person or a team. The entrepreneurial time of a business is a good example. This is social time created by action and

Table 1: Content of Time Framework

Organizational times	In terms of time, velocity, and range	In relation to life or energy	Language used, and speaker and listener relation	How time is kept	What kind of future?	What creates the future?	What drives the intensity of the time trajectory?
Mechanical	Instant, of the moment, short period. The least effective over time	Icy cold/dead	Narratives, traditional. The listener depends on the speaker, because the speaker has acted already	Quantity	An extension of the past, working as it should	Control speech, power	Discipline
Organic	Longer periods than mechanical; 24-hour cycles	Sleep	Subjunctives, aesthetics, rituals, subjective. The speaker and the listeners are unanimous, of one spirit; they agree	Cycles, pace, and tempo	Recurrent cycle, biological/ecological	Rhythm, synchronization	Cooperation, loyalty, memory of the past
Operative, purposive action	Can never cover a person's whole life; but it is able to extend over more than one generation (30 years)	Warm	Nouns, indicatives, numerals. A lack of relations between two people; they may be strangers, or different	Structures, duration of teams	A new form of an old way, product, or process	Purpose	Vision, goals, purpose, perseverance
Affectionate Association	Extends over more than one generation (60 to 90 years)	The love heat	Verbs, imperatives, projectives. The speaker depends on the listener, whom the speaker expects to act on what he has to say	The duration of love	A new life form or trajectory	Pang in the heart, Samaritan ethics	Hope, faith, and love
Transformation	It changes times; begins a new era	Volcanic heat	Words that make us obey God rather than men; the listener is overtaken by the words of the speaker	The life of ideas, or the Holy Spirit	A new era, or eternal life; the Christian future	Sacrifice; determining the hour in which we must let go	Courage, grace

person's whole life, but it can extend over one generation of leadership.

For the people who occupy this entrepreneurial time, the future is a new form of an old way, product, or process. Because creating something new requires life, this time has a measure of life. It is created by purpose and sustained by the strength of a vision, the clarity of the goals or purpose and the perseverance of its leaders. In this time, leaders and followers lack close relationships, since what drives the work is the will of the leader or team of leaders. The leaders speak in nouns, indicatives, and numbers.¹⁵

In terms of how it works in strategy, the story of FedEx is a good illustration. Frock (2008) relates the story of Roger Smith, who put together a team to create a new way of using the air transportation system to deliver packages overnight. The team sacrificed much and even put their jobs on the line for Roger Smith and what he represented. They didn't know exactly how it was going to work out in the end, but they persevered through a difficult situation as they muddled through the entrepreneurial time until they finally stabilized the company. Smith then let the initial leadership team go. It seemed that, beyond their ties to the project, no real personal binding relationship existed.

Fourth, the *affectionate association time* receives its life from the connection or attachment between the speakers and the followers. The language becomes verbs and imperatives, as the speaker depends on the listener to respond and act on what was spoken. But what creates the time, and defines both the language use and the connection between the speaker and the listener, is love for an idea. This love for an idea through language creates a time that may extend over more than one generation: 60 to 90 years.¹⁶ In this case, the people involved define the future as a new life form or the beginning of a new trajectory. The integration of these elements becomes more acute as a pang of the heart, and either sacrificial love or Samaritan ethics becomes the response of the listener as they initiate a new time—sustaining it with hope and faith. In terms of strategy, we can learn from Schultz (2012), the Founder and CEO of Starbucks. His love for coffee, and the way he communicated it, created what Schultz called the “third place” in the United States. This is a place outside of home and work where people could

gather and build community. His passion also sustained the company while surviving the recession of early 2010.

Lastly, we may find ourselves in a *transformative or catastrophic time not of our making*. Others change the time in such a way that we are left with only two options: biblical life or death. We may erupt with life if others are creating a surprisingly novel, new time (Jackelén, 2005) and the eternal breaks into the temporal. In this case, the future is a new era or worldview with its accompanying paradigm. Integrally, someone else's sacrifice will speak words that make us obey God rather than our own words or those of other people. We enter this time by determining the hour in which we must let go of our old life.

This sacrifice may come from someone who left the old worldview, “unfreezing the constricting structures of order itself. This is exactly what occurs when profound insights, breakthrough ideas, or unexplainable synchronicities occur. Explained differently, this is what we usually consider to be extraordinary or exceptional creativity—the realm of the genius” (Purser, 2011, p. 29). God's grace and our courage sustain us through these times. In terms of strategy, the history thus far of Google (Levy, 2011) and Facebook (Kirkpatrick, 2010) come to mind. Both responded to a new time—one not created by them—and entered it courageously, finding unexpectedly new ways of doing things. Google created new ways to find and use information and to use books. Facebook created an unexpectedly new type of living in community.

