

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EXPLICATED IN THE MANNER OF PHILOSOPHERS[1]

EMPREENDEDORISMO EXPLICITADO À MANEIRA DOS FILÓSOFOS

Diego Luiz Teixeira Boava[2] *Fernanda Maria Felício Macedo*[3]

ABSTRACT

This essay presents a philosophical clarification regarding the nature of entrepreneurship, seeking to access its unapparent regions. Firstly, it analyzes its complex etymology; the forgetting of the original meaning (becoming the subject of one's own actions) and the predominance of capitalist ideology limit science to the study of effects, neglecting the causes. Subsequently, the dominant paradigm and its ideological biases (economism, organilogism, psychologism, and sociologism) are criticized, advocating for an integrated vision. The phenomenon is then discussed through its modes of appearance: the mode of being (essence) and the mode of seeing (technique). Finally, entrepreneurship is defined as a promise grounded in six elements: innovation, attitude, transformation, commitment, anguish, and freedom. It concludes that the main scientific barrier is the lack of transdisciplinarity. Without the integration of different fields of knowledge, entrepreneurship remains like a seed without soil: a daily reality that, although persistent, remains theoretically inaccessible and not materialized into full knowledge.

Keywords: ontology, ideology, subjectivity, freedom.

RESUMO

Este ensaio apresenta uma clarificação filosófica sobre a natureza do empreendedorismo, buscando acessar suas regiões inaparentes. Primeiramente, analisa-se sua etimologia complexa; o esquecimento do sentido original (tornar-se sujeito das próprias ações) e a predominância da ideologia capitalista limitam a ciência ao estudo dos efeitos, negligenciando as causas. Em seguida, critica-se o paradigma dominante e seus vieses ideológicos (economicismo, organilogismo, psicologismo e sociologismo), defendendo uma

[1] Received on 16/01/2026. Accepted on 06/02/2026. DOI: doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.24002554
[2] Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto. boava@ufop.edu.br
[3] Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto. profamacedo@yahoo.com.br



visão integrada. O fenômeno é então discutido através de seus modos de aparição: o modo de ser (essência) e o modo de ver (técnica). Por fim, define-se o empreendedorismo como uma promessa fundamentada em seis elementos: inovação, atitude, transformação, comprometimento, angústia e liberdade. Conclui-se que a principal barreira científica é a falta de transdisciplinaridade. Sem a integração de diferentes saberes, o empreendedorismo permanece como uma semente sem solo: uma realidade cotidiana que, embora persistente, permanece teoricamente inacessível e não materializada em conhecimento pleno.

Palavras-chave: ontologia, ideologia, subjetividade, liberdade

INTRODUCTION

This essay proposes to elucidate the essence of entrepreneurship through philosophical reflections on the subject, seeking to clarify that this activity extends far beyond the usual scope of academic and professional discussions. It is argued that entrepreneurship is not merely an object of study for economics, management, psychology, or other specific disciplines, but reveals itself as a fundamental dimension of the human condition itself.

The entrepreneurial phenomenon has traditionally been approached through its observable effects, constituting what may be called ontological forgetting: what results from entrepreneurial action is studied without adequately questioning its first causes. The fundamental cause of entrepreneurship, however, lies in man himself. Not merely as a producer of economic results, but as an agent who transforms reality. It is important to emphasize that this investigation is not restricted to the psychological analysis of the individual as a cognitive subject but turns to man as a being who bestows meaning upon the world, capable, through his actions (of any nature), of reconfiguring the reality surrounding him.

The relevance of this reflection lies in the possibility of establishing a new way of accessing the entrepreneurial phenomenon, allowing progress in understanding the plurality intrinsic to this activity. Until now, this plurality has



remained the almost exclusive monopoly of the so-called applied social sciences (especially economics and management), limiting the possibilities for interpreting the phenomenon.

By broadening the epistemological horizons of the issue, it becomes possible to bring new understandings to the field, offering researchers more robust conceptual tools for their investigative work. Furthermore, this essay aims to strengthen the ties between management and philosophy, disciplines frequently separated in academia, proposing a new way of viewing entrepreneurship that recognizes its existential dimension and its grounding in the fundamental structures of human beings.

THE POLYSEMIC PROBLEM INTRINSIC TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF THE ACTIVITY

Polysemy (a phenomenon denoting the variety of meanings attributed to a term) is an inherent characteristic of all natural languages. Its origin can be traced to two main factors: (1) figurative uses, through extensions of meaning, analogy, and other semantic operations; (2) the borrowing of meanings that a particular word has in other languages (HOUAISS, 2009, p. 1518).

In analyzing economic theory and the history of entrepreneurship, Schumpeter (1949) observes that thinkers such as Adam Smith (1776), David Ricardo (1817), and John Stuart Mill (1848) offered considerations on entrepreneurial activity, but always within the scope of the English term business management. The Austrian economist further suggests that both Smith and Marx, if adequately pressed, would have recognized the importance of this activity. Mill (1848), in turn, states that entrepreneurship does not require extraordinary skills, while simultaneously lamenting the absence of an English word capable of encompassing the specific meaning of the French term entrepreneur:

> It is to be regretted that this word, in this sense, is not familiar to an English ear. French political economists can enjoy a great advantage



> in being able to speak today of the profits of the *entrepreneur* (MILL, 1848, p. 478).

This problem raised by Mill proves fundamental to understanding why entrepreneurship has such a variety of meanings. The issue lies in the fact that the French term entrepreneur constitutes the etymological matrix of all subsequent words related to the subject: entrepreneurship, entrepreneur, etc. This discussion is significant because the transduction that occurred (from French into English and, subsequently, from English into other languages) has profound implications for the systematic study of entrepreneurship.

Hébert and Link (2006, p. 295-296), in analyzing the historical perspectives of the phenomenon, point out that three distinct English terms were originally used to characterize the French word entrepreneur: adventurer, projector and undertaker, each applied in a particular context. However, these were not the words that became established to designate the entrepreneur, but rather the term entrepreneur itself, owing to the prominence of the works of Say (1803) and Cantillon (1755).

The etymological path: from Latin origins to modern languages

The word entrepreneur originated between 1253 and 1289, derived from the term entreprendeeurs, meaning "one who takes charge" or "who carries out some construction or other task," originating from the present participle of entreprendre (CNRTL, 2026a).

The verb entreprendre appeared in 1140 with the meaning "to attack." Between 1174-1176, the meaning "to challenge" or "to accuse" appeared. The meaning employed by Say (1803) and Cantillon (1755) to popularize the term developed between 1176-1181, meaning "to begin (something)," "to carry out," "to set about executing": a meaning that represents a replacement of the verb emprendre. In 1396, the meaning "to interfere in" or "to arrogate the right to judge" emerged. In the sixteenth century, specifically in 1559, entreprendre came to



mean "to win over through flattery" or "to attempt to seduce" (CNRTL, 2026b). Its ultimate etymological root lies in the Latin imprehendere, which means "to take into one's hands," "to assume," "to do."

The first recorded use of entrepreneur in English dates to 1475, designating someone who takes responsibility for something: a manager, controller, or champion in battle. The word already carried connotations of courage and leadership. However, the term was not well received at the time and remained little used. In 1828, the meaning of someone who directs or manages musical entertainments emerged. In modern usage, it means, among other things, someone who takes responsibility for a business; a person who owns and/or manages an enterprise, assuming the risk of profit or loss. In turn, the term entrepreneurship emerged in 1934 to characterize the activity of organizing, controlling, and assuming the risks of a company or business (OED, 2026). It was this word (entrepreneurship) that was translated into Portuguese as empreendedorismo, thus constituting an Anglicism.

