

The Ontology of Entrepreneurship: A Heideggerian perspective

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ABSTRACT

This theoretical paper begins the Heideggerian study of entrepreneurship. It explores the use of the ontological-phenomenological method in the study of a practical activity, entrepreneurship, by considering the notion of limits in relation to the psychology and ontology of entrepreneurship. It argues that each of these two enquiries indicate that entrepreneurs exist within an operational “field”, an important characteristic of which is a distinctive construct of limitation. The entrepreneur is required to think within artificial confines and cannot exercise unbound creativity or initiative. Enquiries into this situation are facilitated by Heidegger’s insights into the nature of the ontic sciences. To gain access to his insights it is necessary to clarify his concept of truth and to dismiss those enquiries that are generated by ontic disciplines. Heidegger develops for our use an ontological method of enquiry, a form of phenomenology, and this provides access to the particular formation of being-in-the-world which provides for the possibility of entrepreneurship. The paper concludes with a reasoned assurance that ontological enquiry has the potential to deepen our insight into the phenomenon of entrepreneurship.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, commercialism, ontology, ontic, ontological, Husserl, Heidegger

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is a crucial aspect of the modern economy and rightfully takes its place as a specialisation in the business curriculum. It is the subject of investment, of popular opinion and of research. Yet, there is – we would argue – a need to gain greater insight into entrepreneurship in and of itself and away from the multifarious perspectives of scientism. Those aspects entrepreneurship which feature in the academic literature sadly fail to congeal into an integrated whole in the way that, say, physics or chemistry integrate their subject matter. We believe that the phenomenological method holds the potential to deepen our understanding of entrepreneurship and potentially to integrate our understanding of entrepreneurship. There are numerous phenomenologists that can enhance our understanding when it comes to entrepreneurship research. For the purpose of this paper, the authors concentrate on a particular and distinctive method which is the onto-phenomenological work of the German scholar Martin Heidegger (1889—1976). Thus, this paper opens the way to enquiries into entrepreneurship which make use of Heidegger’s method, his existential analytic. In the following pages, we cover a brief summary of phenomenology and how it has been applied to the practice of

entrepreneurship. This opens up the discussions on ontic and ontology of entrepreneurship and offers some final thoughts for further inquires.

A Synopsis on Phenomenology

The modern subject of phenomenology – as a method of enquiry – began in the early years of the 1900s with the insights of Edmund Husserl (1931, 1964, 2006). Phenomenological studies in teaching, nursing, psychiatry, organisations, and many other applied intellectual disciplines, may trace their origins to Husserl. Considering studies oriented towards business and management, we notice a phenomenology of organisational analysis (Drummond, 1978), work on the potential of phenomenology in management research (Ehrich, 2005), and investigations into democratic processes (Shaw, 2009b). Enquires into the phenomenology of technology appear occasionally (as for example in the study of mobile phones, Arnold, 2003).

It is well known that there is a branch of phenomenology which takes us away from the strong growing trunk of Husserlian research, and that is the phenomenological ontology of Martin Heidegger which, many claim, is a radical departure from Husserl and thus a distinctive methodology in its own right (Ihde, 1974; Kockelmans, 1967, 1977; Langan, 1959; Sallis, 1978). Therefore, for the purpose of this paper, we focus only on his perspective and do not refer others. Heidegger's rendition of phenomenology is summarised in the first part of his work *Being and Time*. In the second part of that work he attempts to apply his ontological phenomenology to major philosophical questions and not to precise modern practical phenomena such as entrepreneurship. Shortly after the publication of the work, he saw that his application of his method of ontological phenomenology was in error. He then, particularly in a lecture course of 1928, worked out what should have been said in the second part of *Being and Time*. This use of the ontological-phenomenological method influences the approach taken in the present paper. The problem Heidegger addressed in that application was the most fundamental of all problems, what exists primordially, or as he might say, what is the nature of Being (existence) that beings (things) are possible. Heidegger gains access to this problem through a reflection on Immanuel Kant's book *The Critique of Pure Reason*. His phenomenological enquiry may be understood as a new "reading" of Kant, one that Kant himself did not provide, however, that is not its only – or we would claim, its greatest – significance. Its current significance, its importance for the present paper, is found in what it teaches us about the deployment of the ontological-phenomenological method.

