

Ontoteological constitution of entrepreneurship

Constitución ontoteológica del emprendimiento

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship is a pluri-disciplinary phenomenon, object of research in several areas of knowledge. However, studies on this theme present approaches that start to consider entrepreneurship as a field of private knowledge in the phase of epistemological construction. In this context, the aim of this investigation is to contribute to the discussions on the theme, through studies on the ontoteological constitution of entrepreneurship, in propaedeutic character, deflagrating new approaches. Thus, there is a presentation concerning the study of entrepreneurship, which may emphasize its ontical and ontological aspects. In addition, the reason why it is complex to define entrepreneurship is investigated. Subjects regarding the philosophy of entrepreneurship are introduced, seeking to present the bases for an ontoteological approach to the phenomenon. Such an approach assumes that the finality of the entrepreneurial act relates to the main principles and transformations required into the organization. Finally, it is concluded that man is an entrepreneurial being, the meta-entrepreneur, and his entrepreneurial actions are not determined by external factors, but rather by the condition of his potentiality.

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RESUMEN

El emprendimiento es un fenómeno multidisciplinario, y objeto de investigación en muchas áreas del conocimiento. Sin embargo, los estudios que se aproximan a este tema, consideran el emprendimiento, en su fase de la epistemología inicial, como un campo de conocimiento privado. En este contexto, el objetivo de esta investigación es contribuir al debate sobre el tema, a través de un estudio sobre la constitución ontoteleológica del emprendimiento, su carácter propedéutico, y proponer un nuevo enfoque. Se presenta un estudio sobre el emprendimiento que enfatiza sus aspectos ónticos y ontológicos. Además, se investiga la razón por la que es complejo definir el espíritu emprendedor. Se introducen temas relativos a la filosofía del emprendimiento, buscando presentar las bases para un acercamiento ontoteleológico a este fenómeno. Se asume que la finalidad del emprendimiento responde a los principios y transformaciones requeridos en las empresas. Finalmente, se concluye que el hombre es un ser emprendedor, meta-emprendedor, y sus acciones emprendedoras no están determinadas por factores externos, sino por su propio potencial.

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INTRODUCTION

Obtaining a clear and objective definition of entrepreneurship is a complex task due to the singularities of the area. Lavarde (2004) believes that entrepreneurship is at a stage which lacks scientific maturity, needing to recognize the relevance of temporary and social dimensions in investigations. Thus, with this understanding, each researcher may choose the areas of interest that recognize their potentialities.

In light of this situation, the objective of this article is to contribute with discussions on the theme, through studies on the ontoteleological constitution of the entrepreneurship, in propaedeutic character, and give rise to new approaches.

To achieve that, phenomenology and the phenomenological method will be used in the elaboration of this paper.

This method is based on the relation between

subject/object, without giving emphasis to one or the other side. The importance of this method is the human meaning and perception concerning specific happenings. It goes beyond the simple description of an event by the human being; it attempts to clarify, ignite, and disclose meanings.

ONTIC X ONTOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Why is there a lack of conceptual definition and absence of paradigms about entrepreneurship? Firstly, it must be pointed out that previous studies focus on ontical characteristics instead of highlighting the ontological characteristics, which would bring other contribution to the debates. When investigating aspects that are connected to the entrepreneur and his characteristics, rather than elucidating consideration about the entrepreneur's comprehensive sense as something that makes his multiple existences possible, researchers observe only parts of reality.

Table 1. Distinction between ontical X ontological

| Ontic | Ontological |
|--|--|
| Relative or belonging to the being or to its characteristics. It refers to the structure and to the innate essence of a being; what it is in itself; its identity; its difference in relation to others; its relations with others. It concerns beings in their own, real and multiple existences. | It is concerned to the philosophical study of beings and to the investigation of concepts that allow to know and determine the ontical modality; what method to use to study each one; what categories they are applied to. It concerns the beings seen as objects of knowledge. |

Source: adapted from Chauí (2002); Heidegger (1999).

The researcher that emphasizes ontical characteristics in long studies says: 'The entrepreneur is somebody who assumes risks and innovates'. Such a statement, based on rigorous quantitative methods, is unequivocal. It is science based.