The problem of translation and its conceptual implications

Entrepreneurship is not equivalent to and could not adequately be translated as empreendedorismo, because the suffix -ship (which, when added to entrepreneur, resulted in the term used in English-speaking countries) corresponds to various Portuguese suffixes, such as -mento, -dade, etc. Consider, for example: relationship = relacionamento; friendship = amizade. In other words, -ship forms nouns indicating a state, condition, or quality of being something. It would therefore be appropriate for entrepreneurship to be translated as empreendedoridade or a similar term.

Although the translation is mistaken, it is important to examine the origin of the term in Portuguese. Empreendedor means "that which, or one who undertakes," arising from empreendido + -or with the restoration of the thematic



vowel -e. The term first appeared in 1563. Empreender means: (a) to decide to carry out (a difficult and laborious task); to attempt; (b) to put into execution; to accomplish. Its origin lies in the Latin imprehendo or impraehendo, meaning "to attempt to execute a task," with a record dated 1619 (HOUAISS, 2009, p. 742).

The first lexicographic record of empreender in Portuguese-language dictionaries occurred between 1712-1728, in the Vocabulário Portuguez e Latino (BLUTEAU, 1721-1728, p. 70-71), which gives the meaning "to resolve to perform some action, some work, etc."

The term empreendedorismo, in turn, was only included in dictionaries in 2009 (although it had been used for a long period beforehand) and means: (a) a disposition or ability to conceive, coordinate, and carry out projects, services, businesses; (b) an initiative to implement new businesses or changes in existing companies, generally involving innovation or risk (HOUAISS, 2009, p. 742).

This brief etymological account demonstrates how language constitutes a living and dynamic component of the social system. As demonstrated, the word empreendedorismo emerged in the twentieth century to group together a set of activities (especially economic ones) carried out by the entrepreneur.

In turn, the term empreendedor acquired its currently employed meaning in the nineteenth century. An entire earlier history, rich and multifaceted, was apparently forgotten.

The implications of etymological forgetting for research

This forgetting of the origin has profound implications for research on the subject, as it drastically reduces the investigative horizon. By focusing only on the aspects usually studied, science does not adequately answer the question "what is entrepreneurship?", because it cannot problematize the issue on the basis of its own foundations. A philosophical contribution becomes necessary. The



question "what is entrepreneurship?" contains within itself factors that, among other elements, prevent a merely scientific answer: notably, ideology.

This means that the current way of apprehending the phenomenon is determined by scientific positivity and by the interests underlying the capitalist mode of production. Thus, for example, a psychologist is interested only in the entrepreneur's mental and cognitive factors; a management scholar focuses on entrepreneurship in organizations; an economist is concerned with the entrepreneurial dynamics of contemporary economic society; a social worker or sociologist may see the entrepreneur as someone in precarious employment, a victim of the capitalist system, etc.

In this way, it becomes impossible to know entrepreneurship in its entirety, because the fragmentation of studies prevents a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

Several authors observe this problematic aspect of entrepreneurship research regarding the scientific difficulty of establishing deeper understandings of the subject (LANDSTRÖM; LOHRKE, 2020, MOSSBERG, 1994; GALLOWAY; WILSON, 2003; KILBY, 1983; LOCK, 2009; JACKSON; GAULDEN; GASTER, 2001; BROWN, 2007; JOHNSTONE, 2008).

Imprehendere: the foundational semantic core

This epistemological difficulty occurs because of multiple factors, among which the issue of polysemy stands out. Apparently, this might be seen as a secondary factor in the analysis, but it actually constitutes the main element. The etymological investigation conducted established that the earliest meaning of entrepreneurship arises from the Latin imprehendere. This word decisively establishes the comprehensive meaning of entrepreneurial "being," that is, it informs the indubitable component of entrepreneurial activity.



Imprehendere means "to take into one's hands," "to assume," "to do." The term therefore characterizes a set of actions in which man becomes permanently responsible for the accomplishment, commitment, and engagement involved in making his world. Thus, the entrepreneur reveals himself as someone who breaks with the sameness in which human beings usually find themselves immersed. In other words, the entrepreneur breaks with the natural attitude.

Husserl (2012), in discussing the natural attitude, observes that man tends to view the world spontaneously and naively. Objects, things, and events present themselves as realities existing in themselves, independently of consciousness. There is no critical reflection on one's place in the world, on values, on possibilities. In everyday life, man lives his existence within a defined and naturalized space-time, with a succession of events in which he frequently becomes hostage to his own natural attitude. That is, he does not exercise effective control over the events that happen to him, because his mode of being remains naive and unreflective.

The entrepreneur, as the word imprehendere indicates, breaks with this natural attitude, because he takes the course of events into his own hands and possesses reflective awareness of this act of assumption.

The distinction between the genuine entrepreneur and self-employment

At this point, one might object that not all so-called entrepreneurs break with the natural attitude. For example, a former bank employee who decides to open a bakery but essentially continues to replicate his previous life. Now, such a person cannot legitimately be classified as an entrepreneur, but rather as someone who is self-employed. As seen previously, the dominant ideology tends to romanticize entrepreneurship and make anyone an entrepreneur — when, in fact, this is simply someone seeking to maintain his previous condition, rather than to achieve existential transformation.



Today, capitalist ideology promotes support and encouragement for the so-called entrepreneurial spirit, primarily aiming at wealth generation. Authentic entrepreneurship is not reducible to wealth generation, although this may constitute one of its aspects.

The economicist reduction and polysemic proliferation

In reality, entrepreneurial activity is predominantly viewed and researched as an economic phenomenon. Thus, in polysemic terms, the creation of new specialized terms can be observed, such as: eco-entrepreneurship, organizational entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, women's entrepreneurship, cultural entrepreneurship, among others.

This situation is the result of a long process of forgetting, as already observed. However, to truly understand the depth of this forgetting, which is not only etymological but ontological, it is necessary to return to the origins of the Western tradition and observe how entrepreneurship was understood before modern disciplinary fragmentation.

Entrepreneurship before forgetting: Thales of Miletus as a paradigm

It can be stated that the first known philosopher was also the first documented business entrepreneur, demonstrating that, originally, there was no separation between the contemplative life and entrepreneurial action, between theoria and praxis.

Approximately 2,500 years ago, Thales of Miletus (born around 624 BC and deceased around 547 BC) was an accomplished sage, geometer, politician, and major merchant who obtained a considerable fortune through his enterprises. His story is vital to our argument because it demonstrates that, before modern disciplinary fragmentation, entrepreneurship was understood as man's integral mode of being, rather than as an isolated economic activity.



The description of his entrepreneurial ability is recounted by Aristotle (Politics I, 11, 1259a 8-10):

> This is one of the general schemes for attaining wealth, but it is attributed to him [Thales] because of his wisdom. Since he was reproached for his poverty and mocked for his useless philosophy, his knowledge of the stars enabled him to predict that there would be an abundance of olives. Having gathered all the money he could, he rented, before the end of winter, all the oil presses in Miletus and Chios. He obtained them at a good price because no one had made a better offer and he had paid an advance. Once the harvest was in, many people appeared at the same time to obtain the presses, and he rented them out at whatever price he wished. Having made a great deal of money, he showed his friends that it was very easy for philosophers to become rich, but that they did not care about it. This was how he demonstrated his wisdom.

This passage is fundamental to our argument for four reasons:

First: It demonstrates the original unity between knowledge and action. Thales undertook ventures simultaneously in philosophy, science, politics, and business; there was no disciplinary fragmentation of the kind that now characterizes the study of entrepreneurship and resulted in the "four isms" (economicism, psychologism, sociologism, organilogism) that we will discuss below.