Further study and research is needed to validate and empirically test these associations, and to understand the nuances of how and why they are created. Based on the philosophical work of Austin (1962), Searle (1995), and Rosenstock-Huessy (1970), and the research on time in organizations, Christians can learn much about how what happens in organizations depends on the language used, the relationship between speakers and listeners, the amount of life within it, how time is created, and how the future is defined.

How is this valuable in strategy? As a strategist seeks to diagnose reality, while also creating guiding policies and a coherent plan of action, he or she needs to recognize or have enough presence of mind to know his or her times. This is a key sociological aspect of his or her business reality

because various times can constrain, enable, and/or direct actions—including the times of all or his or her ideas. Moreover, strategists need to know how to coordinate what creates these times. They can better understand the events in their organizations by paying attention to the life of their organization, in terms of the time elements of actions and language, relationships between speakers and listeners, and what intensifies the motives that create the life of the organization.

Expressed differently, strategists must pay as much attention to understanding their social times as they do to the economic situation wherein they form strategies. As Rumelt (2011) suggests, “‘a good strategy’ is an approach that magnifies the effectiveness of actions by finding and using sources of power” (p. 95).

Frameworks, naturally, help to simplify life. As stated before, organizations live in a network of times. Therefore—as Whipp, Adam & Sabelis (2002) conclude—concentration on any one of these times implicates all others. In terms of strategy, scholars have suggested that strategists need to pay attention to organizational configurations formed by different types of times (Butler, 1993). It may be valuable, then, to empirically study how associating the time elements of language, life, and the intensifying forces would change these configurations.

Also to be clear, this framework does not describe a trajectory from mechanical to catastrophe. In other words, the changes do not follow each other. Rather, organizations always live in all of them, while paying specific attention to one over all the others, depending on circumstances.

CONCLUSION

Because extant Jews, as well as Gentiles, live and think in time, we can learn much about time from the Bible. Looking at the verses that include the phrase “the fullness of time” and fulfilled time, we can conclude that God integrates words, life, and the intensifying forces of hope, faith, and love into events. By showing that time possesses the elements of (1) speech, (2) listening, (3) action, (4) life, and (5) intensifying forces, this paper contributes to the academic literature regarding organizations and their strategy formations.

Specifically, this study of the fullness of time identifies how times are created. If God works in

our temporal reality through human beings, then how He creates a body of time (from the Exodus to Christ’s resurrection) displays how humans might create a body of time. Time is something we form or articulate; it is not a natural power to which we submit (Leithart, 2010). This means that although business leaders are influenced by their time, they can also create times. They create bodies of time through words. Imperatives that are heard and responded to can begin a body of time while indicatives of what happened can end the time. This being the case, future empirical studies can, for instance, examine Christian organizations to compare and contrast how long their bodies of time exist. For example, an interesting study might be to examine how long ministers of various denominations lead a given church versus how long Christian leaders at public manufacturing companies, etc. remain at the helm.

Finally, so as not to misunderstand the importance of Paul’s use of the phrase “the fullness of time,” Paul tells us that God inaugurated a new time—one when Jews and Gentiles will both belong to Christ’s household. Jesus, by dying on the cross to create this time, founded a new era. In this era, He is the King (Wright, 2012). We, then, have a choice to live in this time or not. To live in his time means to have eternal life—to choose shalom. If this is true, then all human beings confront this fact; complete reality demands it. Moreover, the fact that Christ reigns as King should have practical effects on not only the practice of strategy but also on any organization’s “future.”

ENDNOTES

¹ Although not yet mainstream—as the study and practice of business strategy continues to evolve— theorists and researchers have introduced some aspects of time (Ghemawat, 2002) for practitioners to consider in strategy formation. Meanwhile, because of worldview and paradigmatic changes in Western Civilization, management scholars have introduced new concepts in anthropology and sociology within their studies. Introducing these new concepts into a field that had previously used economics and psychology primarily, these scholars have developed many other competing orientations that inform strategy formation (Whipp, Adam & Sabelis, 2002). Some research involving sociological and anthropological concepts in organizations has made time explicit to the study of strategy formation.