On the other hand, the ontological investigator asks: 'What is innovation? What is success or failure? Do such terms exist in themselves and for themselves or are they evaluations of human actions? What is courage? What is value?' It may be said that the difference is in the way of seeing the phenomenon. For scientists, it is necessary to present a reality, to conceive doubts about such reality and then raise scientific hypotheses. Scientists then, turn to one or more theories and make use of one or more methods to answer the question about the problem. Ontology, on the other hand, is different.

Ontology investigates data, or the being's sense, whatever its nature. It analyzes differences and relations among beings, their way of existing, their origin, and their purpose. 'What does it mean to perform an entrepreneurial role?' This is an ontological issue.

To progress qualitatively in research on the theme it is necessary to structure the issue of entrepreneurship on a philosophical analysis considering its ontological, axiological and epistemological dimensions, following the example of what has happened in debates on the subject regarding technology (Vargas, 1985, 1994; Gama, 1985a, 1985b, 1992; Miranda, 2002). This is relevant because research on this subject may serve as reference for the study of entrepreneurship.

At this point, turning to Merleau-Ponty (1994) is fundamental. According to the author, the action of contemplating a certain theme, in itself, is capable of explaining a given phenomenon, considering that such consideration starts from what is provided. The reflection level is decisive in determining how much is known about the subject. It is also necessary to unite the actions of contemplating to the knowledge on the theme history and on the external explanations, besides trying to put back the causes and the sense of the theme in an existential doctrine.

However, does this reflection happen in relation to studies on entrepreneurship? As far as this research is concerned, the reply to that inquiry is negative. So, why does it not happen, especially if there have been debates on the subject for decades? The answer to that inquiry is that, apparently, there has not been any progress or development to investigations regarding

the doctrine of entrepreneurship's existence; moreover, an ontological analysis on the subject has not been conducted.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The inherent complexity of the discussion on entrepreneurship lies in the epistemological phase in which it lies. Being in a pre-paradigmatic phase, the area has room for the most varied studies, which are developed in agreement with contingent aspects (in relation to the eventual or incidental character of the investigations) of socio-political-environmental conditions and of the historical moment in which the researchers develop their studies.

Bygrave and Hofer (1991) believe that the main challenge of the area is the development of a theoretical basis. The authors discuss obstacles in establishing a formal structure, such as the consensus of investigators in ratifying a general definition for entrepreneurship and the difficult characterization of the entrepreneurial process.

However, in spite of the different ideas on the theme, Raposo and Silva (2000, p. 63) observed that there is a certain understanding among the specialists in some areas:

- Economics: investigates innovation and development;
- Behavioral Sciences: investigates the entrepreneur's psychological characteristics (creativity, persistence, self-control and leadership);
- Engineering and specialists in production administration: investigate the distributors and coordinators of resources;
- Finances: investigates how to evaluate taking risks;
- Administration: investigates how administrators plan their actions, use resources, and command teams;
- Marketing: investigates how opportunities are identified and how to differ offers, in addition to the adaptation to the markets.

Bjerke (2000) states that the definitions that guide the main themes of research are: entrepreneurship; growth and development; the entrepreneur's

personality; entrepreneurial circumstances and process. Such research often results in successful prescriptive models, which are explanatory.

However, there is also comprehensive research which attributes to the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship the following meanings:

1. Actor that executes actions, in agreement with his own symbols, social reality and intentionality.
2. Intrinsic phenomenon to the social reality, resulting from entrepreneurial actions.

Bjerke (2000) also confirms that to understand entrepreneurship, research must focus on three fields, namely those in table 2.

Table 2. Study Levels

| Level | Individual | Social | Speech |
|-------------|--|---|---|
| Objective | Construction and entrepreneur's interpretation | Entrepreneur's action inside the social reality | Control of social speech 'knowledge as power' |
| Referential | Phenomenology/ hermeneutic | Social Phenomenology | Post-modernism |

Source: Bjerke (2000, p.9)

Busenitz et al. (2003), demonstrate in their study that there are new possibilities for investigation in the entrepreneurial field because researchers have already obtained a limited progress in the search for consolidating entrepreneurship as a specific subject of knowledge. The authors mentioned above conducted their studies based on the analyses of articles published in newspapers.

Thus, without a guiding paradigm, specialists investigate several themes. That happens due to the interdisciplinary aspect of entrepreneurship that leads researchers from several areas of knowledge to include the subject in their studies.

Based on the absence of paradigms and definitions of research themes focusing entrepreneurship, an important subject emerges: how do researchers study the subject?