Second: It concretely reveals the meaning of imprehendere. Thales literally "took into his hands" (imprehendere) both astronomical knowledge and the economic opportunity, assuming risks and transforming potentiality into actuality, exercising precisely what Latin designated as undertaking. This was not merely financial speculation, but the conscious assumption of his own destiny.

Third: It shows entrepreneurship as a mode of being, rather than a profession. What Thales did was not merely a commercial transaction, but an existential demonstration: he proved that he could become rich but freely chose to devote himself to philosophy. Entrepreneurship appears here as conscious freedom and axiological choice, rather than as economic necessity or a fixed professional identity.



Fourth: It anticipates the question of purpose (telos). Thales undertook ventures not for money itself, but to demonstrate something about the nature of philosophical wisdom. Entrepreneurial action was subordinated to a broader purpose, revealing that entrepreneurship, at its origin, was understood as a means of realizing values, rather than as an end in itself.

Aristotle continues (Politics I, 11, 1259a 11-13) with another revealing example:

> In Sicily, a man who had received several deposits of money took possession of the iron from the forges. When merchants came from all directions to obtain it, he alone could sell it, contenting himself with twice the price, so that what had cost him fifty talents he sold for one hundred. Dionysius, the tyrant, informed of the case, did not confiscate his profit, but ordered him to leave Syracuse for having devised, in order to become rich, a scheme harmful to the interests of the head of state. That man had had the same idea as Thales: both made an art of monopoly.

This second example is even more revealing for our argument. What Aristotle calls monopoly was accomplished through genuinely entrepreneurial action, with the risks inherent in the activity. But note the fundamental element: the judgment was not merely economic. Dionysius banished the man not for becoming rich (since he did not confiscate the profit), but because of the means employed, which were considered harmful to the common good of the polis.

This reveals something fundamental: in ancient Greece, entrepreneurship was judged ethically, rather than solely by technical efficiency or profitability. Entrepreneurial action was embedded in a system of values that transcended the economic sphere. There was good entrepreneurship (such as that of Thales, which benefited the philosophical community) and bad entrepreneurship (such as that of the Sicilian, which harmed collective interests).

Thales undertook ventures not only in commercial business, but equally in his scientific, philosophical, and political activities. The geometric theorems he developed (such as Thales' theorem), his pioneering investigations into nature (physis) seeking the single material principle (arché), his study journeys to Egypt



and Babylon, and his decisive political interventions in the polis of Miletus were all entrepreneurial actions in the original sense of the term: innovative, risky, transformative. All of this earned him recognition as the first of the seven sages of ancient Greece (BARNES, 1997; BORNHEIM, 1999).

The Greek axiological system: entrepreneurship integrated into the values of the polis

In ancient Greece, entrepreneurial activity was socially encouraged, but within a well-defined and publicly recognized system of values (ethos). Basically, successful entrepreneurs received significant social and political distinctions, not only wealth, but honor (timé) and public recognition. Furthermore, many slaves obtained their freedom through successful enterprises, making entrepreneurship a path to social emancipation. At the same time, there was a system of deterrence (nómos) to prevent excessive individualism and pleonexia (the unbridled ambition to have more than others).

Here is the central point of our argument about ontological forgetting: Business success was judged through an analysis of the means employed and the ends pursued, rather than merely by the amount of wealth accumulated. In other words, what primarily mattered were the ethical values (areté) underlying entrepreneurial practice and its contribution to the common good of the polis (BRÖCHNER, 2025; KARAYIANNIS, 1992; 2003; 2008; ZANAKIS et al., 2003; BITROS; KARAYIANNIS, 2004; 2008).

As Karayiannis (2008) documents, in classical Athens there were three criteria for assessing the ethical legitimacy of entrepreneurial action:

1. Purpose (telos): What is the wealth generated for? Does it serve the common good or only private interests?

2. Means (méthodos): How was the wealth obtained? Through legitimate innovation or unjust exploitation?



3. Proportion (metron): Is the accumulated wealth proportional to the contribution made to the polis?

This is precisely the view that was forgotten. When entrepreneurship was incorporated into political economy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly with Cantillon (1755), Smith (1776), Say (1803), and Mill (1848), this integral axiological dimension was lost. The activity was reduced to its measurable economic dimension (wealth generation, productive efficiency, profit maximization, optimal resource allocation), forgetting the ethical, philosophical, political, and existential dimension that Thales exemplified.

Such forgetting is not merely etymological, but ontological: what was forgotten was not only the original meaning of imprehendere, but the entrepreneurial mode of being itself, which integrated knowledge (episteme), practical wisdom (phronesis), technique (techne), ethics (ethos), politics (politeia), economics (oikonomia), and existence (bios) into a coherent and meaningful whole.

When Cantillon (1755) reintroduced the term entrepreneur into political economy, he was already operating within a fragmented ontology. The entrepreneur is defined functionally (someone who assumes risks by buying at a certain price to sell at an uncertain price), rather than existentially. The question ceases to be what mode of being is this? and becomes what economic function does he perform?, a seemingly subtle but ontologically radical change.

From forgetting to contemporary recovery

Entrepreneurial activity is not a recent phenomenon; what is recent is the systematized and fragmented scientific study of the subject. Such studies began primarily in the nineteenth century through political economy, already marked by the disciplinary separation that Thales did not know and that the Greek polis did not practice.



The twentieth century deepened this fragmentation: psychology studied the entrepreneurial personality; sociology investigated the social context of entrepreneurship; management developed entrepreneurial management techniques; economics analyzed the role of the entrepreneur in economic development. Each discipline captured one aspect of the phenomenon, but the integral view represented by Thales was lost.

However, what can be observed at the beginning of the twenty-first century is a movement, still incipient but significant, to recover the forgotten meaning of undertaking. Cardow (2006), analyzing entrepreneurship as a metaphor, observes that throughout the twentieth century it was predominantly associated with business, whereas other meanings are now emerging: social innovation, cultural creativity, personal transformation, political engagement, environmental activism, linked not only to economic and organizational aspects, but to multiple dimensions of human existence.

Terms such as social entrepreneurship, cultural entrepreneurship, academic entrepreneurship, and political entrepreneurship emerge, all seeking, albeit in a fragmented way, to recover something of the lost wholeness. In everyday life, people begin to identify an athlete, an actor, a teacher, an activist as entrepreneurs, intuitively recognizing that entrepreneurship transcends the business sphere.

It is precisely this transformation of meaning that provides fundamental support for the philosophical elucidation of what entrepreneurship is in its essence.

It is not a matter of inventing anything new, but of returning to a more integral and truthful understanding that existed before forgetting, an understanding in which undertaking meant taking into one's hands (imprehendere) one's own destiny, integrating knowledge, action, values, and purpose into a coherent existential project.



ON THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY AND THE WAYS IN WHICH ENTREPRENEURSHIP IS INVESTIGATED AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES FOR ITS UNDERSTANDING

In the preceding pages, it was established that the term entrepreneurship evolved along a tortuous path over time, beginning its semantic journey in 1140 with the designation "to attack." Since that time, multiple meanings were progressively added to the repertoire of possible interpretations of the term, reaching its apex in 1934 with the introduction of the word entrepreneurship into English, a word subsequently translated into Portuguese as empreendedorismo.

We also saw how, as early as 1755 (with Cantillon) and 1803 (with Say), the term entrepreneur was introduced and established to designate specifically the business entrepreneur, but already within a fragmented ontology that did not recognize the wholeness exemplified by Thales of Miletus. This historical trajectory fundamentally indicates that entrepreneurship was incorporated into the economic vocabulary, becoming a modern ideology that brings about the ontological forgetting discussed earlier.