² Kairology denotes appropriate timing for action in differentiated managerial situations and contexts. It “seems to be a natural tool for examining discourse that emphasizes change, development, progress” (Laurids & Tornroos, 2002, p. 34). Kairology defines timing in a stream of coinciding event networks in the future. Therefore, sensing and interpreting cues initiated by forethought regarding future time and its requirements may be an important prerequisite for strategic success—whether understood as a priori (earlier) or posteriori (later) (Laurids & Tornroos, 2002).

³ See also the work of Hofstede (2001) on long- versus short-term orientations.

⁴ Some scholars disagree with the perspective I am using in this paper. See, for instance, Bundval (2014) and Wright (1996).

⁵ God’s words of course created many other bodies of time. For instance, Genesis created the widest body of time that will probably be completely fulfilled at the end of time, at the renewal of all creation. Noah, Abraham, David, Ezra, and Nehemiah also created bodies of time. Christ fulfilled all of these times in some form or another.

⁶ This perspective may not be a broadly common evangelical perspective, but it is a fully substantiated perspective.

⁷ Within the business strategy literature, Sull & Spinosa (2007) explain speech-acts this way:

For centuries, philosophers viewed language as a tool for describing external reality. Sentences such as “It is raining” were considered true or false on the basis of how well they corresponded to real-world conditions. But in the 1950s, Oxford philosopher John L. Austin argued that many statements are intended to get things done rather than describing reality. When an umpire calls a strike, a military officer issues an order, or a supplier promises to provide a service, that individual is not describing reality but changing it through his or her utterances. Austin argued that speech always falls somewhere along a wide spectrum between purely descriptive statements, such as scientific equations, and purely active statements, such as a priest’s declaration that a couple is married. (p. 81)

Speech-acts can bind not only the speaker but the listener to a future course of action, thus constraining strategists to their past promises, in terms of spoken intentions and commitments.

⁸ I am only recasting this theory; it is based on the work of Rosenstock-Huessy.

⁹ Also, as the literature of time in organizations indicates, we seem to create social time in many ways, including through action, and as Roe (2009) suggests, social times have attributes, such as trust and conflict, whose intensity we should study. Thus, we can logically suggest an association between speech-acts and time and intensifiers such as hope, faith, and love, although I found no research on time in organizations that makes all of these associations. As far as I know, only Rosenstock-Huessy (1954; 1963; 1966; 1970) has associated all the components in his Christian social philosophy, even before Austin published his work on speech-acts.

¹⁰ In this section I have primarily consulted the works of Muilenburg, Austin and Rosenstock-Huessy. I am heavily indebted to the work of Rosenstock-Huessy. In searching for a Christian understanding of reality as I sought a deeper understanding of strategy in the real world, I came across his work. Speaking about Rosenstock-Huessy, Bryant (1986) writes that his inspirational center was his Christian faith. “The Christian faith is neither accidental nor peripheral to the vision we find in Rosenstock-Huessy; rather, it is integral and necessary” (p. 239). Leithart (2007), talking about Rosenstock-Huessy’s relevance, adds, “It’s not only the scope that impresses, but the integration. There is a passionate religious impulse behind everything [Rosenstock-Huessy] wrote, and it’s all made immediately, existentially real” (par. 5). Although Muilenburg and Austin do not seem to have been aware of Rosenstock’s work, they are conversational partners in their view of language and time.

¹¹ I am using the view of time as events, just as Laurids & Tornroos (2002) define it, and as others, such as Marsh (1952), have suggested, the Bible primarily views time.

¹² Rosenstock-Huessy (1954) argues from history, that these are the primal changes people experience. He asserts that from ancient times, people have recognized these as primal, and this explains why the etymology of the names of the week days refers to the gods that represent these primal changes (1954).

¹³ Although the example of Microsoft may not make sense, since we tend to believe that Microsoft is all about innovation, discovery, and creation, the strategy Sinofsky & Iansiti (2010) describes appears to fit well with what this mechanical time is about.

¹⁴ In relation to cultures and the association between language and the other elements see the work of Logan, King, & Fischer-Wright, (2011).

¹⁵ The logic for language used in these types of times may not be apparent. According to Rosenstock-Huessy (1970), since the entrepreneur seeks to make alive what is dead by creating new forms out of an old form, the entrepreneur re-categorizes and renames either things or processes. Their primary contribution is the nouns the entrepreneur uses. "Verbs are used for the opposite purpose. They neither induce old or extraneous or interior experience. The great sensation of verbs is that the universe is made over, in this moment, and is turning into something different." (1970, p.130).

¹⁶ Events in one organization influence other events in the marketplace. Depending on the intensity, an affectionate association event in one organization can lead to catastrophic events in many other organizations and society at large.

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