For Filion (1997) the field is dominated by the functionalist-positivist views, thus it is necessary to incorporate new perspectives to understand who entrepreneurs are, and what they do. Moreover, it is necessary to separate pure research from applied research, with the aim of creating an entrepreneur's theory. The science that would support such a theory would be the 'Entrepreneuriology' or 'Study of entrepreneurship' (Filion, 1997, p. 10).

It is possible to observe that most of the studies done in the field of entrepreneurship are based on empiricism. Davidsson (1991) and Davidsson and

Wiklund (2001) observed that such studies collect empirical data without studying its meaning in more elaborated abstractions, instead of establishing models for later verification.

However, the academy has been turning its attention to new forms of analyzing the problem. Cope (2005) observes that phenomenological research has recently emerged in the field of entrepreneurship, using an interpretative paradigm. In his text, the author analyzes aspects related to both epistemology and ontology, illustrating the passage from phenomenological philosophy to methodology.

Berglund (2007) confirms that many researches in the area are positivist. He presents Husserl and Heidegger's philosophies in an attempt to understand how theoretical concepts and empiric events may be treated, with the use of the phenomenological approach.

PHILOSOPHY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship contains in itself the ability to lead to large psychological, social, political, economical and cultural transformations. Thus, studying entrepreneurship by emphasizing ontical characteristics and by making use of rationalistic, empiricist or utilitarian approaches, leads to limitations in understanding the phenomenon as a whole.

Believing that entrepreneurship can be explained based on the entrepreneur's psychological characteristics (in a type of psychology or 'psychologism'), or based on the context of the entrepreneurial action (in a type of sociology 'sociologism'), or based on the entrepreneurial process (in a type of organization 'organizologism') is to be stuck on some fragments of reality.

Entrepreneurship cannot be mistaken as a study of 'undertaking' or performing entrepreneurial acts because it implicates obtaining philosophical knowledge based on ontological, axiological and epistemological dimensions.

Thus, it is best to think of an 'entrepreneurial philosophy', established upon axiological, ontological and epistemological dimensions.

The present investigation relies upon critical considerations on the topic, so that the Academy may provide contributions of a philosophical-administrative nature to the society. Therefore, the subject should be treated as a 'philosophical issue'. It is expected that this investigation may contribute to narrow the connection between philosophy and administration in an innovative manner, trying to avoid losing the methodological rigidity that such an action may contain.

Thus, the contributions that philosophical studies may offer extrapolate the sphere of possibilities and they may become real. The issue is that philosophy may modify the understanding of human reality.

Bittar and Almeida (2001, p. 24-25) illustrate this point by discussing some kinds of philosophy:

- Scientific philosophies: determine humanity's intellectual course. They exemplify it by Aristotle's formal and analytical logic.
- Abstract philosophies: determine the course of science itself and of philosophy after a scientific intervention. They are exemplified by the issue of modernity, without Kant's thoughts.
- Radical philosophies: of political and social critic character, they are producers of the greatest reflections about society and power structures. They are exemplified by Marx and Engels.
- Spiritual philosophies: form a group of prescriptions that drive the society. They are exemplified by Gandhi and the non-violence.

Therefore, the impact of philosophical studies is observed. The impact that Guerreiro Ramos caused

with the study about administration was to transpose philosophy for the creation of an administrative sociology.

Nevertheless, in relation to the use of phenomenology in organizational studies, it may be observed that such investigations have been achieved for many years and several studies approach such theme.

Burrell and Morgan (1979) ran an analysis about the epistemology and methodology of organizational studies. According to the authors, all theories in the field are based on a philosophy of science and a theory of society. Concerning phenomenology, they present, specifically, the question of reduction in Husserl, the intentionality of conscience, and other themes.

In the classic article 'Phenomenology: the new way of viewing organizational research', Sanders (1982) talks about the difficulty in finding phenomenological studies in administrative research. He presents and discusses aspects of phenomenology and also a specific research model for the area, besides making considerations about paradigms of science and their connections with the theme.

Moreira (2004) observes that there is an increment in the use of the phenomenological method in research made in the administration field, but researchers do not know how exactly to define what phenomenology is. He also discusses the difficulty of transposing a philosophical method to empiric research and the necessary adaptations to make it possible. In addition, he presents possible variants that may be used in administrative research.

Meanwhile, Gil (2003) seeks to analyze the applicability of the phenomenological method in administrative research. He uses Husserl to discuss phenomenological concepts, and observes that much research named 'phenomenological research' cannot be defined as such, due to its methodological imprecision.