Thus, these ideas are naturally absorbed into scientific production, with direct effects on what is investigated and for what purposes. In other words: Academia privileges the study of a given reality, to the detriment of clarifying the genesis of the phenomenon.

However, this constitutes a natural and inherent characteristic of the sciences. Consider the example of physics: until the emergence of Einstein's work, Newtonian ideas prevailed absolutely; and before Newton, the works of other thinkers predominated. In other words, the dominant paradigm determines what should be researched. The same epistemological movement occurs with entrepreneurship.



However, this attitude carries a problematic bias: what should be neutral (if scientific neutrality is possible) becomes a form of ideological indoctrination.

The four reductionist "isms" in the study of entrepreneurship

This situation entails four main reductionisms (isms) in the study of entrepreneurship:

1. Economicism: entrepreneurship is reduced exclusively to its economic sphere. All factors underlying the phenomenon are transposed into the economic dimension, with analyses of other kinds (philosophical, anthropological, existential) disregarded. It is as if Thales were studied only for his speculation involving olive presses, ignoring his philosophy, geometry, and political action.

2. Organilogism: entrepreneurship is reduced to a process operating within specifically delimited structures/systems (the organization). Extrinsic factors are artificially considered components of the system (economics, psychology, sociology, etc.), creating a systemic view that imprisons the phenomenon. Thales would disappear here as an individual, becoming merely a function of the Milesian productive system.

3. Sociologism: the reduction of entrepreneurship occurs when the phenomenon is considered exclusively through its inherent social context, especially regarding its effects on society, with entrepreneurship regarded primarily as a social fact. Thales would merely be a product of the socioeconomic conditions of the Ionian polis.

4. Psychologism: entrepreneurship is reduced to the entrepreneur's psyche: his behavior, aspirations, personality traits, cognitive characteristics, etc. Other factors are considered marginal or secondary. Thales would be analyzed only through his innovative personality or risk-taker profile, ignoring values, purposes, and context.



These four reductionisms represent the opposite of the wholeness that Thales exemplified. Where there was unity between theoria, praxis, techne, and ethos, there is now disciplinary fragmentation. Where there was the whole man (anthropos), there are now homo economicus, homo sociologicus, homo psychologicus, homo organizationalis: all partial abstractions of the concrete human being.

The historical configuration of the economic paradigm

Notwithstanding the situation presented, it is necessary to clarify the historical reasons why it took this form. To do so, the discussion must begin with Cantillon (1755). In Essai Sur la Nature du Commerce en Général, the author discusses entrepreneurial activity in several chapters, directly or indirectly. Among other points addressed, he states that the entrepreneur is a person who pays a certain price for a product to resell it at an uncertain price, having to make decisions about obtaining and using resources and, consequently, assuming the risk inherent in the business. In other words, entrepreneurs consciously make decisions about resource allocations. Furthermore, Cantillon classifies people into two fundamental types: entrepreneurs and wage earners (CANTILLON, 1755, chap. XIII, part 1). The author's pioneering use of the term entrepreneur as equivalent to the modern entrepreneur stands out.

Because of the polysemic issues discussed earlier, Smith (1776), in his book An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, does not use the term entrepreneur, but rather the words adventurer, projector, and undertaker. The adventurer is someone who takes risks; the projector speculates and plans; the indertaker is the prudent man who accumulates capital and achieves slow but steady progress. It should be emphasized that the author did not speak directly about the entrepreneur or entrepreneurship but provided substantial indications in this direction. Thus, the Smithian entrepreneur



resembles the Cantillonian one: someone who wishes to obtain a surplus of value over the cost of production. The entrepreneur is a capitalist owner who faces risk and uncertainty, combining and directing production.

Say (1803) is recognized as the first author to move systematically toward creating a theory of entrepreneurship. By describing the economic events of his time, the author of Traité d'Économie Politique seeks to study the entrepreneur's function, which consists of being an agent of production aiming at useful things endowed with value. The embryonic notion of innovation also derives from him, as he seeks to reconcile scientific knowledge with the practical application of this knowledge and its transformation into production.

Another important economist in this discussion is Mill (1848), who, in The Principles of Political Economy, identifies the entrepreneur's functions as direction, control, and superintendence. Furthermore, he does not establish a clear separation between the capitalist and the entrepreneur. Basically, the author briefly discusses the entrepreneurial theme without making in-depth distinctions between the activities of capitalists and entrepreneurs.

Marshall (1890) offers considerations on various aspects related to entrepreneurship. In Principles of Economics, the author observes that entrepreneurship (organization) constitutes the fourth factor of production, alongside land, labor, and capital. The entrepreneur thus becomes involved in the organization, having the task of coordinating the other factors and being responsible for innovation. Another aspect investigated concerns the skills possessed by the entrepreneur — rare and limited in supply, because they are so extraordinary that few people possess them. However, for Marshall, entrepreneurship can be taught. He also analyzes family entrepreneurship, particularly business succession, among other aspects.

Schumpeter's contribution (1911, 1997) was decisive in consolidating entrepreneurship as a field of study within economics. In Theorie der



wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung (The Theory of Economic Development), the author presents his theory of economic development, demonstrating that the entrepreneur is the agent responsible for disrupting the existing equilibrium between supply and demand, using innovation to do so. Thus, entrepreneurship (innovation) becomes the primary engine of the economy. The entrepreneur promotes radical innovation by destroying and replacing existing modes of production. Hence the emergence of the celebrated concept of creative destruction.

For Schumpeter, the entrepreneur promotes radical change by destroying existing technologies and is the one who proposes disruptive novelties. The need to innovate is dictated by the external environment, and the entrepreneur exists only at the moment of innovation, which cannot be a permanent profession or a social class, although it may develop a system of values. Finally, Schumpeter offered considerations on what is currently called intrapreneurship (corporate entrepreneurship).

The consequences of the established scientific agenda

The investigations presented above fundamentally defined the agenda of scientific research in entrepreneurship. Subsequent developments in the way the phenomenon is studied derived from the need to better explain what happens in the activity. Initially economic, the study of the field evolved toward behavioral approaches, followed by sociological/organizational approaches, among other disciplinary perspectives.

However, it can be observed that the core of the research remains essentially the same (innovation, intrapreneurship, succession, risk, uncertainty, etc.), with the addition of new areas (business mortality, incubators, entrepreneurial profile, etc.). This implies a long process of forgetting, which began in the eighteenth century and reached its apogee in the twentieth century.



Forgetting not only the etymology of imprehendere, but the ontological wholeness itself that Thales exemplified.

The meaning of ontological forgetting

But what does this forgetting mean? Forgetting means the triumph of the economic view of entrepreneurship to the detriment of the essential view. The economic view incorporated a term (entrepreneur) that originally characterized a mode of human being (the essential view, exemplified by Thales) and drastically reduced its meaning to a measurable economic function.

Thus, when speaking of entrepreneurship, people naturally associate it with money, companies, profit, markets, capitalism, etc. However, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, a movement in the opposite direction is already taking place, recovering the original meaning. In everyday life, people can already be observed identifying an athlete, an actor, an Indigenous person, a teacher, an activist, or an artist as entrepreneurs, intuitively recognizing that entrepreneurship transcends the economic sphere and again approaches the wholeness that Thales represented.

Contemporary epistemological limitations

However, this expanded view lacks systematized studies. Thus, the prevailing economic paradigm and the underlying ideology have limiting consequences for an adequate elucidation of what entrepreneurship is. Even investigations into this "new old" form of entrepreneurship present epistemic-ontological limitations, because researchers use knowledge in their work that basically originates from the preconceived agenda.