Phenomenology and Entrepreneurship Research

The ontological-phenomenological method now holds itself for consideration in relation to entrepreneurship research. How has it been used in relation to that subject? Several recent papers adumbrate the potential within this research fame. In the following paragraphs, we refer to four different publications which applied phenomenological method in entrepreneurship research. The first one, is the classic work in the field – which appears to have been largely overlooked in the disciplines of business – is that by three researchers who in the 1990's enquired into entrepreneurship, democratic action and the cultivation of solidarity (Spinosa, Flores, & Dreyfus, 1997). The first third of their book is on entrepreneurship. The mixing of practical and philosophical concerns is evident in the authorship of the work. Spinosa was a Vice President at Business Design Associates, Flores a Finance Minister in the Chilean government and Dreyfus was (and still is) an esteemed Berkeley phenomenologist. The President of Chile is acknowledged for his encouragement (Spinosa, et al., 1997, p. x). In their work, the authors focus on the skill of cultural innovation and its ground (embodiment) within a meaningful community. Our cultural initiatives (including the development of artefacts) are “history making” and we are ill prepared to recognise this or how history is achieved because we are overcome by the categories of thought and action which derive scientific disciplines (those which in the present article we describe with Heidegger's expression “ontic disciplines”). In opening they write:

Our main goal is to show how entrepreneurial practices, the practices of virtuous citizens, and the practices of solidarity cultivation are ultimately ground in and integrated by a crucial skill that human being in the West have had for at least 2500 years. [np] We call the special skill that underlies entrepreneurship, citizen action, and solidarity cultivation history making. (Spinosa, et al., 1997, p. 2).

The wider context of *history making* they identify, in American culture specifically, with such things as Kennedy's attempt to articulate a historical sense of the American people in the 1960s and the popular notion of the “space race”, and the perception of women as expressed by the emergent distaste for gender roles including the confinement of skills to gender interests) (Spinosa, et al., 1997, p. 2). That the three authors are at pains not to identify their insights with (or as) a theory is consistent with the phenomenological practice of Husserl and Heidegger. Nor do they seek to rationalise practice, to explain it with categories imported from the theories of others. They reject the notion that there could be a step-by-step manual for business success or a checklist that can be provided to offer how to progress and advance. It is the very nature of entrepreneurship which denies that there is any such set of procedures. In this, we contend, they authors align themselves with the conclusions of

many in the discipline of entrepreneurship as it develops in universities today. What they strongly assert is the need for a sense of history in a population which is to embrace a culture which produces and nourishes the skills which we find are indicative of entrepreneurship, or democracy for that matter. This is a powerful thesis and highly relevant to those who seek the path to national advancement. A thoughtful review of the book applauds the authors rejection of common notions about entrepreneurship and the insight about how in practice entrepreneurs have a skill that enables them to identify anomalies and recognise the significance of anomalies (Solomon, 1999, p. 172 & 174). A further relevant discussion is found in Spinoza and Dreyfus (1997).

Jason Cope assaults entrepreneurship with the phenomenological method in his commendable paper "Researching Entrepreneurship through Phenomenological Enquiry." His task is to "clarify the relationship between phenomenology as a philosophy and phenomenological enquiry as a stance or approach to conducting entrepreneurship and small business research" (Cope, 2005, p. 163). The phenomenological interview is his main tool and he reviews interviews with six people deemed to be practicing entrepreneurs. Amongst his findings about the method, which he calls "emergent" is the assertion that it will appeal to those who wish to pursue deeper understanding (Cope, 2005, p. 183). The challenge within the phenomenological interview, a technique some find appealing, is the firm view of both Husserl and Heidegger that phenomenology is a first person enquiry. Thus, instead of an enquiry *into* entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs, Cope is involved in his own engagement *with* entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs. He appears well aware of this because he asserts that he seeks greater "transparency in terms of the philosophical assumptions which underpin methodological choices" and more methodological rigor (Cope, 2005, p. 182).

In his review of "process theories" in entrepreneurship, Steyaert includes all these papers as examples of the "Phenomenological Approach" and later he considers Johnnisson's work which – contrasting with those who conduct interviews – involves researchers in the enactment of the entrepreneurial process in a formulation of auto-ethnography (Steyaert, 2007, p. 455; 2011). This latter work appears consistent with the suggestions of Husserl and Heidegger.