However, the phenomenological method holds promise for research in administration, and the interest of many researchers in the method has emerged from the preference for qualitative research, not from recognition of its methodological and epistemological repercussion.

Gibson and Hanes (2003) review the current assumptions of phenomenological research in human resources and they propose a calendar for future research in the field. They present 'phenomenology'

as a methodology adapted to performing research in the area, however, maintaining that it is essential to have a further and more complete understanding of the holistic nature and complexities of experiences that are relevant to the practice of the administration area or sector.

Thiry-Cherques et al (2004), states that the methods of 'phenomenological root' are convenient to administration science. Based on Husserl's phenomenology, the author presents his main concepts and several considerations on the phenomenological movement, talking about a program for applying the phenomenological method to researches in administration.

Carvalho and Vergara (2004) argue that the understanding of interactive experiences and of consumers' essential existences involved in physical working contexts is not possible if conventional methodological procedures are used; thus they present forms by which phenomenology may be a suitable methodological option for research in such a context.

Ehrich (2005) makes considerations about the transposition of phenomenological philosophy to phenomenological empiric research. He presents and discusses Husserl's ideas - the founder of phenomenology - stating that such methodology has plenty to offer to the administration field.

As mentioned above, philosophy may, indeed, contribute to administration, especially through phenomenology. Thus, what is intended in this work is

to contribute to narrow the connection between both, through a study on the teleology of entrepreneurship.

THE ONTOTELEOLOGICAL CONSTITUTION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In several fields of knowledge the issue of pluridisciplinarity is discussed which embraces the constituent and nuclear analysis of human knowledge. But, what does it mean, specifically, for entrepreneurship?

When stated that entrepreneurship is interdisciplinary, the idea is to demonstrate that there is an established connections between that area and other areas of knowledge, whose performance is common to two or more subjects.

Multidisciplinary indicates that the area contains, involves and is distributed through several subjects and researches.

Transdisciplinary, on the other hand, indicates that entrepreneurship searches for answers to its inquiries, out and beyond itself, producing data that provides a new vision on its nature and reality. It would be a type of meta-entrepreneurship, based on metaphysical bases (in the sense of being directed to an ontological understanding of reality) and teleological (in the sense of reaching goals or objectives by considering the purpose as a fundamental explanatory principle in the organization and that transformations result from entrepreneurial action).

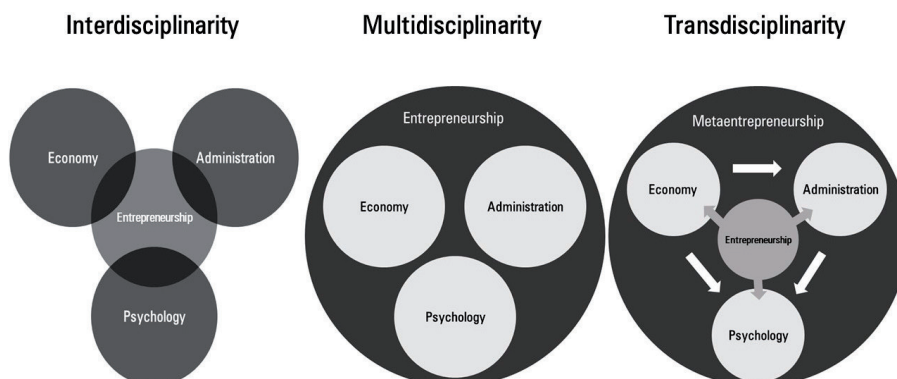


Figure 1. Examples of approaches of entrepreneurship. Source: Boava (2006, p. 37)

Figure 1 reveals the problem found in studies on entrepreneurship and the search for a definition and a paradigm. It happens that, alone, entrepreneurship is not capable of 'existing', thus, the contribution of other subjects is necessary. What occurs is that such an area is a 'being-in-situation', in other words, an empiric reality that is shown and imposed to everyone. It is given, placed in the world, but it is temporal. This proves that there will be entrepreneur and entrepreneurship wherever there is human being.

The economical-administrative aspect of this field is one among many, and is becoming more relevant due to increased interests on the part of governments and society. The existing reductionism, which considers entrepreneurship and entrepreneur just as 'objects' of economy, psychology or administration, results in a lack of a holistic understanding on the phenomenon. Thus, in this ontoteological perspective: 'Who is the entrepreneur and what is entrepreneurship?'