Compared with management, for example, entrepreneurship lags behind in terms of epistemological progress. As a field of study, entrepreneurship can be considered older than management; however, in terms of investigative advances,



management has evolved more rapidly and profoundly. Consider the example of management's appropriation of philosophy in an attempt to explain itself: Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, Sartre, Husserl, Foucault, Habermas, Gadamer, Strauss, among others, are studied and applied in the investigations conducted. In entrepreneurship, however, an inward-looking tendency can be observed that prevents truly profound progress.

Obviously, the advances achieved since Cantillon (1755) have been remarkable, but what has been observed since then is a kind of closure of the field upon itself. In other words, entrepreneurship was incorporated into the capitalist mode of production and transformed into a cog in the system, with science largely responsible for the continuous improvement of this cog.

Ontic reflections versus ontological reflections

The explanation for what happens is that researchers generally engage in ontic reflections on entrepreneurship, seeking the internal problems of its reality, its observable characteristics, its measurable effects, etc. They study what entrepreneurs do, rather than what it means to be an entrepreneur.

Another investigative path that can provide new fundamental insights is ontological reflection. Such reflection seeks the origin, foundation, and comprehensive meaning of entrepreneurial reality, questioning the being of entrepreneurship. It asks not how many companies has the entrepreneur created?, but what does it mean to be an entrepreneur?

Entrepreneurship is a complex phenomenon composed of both an ontic mode and an ontological mode, the two being inseparable. Science has made important advances in understanding ontic reality (measurable, observable, quantifiable) but does not adequately concern itself with the ontological mode, perhaps because it considers the type of investigation necessary to establish such an understanding too abstract.



This situation entails the reductionism seen earlier and makes entrepreneurship a kind of modern technique, which, strictly speaking, it is not.

Propositions for overcoming the reductionist paradigm

One solution to this reality is to propose new elements of analysis on the subject, particularly through integrative investigations that encompass not only the current agenda, but a variety of interpretative possibilities.

In this way, science will have other resources to better understand the subject in its entirety, overcoming disciplinary reductionisms (the four "isms") and recovering the ontological dimension of the entrepreneurial phenomenon.

It therefore becomes imperative for entrepreneurship studies to engage in dialogue with philosophy, anthropology, phenomenology, and other fields of knowledge that can illuminate aspects forgotten or neglected by the predominantly economic approach.

Only then will it be possible to understand entrepreneurship not merely as an economic activity, but as a fundamental mode of man's being in the world.

ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS A MODE OF MAN'S BEING AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE REALITY IN WHICH HE LIVES – MODES OF APPEARANCE

Entrepreneurship constitutes something proper and inherent to man. Wherever there are human beings and society, there will be entrepreneurial activities, regardless of their nature, whether economic, social, political, sporting, cultural, academic, artistic, etc.

Fundamentally, there are two modes of appearance of the entrepreneurial phenomenon: (1) one that makes man a conscious builder of his world and, through it, leads him to engage and act so as to unveil his concreteness, a mode of being that reveals authentic existence; (2) another that,



through instrumental reason, limits, suppresses, and prevents the full development of entrepreneurial man: technique. Technique is understood as a body of empirical knowledge transformed into manuals, best practices, recipes, and standardized procedures. These two forms of entrepreneurship (modes of appearance) raise crucial questions for its study.

Entrepreneurship as technique is a way of seeing. Entrepreneurship as possibility is a mode of being. The distinction is fundamental: the way of seeing does not inform us about what shows itself in itself, but only about what one wants to see, about what ideology permits or determines one to see. The mode of being, in turn, is a manifestation of the phenomenon that shows itself as it is, rather than as it appears to be or as one wishes it to be.

Entrepreneurship as technique: the ideological dimension

Entrepreneurship as technique is grounded in the dominant ideology. This situation can be exemplified by examining three of its main ideological components:

1. Specialized literature: the bibliography on the subject consists mostly of business plan manuals, recipes for starting companies, studies of the given reality (without critically problematizing this reality), studies on how to maximize results through preexisting practices (with the introduction of the most recent empirical discoveries), etc. This is prescriptive literature, rather than questioning literature.

2. Academic teaching: universities disseminate techniques for students to become entrepreneurs, without transcendent discussions, only immanent ones. In other words, students are trained to master an articulated body of knowledge for the purpose of reproducing the given reality, rather than radically transforming it or questioning its foundations.



3. Public discourses: the media, politicians, support agencies, business organizations, etc. basically use the economic view in their discourses: entrepreneurship as a generator of wealth, employment, and development. There is no significant space for other non-ideological possibilities or for questioning the foundations of the activity.

The way of seeing, as established in the preceding pages, originated from the incorporation of the term entrepreneur into the economic research agenda. This entails the endless, fruitless search for the definitive definition of entrepreneurship, like an epistemological perpetual motion machine. In physics, perpetual motion is not impossible, but achieving it would require revising the laws of thermodynamics or mechanics (through new discoveries and paradigm shifts). An analogous situation occurs in entrepreneurship: to overcome the circular search for definitions, it is necessary to break with the prevailing status quo.

The way of seeing: forgetting and romanticization

The way of seeing is ontic and immanent, making entrepreneurship what it appears to be, rather than what it is. Or, in other words: it is forgetting, concealment, ontological veiling. It is a manifestation of the will of the dominant ideology, an idealizing romanticism. This has already been critically observed: science, through new approaches, finds that there is an excessive and mythical valorization of the entrepreneur. The mythical image that associates the entrepreneur with the hero, with the superman (as if he were metahuman, endowed with extraordinary qualities), is progressively being deconstructed and revealed in its ideological nature.

The curious aspect of this discussion is that the entrepreneur is not metahuman; he merely breaks with the Husserlian natural attitude. This is why he is considered different, exceptional. But this constitutes ideological



falsification, because anyone can make this movement; there are no absolute external constraints, but rather a conscious and existential decision. As an illuminating analogy, the entrepreneur can be associated with Guerreiro Ramos's (1984) parenthetical man, who places the social system in parentheses in order to think critically about his condition.

Ultimately, this technical mode of appearance of entrepreneurship is linked to the dominant logic of twentieth-century scientific production, in which man was reduced to a mere passive spectator of advances in science and technique. However, the technical model is showing clear signs of exhaustion because it does not provide sufficient answers to the number of questions that have arisen in recent decades.

Entrepreneurship as a mode of being: the ontological dimension

In turn, entrepreneurship as a mode of being indicates that the activity has well-defined ontological characteristics and can be analyzed on its own terms, as it shows itself phenomenologically. Thus, it becomes possible to identify that the entrepreneur gives meaning to his action with reference to his existential values. The action he performs, to be genuinely entrepreneurial, does not need to be economic in nature.

A teacher, for example, can be entrepreneurial with his class. In his lessons and projects, he can perform authentically entrepreneurial actions. The mode of being has the possibility of revealing what is or is not proper to entrepreneurship through the phenomenological analysis of the set of attitudes the teacher adopts. It is not a matter of studying psychological behavior. It is not a matter of studying measurable results. In this case, it is basically an examination of the actions he took, considering the values he holds and the ultimate purpose toward which he is directed. Thus, the universals of entrepreneurial experience are extracted. This is one investigative path.



The other path is to observe the teacher who is there merely to earn his salary and teach his classes, simply fulfilling contractual obligations. Universals can likewise be extracted and the mode of being unveiled, or, more precisely, a mode of not-being entrepreneurial. What is not can reveal, by contrast, what is. In showing themselves phenomenologically, both what is and what is not carry their own particular characteristics that enable understanding.

