

Redefining Entrepreneurship: Philosophical Insights in a Post-individualist Era

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Abstract

In the dynamic landscape of post-individualist entrepreneurship, this study delves into the profound interplay between philosophy and entrepreneurship. Guided by foundational philosophical tenets, including Spinoza's 'conatus' and 'affects', Schopenhauer's asceticism, and Nietzsche's diverse perspectives, their implications for modern entrepreneurship are dissected. Employing a critical and analytical approach, the convergence and divergence between philosophy and entrepreneurship are explored. The methodology integrates philosophical works, entrepreneurship theories and social network concepts to unveil fresh insights into contemporary entrepreneurial behaviour. This study not only identifies significant resonances between these philosophical underpinnings and entrepreneurship but also confronts the challenges posed by philosophical contrasts. For instance, while Spinoza's concept of 'conatus' resonates with the entrepreneurial drive for innovation and

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perseverance, Schopenhauer's asceticism introduces a contrasting perspective, questioning the sustainability of entrepreneurial desires in the face of materialism and temporary gains. This juxtaposition challenges individuals to reevaluate the essence of entrepreneurial success, suggesting that it extends beyond mere financial gain to include deeper satisfaction and a more meaningful purpose that transcends fleeting desires. The study's results offer tangible benefits for entrepreneurs, illuminating the emotional complexities, ethical implications and the intricate dynamics within entrepreneurial networks.

Keywords

Emotions in entrepreneurship, networked entrepreneurship, Nietzschean perspectives, philosophy of entrepreneurship, post-individualist entrepreneurship, Spinoza's 'conatus', Schopenhauer's asceticism

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Evolution of Entrepreneurship: From Individualist Perspectives to Interpersonal Relationship Networks

Nearly three centuries ago, the poet William Wordsworth admonished that action follows thought. Perhaps it is no less true that thinking and ideas about entrepreneurship and, more generally, business may emanate from deeply held philosophical beliefs. There is broad consensus regarding the significant contributions of Cantillon (1931) and Schumpeter (1934) to the formulation of the concept of entrepreneurship. In the early eighteenth century, Cantillon outlined the contours of an emerging economy based on individual ownership and economic interdependence, referring to it as 'mutual necessity'. In this economic context, the author identified three main groups: (a) landowners, financially autonomous; (b) entrepreneurs who take risks in market exchanges aiming for profit; and (c) salaried workers who opt for contractual income security instead of active decision-making. Although Cantillon initially emphasised landowners, a closer analysis reveals that entrepreneurs are the central agents in his work (Hébert & Link, 1989). Schumpeter, in attributing innovation to the engines of change, grounded economic progress in it.

The role of the entrepreneur in economic expansion, according to Schumpeter, is clear in conceiving entrepreneurship as the formation of new combinations, with individuals responsible for this process called entrepreneurs (Schumpeter, 1934).

Through a systematic analysis of the mentioned works, it is possible to delineate the entrepreneur as one who promotes innovations in environments permeated by uncertainties, triumphing over imminent challenges (Leyden et al., 2014). From this foundation, over about a century later, the study of entrepreneurship focused on representing the entrepreneur as a solitary and 'atomised heroic individual'. However, at the end of the twentieth century, especially in the period between the 1980s and the early 1990s, some researchers redirected their attention to considering the entrepreneur as someone whose personal journey intertwines with networks of interpersonal relationships (Elfring & Hulsink, 2003).

For instance, Gartner (1985) emphasises entrepreneurial behaviour, arguing that entrepreneurship should be understood as a set of activities that transform ideas into organisations. For example, the founders of Airbnb utilised their personal networks to gain initial traction, showcasing how entrepreneurial behaviour, combined with leveraging personal networks, can transform a simple idea into a global organisation. This exemplifies Gartner's theory by demonstrating that entrepreneurship is not just about the individual but about how ideas are executed and supported through networks. Johannisson (1996) highlights the importance of social networks and social capital for entrepreneurship, arguing that personal networks are crucial for mobilising resources and support. An example of Johannisson's theory in action can be seen in the early days of Facebook. Mark Zuckerberg's use of his Harvard University connections to spread the word about Facebook exemplifies the critical role of personal networks and social capital in mobilising resources and support for entrepreneurial ventures. This demonstrates how social networks can serve as a crucial foundation for entrepreneurial success. Steyaert and Katz (2004) propose a reimagining of entrepreneurship as a social and cultural phenomenon, emphasising the need for narrative and interpretive approaches in entrepreneurial research. Blake Mycoskie founded TOMS with a narrative of social entrepreneurship, where for every pair of shoes sold, a new pair would be given to a child in need. This approach showcases entrepreneurship as a social phenomenon, emphasising the narrative and cultural impact of entrepreneurial activities on society. Hjorth (2004) discusses entrepreneurship as world-making, using

philosophy to explore how entrepreneurs imagine and realise new realities. The creation of Tesla, Inc., by Elon Musk serves as an example of how entrepreneurship can be about imagining and realising new realities. Musk's vision of accelerating the world's transition to sustainable energy has been a driving force behind Tesla's innovation in electric vehicles and renewable energy solutions, embodying Hjorth's concept of entrepreneurship as world-making. Drakopoulou Dodd and Anderson (2007) examine the intersection between entrepreneurship and identity, showing how an entrepreneur's personal narrative influences venture creation and growth.