Entrepreneur: an individual who performs an action capable of producing a rupture with what brings safety and stability to his position (accommodation, alienation, passion etc.). A cathartic-like effect is produced and that generates in this individual, a liberation from what is strange to his essence and, due to that, limits his entrepreneurial capacity. He is, therefore, a person that transforms his potentiality in reality, characterized by being temporal and impermanent, embracing the most varied sectors of social life, such as: businesses, politics and sports, among others.

Entrepreneurship: group of activities that provide the entrepreneur, in the course of his action, with full freedom. A rupture with all that provides safety and stability manifests such freedom. The dependence state, in relation to external factors (existing in safety and stability), is replaced by the possibility of being the subject of the action. Its base is transdisciplinary and teleological, being sustained by the search for the being's full accomplishment.

There will be a development of entrepreneurial capacity in the individual as long as he progresses from the being-in-itself towards the being-for-itself, because the degree of his freedom will be increased. Sartre (1966) stated that existence precedes essence. In other words, it may be said that man appears in the world, finds himself, exists, and only later he defines himself. Man will be what he makes of himself (the author calls it subjectivity);

there is no extrinsic conditioning. The human being is a project that is gradually built. Consequently, his is defined by the totality of his actions. In short, the individual is what he does.

At this point, it is appropriate to explain that to be is not equal to exist. When somebody says: 'I am an entrepreneur', he is behaving in the typical way of all beings, in a passive way, without great possibilities. Whereas when one says 'I am (involved) in 'entrepreneurship', there is the idea of passing from a potential condition to reality. Consciously, the subject feels he is fulfilling himself as an entrepreneur. In other words, the individual chooses to be an entrepreneur.

CONCLUSIONS

In this study, it was observed that the ontoteological constitution of entrepreneurship lies on what is called meta-entrepreneurship, which makes use of a transdisciplinary approach.

The entrepreneur's finality is the fundamental explanatory beginning in the organization and in the transformations resulting of entrepreneurial action. The ontological understanding of reality enables the individual to go further and deepen the current base of knowledge on the theme. It was demonstrated that the investigations made did not obtain success in the search for the 'nature' of entrepreneurship, because of two aspects: 1) the pre-paradigmatic phase in which the field is; 2) the emphasis on ontical studies.

It should be considered that man is 'self-made', and presents limitations of thought, thus, it is observed that any investigation in this field must necessarily consider that every human action is intentional. As the subject develops from the being-in-itself towards the being-for-itself, there will be a development of entrepreneurial capacity because the level of freedom will be increasing.

Man is a human being, ready for acting in entrepreneurship or for its undertaking. What will determine the entrepreneurial action are not external factors, but his potential condition. Moreover, with the certainty that entrepreneurship holds a philosophy, based on ontology, axiology and epistemology, it was possible to verify that only scientific investigations on the theme are insufficient for a wide and deep understanding of the phenomenon. It is also necessary to carry out philosophical investigations.

Such investigations differ from scientific ones, since they are directed at reaching the first principles, the genesis. Questions such as 'what is its essence?', 'what is this/that?', 'who it this/that is for?', and other ones made in this kind of study.

Entrepreneurship, within a philosophical perspective, is universal. Where there is man and society there will be entrepreneurship. The transdisciplinary ontical researcher starts from certainties, from assumptions that lead him to questionings. The ontological investigator questions the starting point.

Therefore, to consider entrepreneurship as transdisciplinary is to adapt it to reality by understanding that the answers to man's inquiries are not in the man, himself, but in the meta-entrepreneurship, which has its bases in teleology and metaphysics.

In science, Filion (1997) observed this situation and he affirms that it is necessary to separate the pure research from the applied research, in order to create a theory of the entrepreneur. The area of science supporting this theory would be entrepreneurship.

As observed, the studies in this area are in a maturing phase. The present study contributes to the subject as the inquiries emerge from a new starting point.

It is necessary to carry out further studies, through general reflection on the nature, phases and boundaries of knowledge on the subject, particularly, in the relations established between the researcher and the theme.

The objective of this paper is not to drain the subject, but to facilitate the steps for further transdisciplinary studies on the theme. Many of the observations made here need further studies and discussions.

Concluding, a contribution to a scientific-philosophical progress on the subject was made by showing new investigative horizons and putting back the being's primacy when dealing with entrepreneurship.

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