The non-entrepreneurial teacher, for example, may not be concerned with bringing innovations into the classroom, may research nothing beyond what he has researched for twenty years, may always do what worked in the past and guarantees stability. The entrepreneurial teacher, in turn, may constantly innovate in the form and content of teaching, may research the same subject for twenty years but, during this period, have reinvented himself countless times, contradicted himself in his writings, abandoned established certainties; he may set aside something that works for something he does not know will work, assuming the risk of uncertainty.

Consider the example of the great entrepreneurial philosophers. They usually write profusely and on multiple subjects, being classified according to the periods of their intellectual trajectories. Thus, there is the young Heidegger, the Heidegger of the turn (Kehre), the old Husserl of the Cartesian Meditations versus the late Husserl of the Crisis, etc. And they constantly sought to reinvent themselves, even questioning their own foundations.

But what about their contemporaries who shared the same university spaces but did not undertake philosophical ventures? Now, such people (teachers who merely reproduce knowledge) can also provide revealing information about entrepreneurship, even without undertaking entrepreneurial action, precisely because they demonstrate what the absence of entrepreneurship is.



The transcendental and metaphysical nature of entrepreneurship

For, as a mode of being, entrepreneurship reveals in its splendor a multiplicity of meanings that demonstrate the activity to be transcendental, in the Kantian sense of a condition of possibility for transformative experience. Furthermore, entrepreneurship is, in a certain way, metaphysical, because it turns toward an ontological understanding of reality in search of its ultimate foundation.

Critics may object that this is difficult to verify empirically or operationalize methodologically. But this is precisely the point of transformation from the way of seeing to the mode of being, necessarily implying a break with the positivist tradition and conventional research methods.

Entrepreneurship as an existential project

As a mode of man's being, anyone can undertake entrepreneurial action. There are no absolute external constraints, insurmountable limits, or ontological impediments. What will determine whether a person undertakes entrepreneurial action is his existential project, linked to a set of choices he can consciously make (with not choosing paradoxically also constituting a choice).

By consciously deciding to undertake entrepreneurial action, man makes an existential break with what gives him security and stability, entering a zone of doubts, uncertainties, and open possibilities. Someone who does not undertake entrepreneurial action, by contrast, does not have as many anguishing uncertainties, because he will know in advance what his future possibilities are; he lives within the predictability of the natural attitude.

The mode of being as recovery and unveiling

The mode of being is the possibility of recovering, manifesting, and unveiling the phenomenon in its authenticity. It is the transformation of a will, desire, or potentiality into concrete actuality. The greatest indicator of the



entrepreneurial mode of being (the fundamental explanatory principle in the organization and transformations resulting from entrepreneurial action) is purpose (the Aristotelian telos), which is why economists study the activity so extensively, although frequently in a reductionist manner.

Furthermore, it is through the mode of being that one can authentically arrive at what entrepreneurship is, through a phenomenological clarification of the original and primary meaning of the activity, starting from what it is ontologically, rather than how it is viewed ideologically.

Thus, it becomes possible to obtain a new understanding of the subject, as will be demonstrated below.

ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP ELUCIDATED IN THE MANNER OF PHILOSOPHERS

When speaking of entrepreneurship elucidated in the manner of philosophers, the intention is to speak of a specific way of accessing a phenomenon. To elucidate means to make clearly expressible, evident, in a clear and rigorous manner. A way of access is a path, one among many possible ways of reaching a place, of apprehending a reality. Entrepreneurship (as a phenomenon), in turn, is a mode of man's being that shows itself just as it is, in its original manifestation. Therefore, what entrepreneurship is in its essence will be demonstrated phenomenologically.

There is a fundamental question: what is entrepreneurship? To answer this question, it is necessary to situate the historical-ontological moment at which it began to take shape. And when did entrepreneurship emerge? The answer: it has always existed. Or, more precisely, ever since man has been man, there have been entrepreneurial activities. Such activities arose spontaneously, as a practical experience of man's mode of being in his relationship with the world.



However, in the Middle Ages, precisely in the twelfth century, undertaking became institutionalized. At that time, those who undertook ventures in their occupations achieved notable progress in their lives and stood out socially, which led the sector to progressively acquire relevance and social recognition.

Innovation as a starting point

An important foundational component thus emerges: innovation. Innovation relates to something new, to doing something that was not done previously. And the people of the Middle Ages needed constant renewal to overcome the limitations of their time. Such innovation, in turn, represents an existential attitude.

Attitude can be expressed as positioning oneself before the world, or the conscious way of manifesting this purpose. Every attitude brings with it a transformation, which necessarily represents a moment of rupture with the previous state.

Transformation, as the name indicates, signals a modification of a previous state. One condition is set aside and another is pursued. There is an ontological rupture. The subject consciously causes an interruption in the continuity within which his life naturally unfolds. There is a leap into the future, a movement toward the not-yet-realized.

Beyond innovation: commitment

However, innovation with attitude transforms, but does not sufficiently answer the question what is entrepreneurship? Many beings perform these actions daily and are not genuinely entrepreneurial. Another fundamental factor thus appears: commitment.

Commitment means placing oneself in a permanent state of obligation toward what one does in the world; it means engaging and being responsible for



the making of one's own existence. It represents taking command of situations continuously and consciously. Someone who commits assumes responsibility for what needs to be done and knows, or seeks to know, how to do it. In doing it, he acts with awareness of the possible results he may achieve. In this way, anguish comes to light.

Anguish and risk

When speaking of anguish in this specific situation, the term designates the uncertainty proper to someone who is committing himself and who feels apprehensive about the results and consequences of his actions. Anguish guides the entrepreneur by delimiting how far his action can or cannot go. The entrepreneur without anguish is reckless — he acts without awareness of limits and possibilities.

Anguish contains and involves a term very dear to entrepreneurship: risk. Risk is uncertainty about success, the possibility of error, arising from factors extrinsic to the being, contingently and unpredictably.

Freedom as essence

But the question what is entrepreneurship? still lacks a definitive answer. Commitment implies anguish because it contains the risk factor (which simultaneously threatens and propels freedom). To overcome this situation, something that enables transcendence is required. The means of achieving this is to free oneself.

Freedom is thus an essential component because it is responsible for a moment of catharsis for the entrepreneur. In other words, there is a kind of purging, a purification of the factors responsible for his limitations, which interfere with man's full development. This freedom manifests itself in terms of the individual's potential to act autonomously in pursuit of his existential goals.



Without considering limiting conditions or insurmountable obstacles, the entrepreneur realizes himself through self-determination and constitutes both himself and the world in which he lives. What makes the entrepreneur act is freedom, to overcome anguish, among other existential factors. To develop entrepreneurial capacity, man must evolve from being-in-itself toward being-for-itself (Sartrean categories), because the degree of his freedom will be continuously increased.

It thus follows that freedom is the essence of entrepreneurship, as well as its highest value, because value represents an Ought-to-Be. Therefore, the essence of entrepreneurship is value. And the highest value is freedom.

*Man as a being-for-undertaking**

However, there is still no complete clarification of what entrepreneurship is. Since the essence of entrepreneurship is value (freedom), what is enclosed within this essence?

Man observes that the surrounding world is full of values and that he must always make a choice, which inexorably has implications for himself and those around him. A choice is one possibility among many. In the case of the value of freedom, the entrepreneur chooses to be free. He acts toward this end, consciously or otherwise. And this reveals that man is a being-for-undertaking. It is value that gives entrepreneurship its ultimate meaning, and within this essence lies the preliminary answer to the question what is entrepreneurship?