The *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods in Entrepreneurship* has a chapter entitled "Researching entrepreneurship as lived experience" (Chapter 3 in Neergaard & Uihøi, 2007, pp. 75-93). The author seeks to describe entrepreneurship as an art, a "practice-oriented endeavour that requires a sensitive and committed engagement with a range of phenomena in the surrounding world" (Berglund, 2007, p. 75). Berglund's chapter is the most comprehensive overview of phenomenological methods in the study of entrepreneurship and it does much to relate research initiatives to the foundational theory of Husserl and Heidegger. His perspicuous diagrams which show

the relationships between traditions of enquiry may interest many who seek a perspective on the epistemology and ontology of entrepreneurship.

This paper, we claim, demonstrates the spectacular potential of ontology for the study of entrepreneurship by way of a single example – an enquiry into limits or confinement. It draws upon the Continental tradition of thought much associated with Kant and the pre-eminent German philosopher Martin Heidegger. Although the potential of Heideggerian ontology is being realised in disciplines as diverse as nursing, teaching and psychiatry, it has yet to show itself in the work of those who worry about entrepreneurship.

ONTIC ENQUIRIES INTO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

How are we to conceptualise Heidegger's account of the activity of entrepreneurship? Of overarching importance in Heidegger's account of human existence is the distinction between the ontic and the ontological. As we make use of it in the present paper it behoves us to say something about the distinction. Heidegger is a progressive philosopher, his ideas change throughout a long life, and this challenges our interpretation his thoughts. The account of the distinction at issue in the present paper which we draw upon is that which pertains to his early work, more precisely his thinking before the publication of *Being and Time* in 1927.

Before we proceed with Heidegger to the question "what is entrepreneurship?" it is necessary to introduce Heidegger's concept of truth. Truth is an integral part of Heidegger's deliberations about disciplines such as entrepreneurship. What is truth? Heidegger's two leading concepts of truth are *adaequatio* and *alētheia*. "*Adaequatio*" is truth located in an agreement or correspondence between reality and representations, mental or linguistic. This includes for example the correspondence apparent in "that is blue", "blue is a colour", and " $2+2=4$ ". Heidegger says that correspondence theories of truth are the "traditional" concept of truth or the "usual" concept of truth and he considers them in Aristotle and Aquinas (Heidegger, 1962, p. 257; 2002, p. 6; 2007, p. 280) . He finds such accounts of truth undoubtedly meaningful. Although there are various renditions of the correspondence theory of truth, and thus abundant words that refer to the theory, the generic word preferred by Heidegger to refer to this form of truth is the Latin *adaequatio*, evidently because it indicates "similarity" which implies a human judgement that involves an equation, whilst remaining silent on the content of the judgement or equating. *Adaequatio* is the notion of truth that we engage when we say something is right or wrong. It is an indispensable notion in current practical Western education, and it is crucial in enquiries into entrepreneurship. In entrepreneurship, an enduring

example of *adaequatio* is “empirical verifiability”, the conformity of an assertion to a fact – for example, the statement about the records made of how an entrepreneur works.

Alētheia is Heidegger’s notion of truth – the truth inherent in the “disclosure”, “uncoveredness” or “unconcealment” of beings. It is the human way to abide with this truth and all abidance with beings necessarily involves this form of truth. *Alētheia* rests upon the primordial phenomenon of human disclosedness and is inherent in all disclosures of beings including those beings that are the occurrent, physical entities of entrepreneurship. Truth as disclosure is an ontological truth and indelible in the complex that is the human being involved and the beings disclosed. Heidegger credits Kant as the first to ground *adaequatio* in *alētheia*. This sentence, which refers to the two “forms of truth”, is a more specific rendition of Heidegger’s assertion that Kant’s real Copernican Revolution is his discovery that metaphysics grounds all human knowledge of objects. The question about *beings* is the question that entails *adaequatio*, hence the traditional/usual concept of truth. This contrasts with *alētheia*:

The most primordial phenomenon of truth is first shown by the existential-ontological foundations of uncovering ... With and through it [the human being] is uncoveredness; hence only with [the human’s]... disclosedness is the most primordial phenomenon of truth attained. What we have pointed out earlier with regard to the existential Constitution of the “there” and in relation to the everyday Being of the “there”, pertains to the most primordial phenomenon of truth, nothing less. (Heidegger, 1962, p. 263).