Thus, a significant evolution in the perception and scope of research on entrepreneurs emerges in contemporary entrepreneurship studies, which can be called post-individualist. As highlighted by Alvarez and Barney (2007), there has been a shift towards exploring alternative theories of entrepreneurial action. These theories delve into the distinct approaches of discovery-driven and creation-driven entrepreneurship, illustrating the evolving landscape of entrepreneurship research. For example, Mazzarol and Reboud (2008) shed light on the significance of entrepreneurship and innovation in a post-industrial economy. They emphasise the ongoing relevance of entrepreneurship in shaping and driving economic development in contemporary, post-industrial societies.

Hence, it can be concluded that entrepreneurship is dynamic both as an activity and a topic of research. It becomes apparent that contemporary scholarship continues to uncover new dimensions of entrepreneurial activity. Spigel (2021) and Stam (2015) exemplify the dynamic nature of entrepreneurship scholarship by introducing the concept of entrepreneurial ecosystems. This source emphasises how contemporary entrepreneurship research explores the interconnected networks and relationships that shape entrepreneurial activities. It sheds light on the evolving dynamics of entrepreneurship in an interconnected world. Similarly, Audretsch and Keilbach (2021) introduce the concept of knowledge spillover entrepreneurship. This source illustrates how entrepreneurship research has evolved to explore this innovative perspective, emphasising the dynamic nature of entrepreneurial endeavours and their evolving roles in the modern knowledge-driven economy. Prashantham et al. (2019) highlight the significance of effectuation theory, as established by Sarasvathy (2001) and further developed in subsequent works (Sarasvathy & Dew, 2005; Sarasvathy et al., 2014), in understanding networks within entrepreneurship, including the realm of innovation and entrepreneurship. Sarasvathy and Botha (2022)

note that when building new ventures, entrepreneurs confront three problems—Knightian uncertainty, goal ambiguity and isotropy. The literature on effectuation offers a framework for action, interaction and reaction within the prediction control space that can help entrepreneurs tackle these problems.

In this context, the complex webs of interrelated connections have come to be recognised as resources of fundamental importance for entrepreneurs. This recognition arises from the ability of intertwined networks to provide access to spheres of influence, valuable information sets, specialised knowledge and substantial financial contributions. Simultaneously, such interconnected networks are also seen as essential catalysts for the entrepreneurial core since several years ago, notably in innovative spheres like high technology (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986; Birley, 1985; Johannisson, 1987), as well as in banking and finance fields (Leite, 2013), among others.

In like manner, interconnected relationships, often encapsulated under the term ‘networking,’ have also been around for several years. For example, they inspired the interest of Granovetter (1973, 1982). The author meticulously outlined the subtleties that permeate such relationships, introducing a differentiation between weak and strong ties based on four fundamental criteria: (a) frequency of contacts; (b) underlying emotional load in the relationship; (c) degree of interpersonal closeness; and (d) reciprocal commitments between the involved agents. The dynamics that emerge reveal that weak ties enable the acquisition of incipient information from the industrial landscape and the formation of new business connections. On the other hand, strong ties represent considerably reliable and resilient connections, remaining intact both in favourable circumstances and in adverse moments. LinkedIn’s success as a professional networking platform exemplifies Granovetter’s theory. LinkedIn leverages the power of weak ties, allowing individuals to connect with distant contacts and industry professionals, thereby broadening their network beyond immediate strong ties. This platform demonstrates the value of weak ties in providing access to new information, job opportunities and business connections that strong ties might not offer.

Additionally, Krackhardt (1992) delved into the emotional dimension underlying strong ties, arguing that factors like commitment, loyalty and friendship within an organisation play an essential role in the ability to face and overcome crises of considerable magnitude.

Daniel Goleman, in ‘Emotional Intelligence’ (1995), highlights the vital importance of emotional intelligence in interpersonal relationships,

highlighting how skills such as empathy, self-awareness and emotional management are crucial for effective communication, building strong relationships and resolving conflicts. In entrepreneurship, these emotional skills are essential, not just auxiliary, for establishing strategic partnerships, leading teams efficiently and navigating negotiations in pressured contexts. Goleman argues that the ability to understand and manage one's own and others' emotions constitutes a significant competitive advantage in the business world. Therefore, emotional intelligence is highlighted as a crucial tool not only for personal growth but also as a fundamental pillar for entrepreneurial success, affecting everything from business decisions to crisis management.