For entrepreneurship to exist, it is fundamental that the entrepreneur exists. This individual acts according to a set of values peculiar to him and differing from person to person, but one of the universal values (found in all entrepreneurs) is freedom. Thus, freedom is a finitude, in the sense that it has an end, an objective, an insurmountable limit. To attain freedom, one must undertake



entrepreneurial action. When one does not undertake entrepreneurial action, one is not fully free.

Entrepreneurship as a promise

Then, what is entrepreneurship? A promise.

It is the promise of emancipation, of seeing oneself freed from all the external constraints that hinder the full realization of being and obscure the path toward making the subject the conscious architect of his existence.

This promise, furthermore, is grounded in man, rather than in the social or economic structure. Those who do not know the meaning of the word entrepreneurship develop entrepreneurial actions independently of any theoretical conceptualization. In being a promise, entrepreneurship is revealed as a coming-to-be, a constant becoming.

Constituent elements of entrepreneurial activity

Thus, it is possible to outline some of the constituent elements of entrepreneurial activity:

Innovation → Attitude → Transformation → Commitment → Anguish → Freedom → Promise

There are other elements not mentioned in this analysis, such as rationality, becoming, the problem of conceptual vagueness, the ontological problem of entrepreneurship, etc. However, with these six items it was possible to arrive at a preliminary result concerning what entrepreneurship is: a promise.

Thus, having understood that the field constitutes a promise, it is correct to state that technical and scientific tools alone are not sufficient to educate entrepreneurs. It is necessary to combine efforts with a philosophical education so that man becomes aware of his condition as a bestower of meaning upon the world.



This is possible because the activity goes beyond the Manichaean view that sees entrepreneurship as a struggle between capital and labor. There is a movement toward considering, in analyses, a philosophical existential perception that sees in the activity a liberation of man, a possibility of transforming his potentiality into acts, of progressing as a being.

Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that society does not create entrepreneurship; it merely enables its emergence, which occurs spontaneously and practically among all peoples, in all cultures and political regimes.

It is a movement toward the unknown, seeking to do things that are not usually done, which will make the entrepreneur a different person because he will overcome the natural attitude. Nevertheless, it is only a promise, a possibility that may or may not materialize.

In the contemporary setting, marked by the growing presence of algorithmic and artificial intelligence systems, this dimension of promise becomes even more relevant. Algorithms operate by identifying regularities in what is already given, inferring possible futures based on the repetition of past patterns. Entrepreneurship, however, as a movement toward the unknown, is not to be confused with prediction or probabilistic calculation. The entrepreneurial promise is not a statistical projection, but the opening of a horizon that cannot be fully anticipated, precisely because it implies the transformation of the acting subject himself.

Confusing the predictive capacity of algorithmic systems with the essence of entrepreneurship means reiterating the reduction of the phenomenon to the plane of the technical way of seeing, already criticized in this essay. Although artificial intelligence can support decisions and expand analytical capabilities, it remains situated in the domain of means (in immanence, in data that already exist), without reaching the ontological dimension of entrepreneurial



action (transcendence, in what does not yet exist), which involves freedom, risk, and anguish before what is not yet.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout this essay, an attempt was made to demonstrate, in a propaedeutic manner, a different type of perception of entrepreneurship. The analyses conducted were based on phenomenology, particularly Heidegger (1999) and Sartre (1966, 1997).

A direct type of approach was privileged, one that would bring to light aspects insufficiently clarified in previous investigations. The essay's very name indicates its purpose: to conduct uncommon research that breaks with established paradigms.

Entrepreneurship was successfully elucidated philosophically, but important aspects of the activity were not discussed, notably the being-who-undertakes in his existential totality. However, this does not prevent the establishment of a specific notion of what entrepreneurship is. On the contrary, it becomes a kind of aporia, in the sense of establishing a fruitful doubt because of the objective impossibility of obtaining a definitive conclusion to the proposed question. Aporia is not failure, but an invitation to continue the investigation.

This work addressed several themes, complex in themselves and requiring further study:

The ideological issue in entrepreneurship: Contributions from critical theory (the Frankfurt School, post-structuralist studies) would assist in understanding this phenomenon, which is determinant for the activity and prominent in contemporary practices.

Etymology: it proved to be the first cause of the field's complexity because of the polysemy of the term *entrepreneur*. In-depth lexicographic and linguistic work becomes fundamental to clarifying semantic developments.



The history of entrepreneurship: it is at an advanced stage, but the ideological issue can be observed to exert considerable influence on research. Historians can make important contributions by researching little-explored subjects, such as entrepreneurship in ancient Greece, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, etc.

Philosophy: it can contribute decisively through discussions of entrepreneurial man and the ideological issue. Philosophical works on entrepreneurship are still limited in number and deserve expansion.

Fundamental distinctions

The distinction between the mode of being and the way of seeing entrepreneurship proved appropriate because it succeeded in clarifying two sides of the same phenomenon, which operate inseparably and, if adequately articulated, can contribute to entrepreneurship becoming a discipline with autonomous scientific status.

Regarding the scientific study of entrepreneurship, it was found that it is largely an object of the so-called applied social sciences and that it has an ideological bias because of its economic origin. This situation gives rise to four isms: economicism, organilogism, sociologism, psychologism — which treat the activity in a reductionist manner, without seeking general integration.

Science cannot adequately problematize the starting point, thus resorting to a given reality that causes a forgetting, a veiling, or rather, a concealment of entrepreneurship. Because it is concealed (forgotten), entrepreneurship is viewed only technically.

The same occurs, for example, in mathematics: calculus is normally used and applied, but few know about its origins, when and why it emerged, etc. It is forgotten, despite being used daily. Forgetting is not the absence of use, but the absence of questioning of the foundations.



At this point, it is important to consider that progress of an epistemic-ontological nature (capable of breaking through the current difficulties) is possible only through a recovery of origins, by unveiling entrepreneurship. Such an undertaking is a joint task of science and philosophy. The former contributes scientific rigor and empirical demonstrations. The latter helps clarify aspects not contemplated and/or not considered by the traditional scientific approach.

Regarding entrepreneurship as a promise, it was found that this promise begins with innovation, because innovation is the guiding element for overcoming a state in which man situates himself in the world through the natural attitude. In innovating, man adopts an attitude, seeking to manifest and situate his place in existence so as to position himself before the events that happen to him.

This causes a transformation that leads the entrepreneur to modify a mode of being that makes him believe in things as he sees them, rather than as they actually are.

For transformation to occur, commitment is required, acting as the element proper to engagement, the means through which man takes command of his life and influences the lives of those around him.

In committing himself, the being experiences anguish, because the feeling of apprehension makes him aware of the uncertainties he will necessarily face throughout his entrepreneurial project. Anguish is a kind of pre-anticipation of risk, because there is always the contingent possibility of success or failure.

Overcoming anguish unveils that the essence of entrepreneurship is value. The highest value in the activity is freedom. Thus, freedom becomes equivalent to the essence of entrepreneurship and a universal value.

Enclosed within the essence of the activity is the answer to the question what is entrepreneurship?, which proved to be a promise grounded not in the social or economic structure, but in man.



It is the promise of emancipation, of freeing oneself from all the factors that hinder and prevent the full realization of being. In other words, as a possibility, entrepreneurship is a promise, possible only as an existential project of the being who undertakes.

Thus, entrepreneurship is a being-in-situation, that is, an empirical reality that shows itself and imposes itself on everyone. It is given, placed in the world, and temporal, and can currently be considered an axiological invariant, in the sense that it is becoming a value for everyone, just as justice, equality, freedom, etc. are.

Nevertheless, the confusion involved in using and qualifying the term entrepreneur stands out. When one says, I am an entrepreneur, one demonstrates that man is behaving in a way typical of all beings, passively and in a crystallized manner, without great transformative possibilities. He behaves like an inanimate entity, a mineral or a plant, something that simply is.