Adaequatio, the truth of judgement, ultimately presupposes *alētheia*. What is primarily true is the uncovering of beings (objects), and this perspective enables Heidegger to say that the human being exists “in the truth” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 263).

If you ask a Heideggerian scholar, “what is entrepreneurship?” the scholar may tell you that entrepreneurship is an ontic discipline or a regional ontology. These answers are consistent with Heidegger’s phenomenological account of the human being. Heidegger’s schema which shows the integration of the human being and the environment, and the analogy of the tree which indicates a structure for both the human being’s ontology and metaphysics, give us access to his concepts. One of the present authors develops this elsewhere particularly in relation to the discipline of physics (Shaw, 2009a, 2010).

Early in *Being and Time*, Heidegger refers to the “ontical sciences” and contrasts research in these sciences with research in ontology. Entrepreneurship is an example of an ontical science, and inquiry in such a science “is concerned primarily with *entities* and the facts about them” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 31). His term “ontic studies” may refer to all the subjects or departments in universities.

University subjects are a selection of ontic disciplines and when students learn their prescribed subjects they learn “the interconnection between true propositions” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 32). Another example of ontic studies is the collection of papers about entrepreneurship that the introduction to the present paper considers. It is apparent that truth in such subjects is most dependent, if not exclusively dependent, on correspondence, *adaequatio*. Husserl, Heidegger’s early mentor, argues that the human life-world founds ontic disciplines:

Each of us has his own appearances; and for each of us they count ... for what actually is ... we have long since become aware of this discrepancy between our various ontic validities. But we do not think that because of this there are many worlds. (Husserl, 1999, p. 338)

Ontic certainty, for Husserl, is founded on induction (Husserl, 1999, p. 355 and 376), and consequently the subjects taught in universities are effectively founded upon aspects of the world which children spontaneously discover for themselves.

Inevitably the question arises, what are all these entities and disciplines founded upon? Husserl proposes that there are two forms of ontological investigation: fundamental ontology and regional ontology. Ontic studies in this sense just discussed, aligns with the notion of regional ontology. As Husserl says in his “preliminary” work, *Ideas I*, written around 1922:

... there emerges a fundamentally essential difference between being as mental process and being as a physical thing. Of essential necessity it belongs to a regional essence, Mental Process (specifically to the regional particularization, Cogitatio) that can be perceived in an immanent perception; fundamentally and necessarily it belongs to the essence of a spatial physical thing that it cannot be so perceived. (Husserl, 1999, p. 72)

He continues to discuss the “physical-thing datum” and “data analogous to physical things”, and it is again apparent that the concept of truth here is *adaequatio*, particularly when he refers to “essential necessity transcendencies” (Husserl, 1999, p. 72). Husserl would say that the theorists of entrepreneurship constructed mental models of transcendent physical entities – entities that exist but which in themselves have nothing to do with the actual practice/activity of entrepreneurship.

Heidegger provides an overview of ontic studies in his 1927 lecture, “Phenomenology and Theology”, where, in a move beyond Husserl, he identifies three things that are always associated with science. Talking primarily about theology but speaking about ontic studies generally, including entrepreneurship:

Proper to the positive character of a science is: first, that a being that in some way is already disclosed is to a certain extent come upon as a possible theme of theoretical objectification and inquiry; second, that this given positum is come upon with a definite prescientific manner

of approaching and proceeding with that being. In this manner of procedure, the specific content of this region and the mode of being of the particular entity show themselves. (Heidegger, 1998, p. 42)

The quotation from Husserl in *Ideas I* emphasises both the mental and the physical, and makes use of the notion of a region. Heidegger in this quotation dispenses with the Mental but holds to the notion of a specific content for a “region”. Truth as disclosedness of a being, is “proper” to the positive character of science, which reflects the notion of phenomenological seeing, apprehension, which because it is dominated by hermeneutics is more than *mere* description. As we might expect, Heidegger’s image is spatial (region), and the model hidden within his grand-analogy is that of a Venn diagram (set theory in mathematics). Heidegger’s word “positum” is a rare word today although it was once used in philosophy to indicate a thing laid down or presupposed, especially as a basis for argument or a postulated or posited entity (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989). Heidegger apparently refers to that necessarily presupposed for there to be a particular entity. “Laid down” is one clue to the spatial nature of the image, as is his use of the word “region” in the same paragraph. As he said in 1919 on primordial science as a pre-theoretical science, “Precisely that which first is to be posited must be pre-supposed” (Heidegger, 2000, p. 74) . A positum, always a being, can be the ontological equivalent of an ontic “object” which includes the “sight things” referred to above.