Whereas when one says I am being entrepreneurial, one demonstrates that one is passing from a condition of potentiality to reality. There is a realization of the promise, a dynamic movement, a coming-to-be.

Finally, it can be said that the greatest difficulty in studying entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur lies in an aspect little explored so far: the transdisciplinary issue, which makes the activity simultaneously everyone's and no one's (because several sciences study it, but do not adequately connect with one another).

Future research could consider that, by itself and in itself, entrepreneurship does not exist in isolation. It is necessary to combine efforts across different branches of knowledge (epistemological integration). This is vital because the activity alone is like a seed without soil or water to grow and develop. It is a given reality that does not fully materialize in terms of knowledge. It will be



there, occurring every day, in all entrepreneurial actions, but will remain inaccessible to integral understanding, that is, it will remain merely a promise.

Succinctly, it can be concluded that entrepreneurship rests on three inseparable components: action, value, and purpose. Entrepreneurial action seeks a purpose based on certain values that the entrepreneur envisions and assumes. In this way, entrepreneurial human action is guided by imperatives of a praxeological nature (relating to conscious and value-oriented human action), rather than a technical nature, as the subject has usually been discussed.

Entrepreneurship, therefore, reveals itself not as a set of techniques or managerial skills, but as a fundamental mode of man's being — a mode of being characterized by the pursuit of freedom through innovation, transformation, and commitment. It is the permanent promise that man can consciously and freely construct his own world and his own existence.

REFERECES

ARISTÓTELES. Politics. [Texto de Bekker]. Londres: Longmans e Green, 1877.

BARNES, J. **Filósofos pré-socráticos.** São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1997.

BITROS, G.C.; KARAYIANNIS, A.D. The liberating power of entrepreneurship in ancient Athens, **EconWPA** - Method and Hist of Econ Thought, 2004.

BITROS, G.C.; KARAYIANNIS, A.D. Values and institutions as determinants of entrepreneurship in ancient Athens. **Journal of institutional economics**, vol. 4, no. 2, p. 205–230, 2008.



BLUTEAU, R. **Vocabulário Portuguez e Latino**. Coimbra: Colégio das Artes da Companhia de Jesus, 1721-1728. Disponível na internet: https://www.bbm.usp.br/pt-br/dicionarios/vocabulario-portuguez-latino-aulico-anatomico-architectonico/?page_number=2245#dic-viewer > Acesso em 10 jan. 2026.

BORNHEIM, G. A. **Os filósofos pré-socráticos.** São Paulo: Cultrix, 1999.

BRÖCHNER, Jan. Time, kairos words, and contexts of ancient entrepreneurship. **International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research,** v. 31, n. 11, p. 134-150, 2025.

BROWN, C.R. **Economic theories of the entrepreneur**: a systematic review of the literature. Cranfield, 2007, Dissertação (Mestrado), Cranfield University.

CANTILLON, R. **Essai sur la nature du commerce en général** [1755]. Disponível na internet: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8613362w/f16.item> Acesso em 05 jan. 2026.

CARDOW, A. **The metaphorical rise of entrepreneurship**. Working paper series no. 8). Auckland: Massey University, 2006.

CNRTL a. **Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales**. ATILF/CNRS, Nancy Université. Disponível na internet: <http://www.cnrtl.fr/etymologie/entrepreneur> Acesso em 04 jan. 2026.



CNRTL b. **Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales**. ATILF/CNRS, Nancy Université. Disponível na internet: http://www.cnrtl.fr/etymologie/entreprendre> Acesso em 04 jan. 2026.

GALLOWAY, L; WILSON, L. **The use and abuse of the 'entrepreneur'**. Edinburgh:Heriot-Watt University, 2003.

GUERREIRO RAMOS, A. Modelos de homem e teoria administrativa. **Revista de administração pública**, vol. 18, no. 2, p. 3-12, 1984.

HÉBERT, R.F.; LINK, A.N. Historical perspectives on the entrepreneur. **Foundations and trends in entrepreneurship,** vol. 2, no 4, p. 261–408, 2006.

HOSELITZ, B. F. The early history of entrepreneurial theory. In SPENGLER, J.J.; ALLEN, W.R. **Essays in economic thought**: Aristotle to Marshall. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1960.

HOUAISS, A. **Dicionário Houaiss da língua portuguesa.** Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva, 2009.

HUSSERL, E. **Ideias para uma fenomenologia pura e para uma filosofia fenomenológica:** introdução geral à fenomenologia pura. Aparecida: Ideias & Letras, 2012.

JACKSON, W.T.; GAULDEN, C.; GASTER, W. Who it is and what it does: Finding the "heffa-preneur." **Academy of entrepreneur journal**, vol. 7, no. 2, p. 17-29, 2001.



JOHNSTONE, B.A. **Entrepreneurs and organisations**: A case study of the Gisborne aquaculture cluster. Auckland, 2008. Tese (Doutorado), Auckland University of Technology.

KARAYIANNIS, A. D. Basic elements of entrepreneurship: ideas from the past. **Storia del pensiero economico**, vol. 5, no. 2, p. 91-105, 2008.

KARAYIANNIS, A. D. Entrepreneurial functions and characteristics in a proto-capitalist economy: The Xenophonian entrepreneur. **Wirtschaftspolitische Blatter,** no. 4, p. 553-563, 2003.

KARAYIANNIS, A. D. Entrepreneurship in classical greek literature. **The South African journal of economics**, vol. 60, no 1, p. 67-93, 1992.

KILBY, P. An Entrepreneurial Problem. **The American economic review**. vol. 73, no. 2, p. 107-111, 1983.

KILBY, P. **Entrepreneurship and economic development.** New York: Free Press, 1971.

LANDSTRÖM, H.; LOHRKE, F. T. **Historical Foundations of Entrepreneurship Research. London**: Routledge, 2020.

LOCK, R. **Mapping the *aliran* of the academic discipline of entrepreneurship**: A discursive representation. Auckland, 2009. Dissertação (Mestrado), Auckland University of Technology.

MARSHALL, A. **Principles of economics** [1890]. Londres: Macmillan, 1920.



MILL, J. S. **The principles of political economy with some of their applications to social philosophy** [1848]. Londres: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909.

MOSSBERG, H.E. Entrepreneurism in the academic setting. **American journal of pharmaceutical education**. vol. 58, no. 4, p. 390-399, 1994.

OED. **Oxford english dictionary**. Oxford University Press, 2010. Disponível em <http://www.oed.com/> Acesso em 04/02/2010.

RICARDO, D. **Principles of political economy and taxation.** Londres: John Murray, 1817.

SAY, J. B. **Traité d'économie politique:** ou simple exposition de la manière dont se forment, se distribuent ou se consomment les richesses. Paris: Deterville, 1803.

SCHUMPETER, J. A. Economic theory and entrepreneurial history In: **Change and the entrepreneur:** postulates and patterns of entrepreneurial history. Cambridge-Mass: Harvard University Press, 1949.

SCHUMPETER, J. A. **Teoria do desenvolvimento econômico:** uma investigação sobre lucros, capital, crédito, juro e o ciclo econômico. São Paulo: Nova Cultural, 1997.

SMITH, A. **An inquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations**. Londres: Strahan and Cadell, 1776.



ZANAKIS, S. H., THEOFANIDES, S., KONTARATOS, A. N., TASSIOS, T. P. Ancient Greeks' practices and contributions in public and entrepreneurship decision making,**Interfaces**, vol. 33, no. 6, p. 72-88, 2003.