“Positum” – the word indicates its home within a model, it is spatial in its allusion, it is unitary in its reference, it relates directly to ‘truth’ in Heidegger’s sense, and accordingly it is a commended word for an existential analytic. It also has the authority of Heidegger. “Positum” continues in Heidegger’s spectacular use in his discussion of regional ontology a decade beyond the publication of *Being and Time*. In the controversial translation of *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* we read:

What is “scientifically” knowable is in each case given in advance by a “truth” which is never graspable by science, a truth about the recognised region of beings. Beings as a region lie in advance for science, they constitute a positum, and every science is in itself a “positive” science... (Heidegger, 1999, p. 101)

The image is again spatial – this time it is “grasp” and “region” that build analogy. The positum, to be an existing being, must always be disclosed. It is unitary and it is rendered as truth. The human being even renders speculation as a positum – speculation is a truth for us. It is with ontological certainty that we understand that we are involved in speculation. I “know” when I conjecture. Both quotations demonstrate that Heidegger’s use of the word “positum” draws upon the spatial analogy that founds the reasoning extant in regional ontology and ontic studies. “Positum” conjures associations that the word “entity” does not, and the “positive sciences” are now recognised as the sciences that address the positum.

THE ONTOLOGY OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Ontology is the study of the modes of existence of that which exists. We already have decided that entrepreneurship exists and consequently we must ask about the nature of its existence. When we are clear about what it is that we chase, we can begin the chase. Heidegger is correct when he begins *Being and Time* with the assertion that we have all forgotten being. One consequence of our forgetting the subject of ontology as a pre-eminent branch of metaphysics is that there is not in common use a vocabulary for ontology. We draw the vocabulary we use in intellectual discussions from theories that hold their own presuppositions and consequences. If we import words into ontology, they can create confusion because they carry with them associations from elsewhere. Equally, it can become graceless and confusing when we use the same word for two “concepts” that hold separate provenance. Further, we can expect to make more progress when we develop our own categorial framework upon the intellectual labour of others. For these reasons, it is best to use Heidegger’s terminology to refer to ontology.

“Dasein” – which may tentatively be thought of as the human being – is one of the core terms in *Being and Time*. It first appears as one of things that has being and “is”:

Everything we talk about, everything we have in view, everything towards which we comport ourselves in any way, is being; what we are is being, and so is how we are. Being lies in the fact that something is, and in its Being as it is; in Reality; in presence-at-hand; in subsistence; in validity; in Dasein; in the ‘there is’. (Heidegger, 1962, p. 26)

If Heidegger “defines” Dasein, he does so thus:

This entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term “Dasein”. (Heidegger, 1962, p. 27)

At the same time, he provides decisive counsel for the present thesis when he says that if we are to enquire, to formulate questions explicitly and transparently, we must first give a proper explication of Dasein.

Science and technology are hegemonic in Western universities and one of the consequences of this is the preponderant influence of the methods of science in all manner of enquiries. Yet science cannot investigate itself scientifically. That which is the foundation of a method is already present in

the method and integrally a component of any investigation that uses the method. This necessitates the use of another method of enquiry challenges Husserl, and then Heidegger. It turns us to recognise that the enquirer is integrally a part of any enquiry, even the enquiries of entrepreneurship that seek to eliminate the involvement of the human being as observer and thereby to claim objectivity.

The alternative method of enquiry – phenomenology – renders objectivity in another way. Phenomenology as the “science of phenomena” is a diverse intellectual discipline with little consensus about how to conduct phenomenological research. Kockelmans provides a guide to this subject with regard to Heidegger particularly (Kockelmans, 1965, 1985, 1989). Phenomenology is not a set of rules about how to proceed, but rather it is whatever renders as sense to the enquirer in a particular situation. Heidegger places the key words in italics when he writes of the methodological use of the word “phenomenology”:

‘Phenomenology’ neither designates the object of its researches, nor characterizes the subject-matter thus comprised. The word merely informs us of the “how” with which what is to be treated in this science gets exhibited and handled. To have a science ‘of’ phenomena means to grasp its objects in such a way that everything about them which is up for discussion must be treated by exhibiting it directly and demonstrating it directly. (Heidegger, 1962, p. 59)

In this quotation, Heidegger uses the word “science” in the traditional German manner, which refers to any determined, systematic enquiry directed at the attainment of knowledge. The idea of “seeing” or “grasping” in a manner that exhibits and demonstrates to us in a direct way stands in contrast to the aspirations that entrepreneurs hold for entrepreneurship.

Specific mention should be made of the expression “existential analytic”. As indicated, phenomenology is an activity, not a theory. It is like a sports fixture, where there are rules and preparations, what occurs in the play is what counts, and the outcome is unpredictable. The sports code played in this thesis was devised by Heidegger and it is called an “existential analytic of the Dasein”. The engagement is between she who enquires *and* human beings like herself and whatever else she encounters – “what is primarily interrogated is those entities which have the character of Dasein” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 65). The event necessarily involves the two teams to an equal extent, although the report on how they perform comes from one of those involved in the play.

The direct involvement of the Dasein that enquires warrants comment, because it is central in an existential analytic and contrasts with all the sciences (in the modern sense) that lay claim to objectivity, including physics. “Looking at something, understanding and conceiving it, choosing, access to it—all these ways of behaving are constitutive for our inquiry, and therefore are modes of Being for those particular entities which we, the inquirers, are ourselves” (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 26-

27). It is not possible in an existential analytic to be free of the questioners comportment (not “behaviour”, because “behaviour” is steeped in objectivist theory).

The word “existential” refers to a full or general understanding of existence, which must include a sense of both structure and content. It contrasts with “existentiell” which refers to someone’s personal understanding of their own existence (Heidegger, 1962, p. 33). Fundamental ontology, which is the source of all other ontologies (that is, regional ontologies, such as those of physics and ordinary-everydayness), is achieved through an existential analytic (Heidegger, 1962, p. 34). Because of the direct relationship between fundamental and regional ontology it is deemed appropriate to use the term “existential analytic” to refer to a study that is primarily regional.

Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation – broadly, what it means to understand texts, utterances, or nature. The word “hermeneutics” appears in many contexts. It may describe a method of enquiry, for example in “Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology” or it may describe a leading feature of human beings, for example in “the hermeneutic way of being of Dasein”, or it may refer to a major theme within the discipline of continental philosophy. All of these uses of the word appear relevant in the study of the ontology of entrepreneurship.

Ancient hermeneutics has multiple and conflicting histories that extend to the origins of writing itself. Whenever someone makes an interpretation of something, there is the potential to say that hermeneutics is involved. Many scholars find a beginning for hermeneutics in ancient Greek works, which reflect the etymology of the term as *hermeneuō* (translate or interpret), and which include Aristotle’s work of about 360 B.C. with its Latin title *De Interpretatione*. From its origins until today, “hermeneutics” may refer to translation, proclamation, or explanation. In the West, hermeneutics came to describe what was involved in the interpretation of important texts in the Bible. As is easy to imagine, the practice of hermeneutics was as diverse in this period as in ancient times. Perhaps the dawn of the modern era, the Enlightenment, heralds the advent of modern hermeneutics. Kant’s essay on “what is enlightenment” brought reason to the foreground – as a means to access the truth. The present thesis considers the implications of this in the philosophy of science. Husserl’s phenomenology, founded upon meaning existent in the life-world and giving credence to intuitionism, paves the way for Heidegger’s distinctive phenomenology which may be truly called hermeneutic phenomenology. As Heidegger says, the “phenomenology of Dasein is a *hermeneutic* in the primordial signification of this word, where it designates this business of interpreting” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 62). This is the first of three uses Heidegger finds for the word “hermeneutic”. The second is also methodological in that it refers to the extension of the ontology uncovered (the meaning of being), to a general hermeneutic of investigation. Thereby is revealed “any further ontological study of those entities which do not have the character of Dasein” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 62). He continues:

this hermeneutic also becomes a 'hermeneutic' in the sense of working out the conditions on which the possibility of any ontological investigation depends.

And finally, “hermeneutic” is the word used to describe the nature of the human being as Dasein – this is philosophically the most important aspect of the Dasein:

to the extent that Dasein, as an entity with the possibility of existence, has ontological priority over every other entity, “hermeneutic”, as an interpretation of Dasein’s Being, has the third and specific sense of an analytic of the existentiality of existence; and this is the sense which is philosophically primary. (Heidegger, 1962, p. 62)

Enquiries into entrepreneurship which adopt Heidegger’s phenomenological method of enquiry answer to the word “hermeneutic” in one of Heidegger’s three senses (and the context should indicate which sense pertains). Thus, Heidegger opens for us lines of enquiry into entrepreneurship which depend heavily his theory and the outcome of such an enquiry is quite unknown.

CONCLUSION

This paper opens a way of enquiry into entrepreneurship: it shows that the ontological tradition of Kant and Heidegger holds serious potential to bring insights into a process that is little understood in its fundamental nature. We advocate for a re-search paradigm which does not seek to advance the enterprise of entrepreneurship or to facilitate the control of entrepreneurial deliberations and activities. The purpose of this re-search is merely to make sense of entrepreneurship as a phenomenon. The construction “re-search” distinguishes this form of enquiry from “research” which is a word best reserved for the practices of modern science. Re-search seeks to explicate (have us understand), not to explain in the paradigm of causation and induction (which is only capable of providing precise information about a *limited* spectrum of objects or events). To advance our understanding of entrepreneurship, paradoxically, we must fully and truly abandon our desire for progress. Phenomenological research cannot begin with the idea that we are going to improve, progress and advance, or fix things up. We must use a Heideggerian insight into the nature of truth to provide us with access to that which occurs as entrepreneurship.

The social science research methodologies that many use to investigate entrepreneurship – ontic science – import into their enquires both the advantages and disadvantages of modern science. Social science research methods can only provide limited insights into observed actions and some of characteristics of entrepreneurs. Before such insights are achieved, however, researchers have to define the object of enquiry, which is to say, we have to define entrepreneurship or an aspect of something which they deem to be relevant to entrepreneurship. Thus, they proceed primarily by narrowing of the field or objects of study, and by accepting restrictions upon the methods of enquiry.

Entrepreneurs are employed to innovate and produce new artefacts or processes. Thus, their tasks are narrow because they demonstrate success by way of applauded physical objects. Such objects must achieve profits broadly defined. Yet this construct of a goal is not the goal of research *qua* science and it assiduously limits that which scientists might pursue *qua* science as research. Indeed, with this inner purpose, the scientist ceases to be a scientist in the narrow sense of the word (in the sense of “researcher”) and becomes an entrepreneur. There is a substantial literature on the difficulties involved in commercialising new science. The ontological argument suggests that research and entrepreneurship are dramatically different phenomena because they involve involvement in different circumstances/limits (one aspect of which we can see in the ontic goals pursued). Consequently, there is no reason to believe that those with experience in research will make competent entrepreneurs. The ontological space of the entrepreneur is not that of the scientist, and there is little reason to believe that one holds any congruence to the other.

What might proper phenomenological enquiries into entrepreneurship produce? The ontology of entrepreneurship awaits us as one legitimate and open field of enquiry into the event of entrepreneurship. Primarily these investigations will draw upon the work of Heidegger and appear as an existential analytic. (The present paper does not discuss the potential of Husserl, whose work provides us with a similar unexplored pathway.) We stress that the research programme proposed is a distinctly Heideggerian enquiry, which means an investigation into fundamental ontology as well as the beings extant in entrepreneurship. Such a programme would draw upon the early work of Heidegger which is signposted in *Being and Time* and his deliberations regarding Kant subsequent to *Being and Time*. This can be one limitation of this paper since we concentrated only on Heidegger and enquiry into confinement. We hope the current paper can be a triggering point for entrepreneurship scholars to explore ontological-phenomenological method. Re-searchers inclined to invest in such a study must accept that it is not directed at the making of a profit, but rather is about the understanding of a distinctive phenomena – entrepreneurship.

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