In general, the authors subscribe to this position regarding the intrinsic importance of emotional relationships with strategic partners, as well as those maintained with close friends and family members. Such connections operate as a fundamental boost in optimising the journey towards acquiring enriching knowledge and obtaining crucial resources.

However, the purpose in this specific circumstance is to conduct a targeted exploration at the intersection of the philosophical principles of de Spinoza (1955), Schopenhauer (1966a, 1966b) and Nietzsche (1887/2008) with current considerations about entrepreneurship. On the one hand, this study establishes a connection between the representation of the entrepreneur in the tradition of Cantillon and Schumpeter and the concept of 'conatus' as conceived by Spinoza. Furthermore, the study aspires to examine the intricate interrelated connections and their intensity outlined by Granovetter (1973, 1982) in light of Spinoza's 'theory of affects'. In this effort, the study seeks not only to highlight the relationship between Spinoza's philosophy and entrepreneurship studies, as well as emphasise the inherent advantages of participating in networks of connections, but also to warn about possible risks due to the potential loss of rationality (Schopenhauer) and weakening of networks due to low diversity (Nietzsche, 1887/2008).

Reflecting on this conceptual evolution of entrepreneurship, in this study, Spinoza's concepts of 'conatus' and positive 'affects' are applied to further expand the understanding of the entrepreneurial profile. Instead of viewing it as an atomistic and isolated figure, a vision of the entrepreneur as an inherently gregarious being is proposed, whose essence seeks to form support networks and connections that are not limited to the strategic but are also rich in joy and well-being.

Philosophy and Entrepreneurship: An Intersection of Ideas

Persistence and Innovation: The Parallel Between Spinoza's 'Conatus' and Entrepreneurship

The term 'conatus' is prominent in philosophical discourse and is used to indicate the intrinsic inclination or innate impulse of individual entities towards the preservation of their own existence, seeking self-preservation and continuity (de Spinoza, 1955). In Spinoza's philosophy, 'conatus' attains the status of a fundamental axiom, permeating all elements of the universe, from inanimate objects to living organisms. Its understanding reveals itself as the intrinsic inclination that defines each entity, endowing it with the capacity to maintain its existence and resist any influences that may threaten or erode such existence (de Spinoza, 1955).

The notion of 'conatus' not only prominently fits into Spinoza's philosophy but also resonates in contemporary transdisciplinary discussions, echoing in areas that encompass both biology and psychology (Damsgaard et al., 2024). In these modern contexts, the term is mobilised to denote the inherent impulse or innate instinct that living beings exhibit in seeking well-being, reproduction and adaptation to the surrounding environment, as occurs in entrepreneurship.

In the third part of 'Ethics', Proposition 7, Spinoza posits: 'The effort by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing other than its current essence'. This proposition lays the foundation for the concept of 'conatus' as the manifestation of an entity's essence, suggesting that the natural tendency of all things is self-preservation. The demonstration of Proposition 7 elucidates that the essence of a thing naturally leads to certain outcomes and that things cannot act in any way that does not necessarily follow from their determined nature. Therefore, the effort by which a thing, either alone or in conjunction with others, acts or strives to act is tantamount to its given or actual essence. This explanation deepens the understanding of how the 'conatus' is intrinsically connected to the essence and existence of each entity, highlighting the indissoluble bond between a being's essence and its continuous persistence in existence.

In a broad sense, the concept of 'conatus' emerges as an idea that incorporates the intrinsic premise of self-preservation, manifesting as an

innate effort for continuity that takes various forms in the vast landscape of the natural world.

The concept of 'conatus' is pivotal to Spinoza's ethical framework, proposing that aligning actions with one's inherent nature is crucial for attaining happiness and freedom. This principle underscores the notion that individuals, driven by their 'conatus', are compelled to pursue knowledge, cultivate virtue and achieve harmony with the natural order.

The reverberation of Spinoza's 'conatus' ideas in the context of entrepreneurship is noteworthy, given the shared essence of persistence and effort for continuity between both concepts. At the core of entrepreneurship, the entrepreneurial individual, aligned with the principle of 'conatus', not only seeks their survival but also the expansion of their initiatives. Just as entities, whether animate or inanimate, motivated by 'conatus', confront threatening factors to their existence, entrepreneurs face challenges with determination to preserve and expand their achievements. Similarly, Cantillon's entrepreneurs are constantly called upon to use their entrepreneurial judgement to avoid errors in their predictions, as it entails inevitable consequences (Hébert & Link, 1989).

Conversely, for Schopenhauer (1966b), a devotee of asceticism, the most magnificent, significant and remarkable phenomenon that has ever appeared in the world is not that of the conqueror but that of the ascetic, expressing his admiration for the silent and hidden life of a man who renounces the desire to live as a path to transcendence.

Thus, from the intersection of 'conatus' and entrepreneurship, the concept of innovation gains prominence, both in a positive and negative dimensions. The entrepreneur, akin to the innate inclination expressed by 'conatus', is compelled to instigate transformations, introduce new approaches and transcend traditional boundaries. In Schumpeter's theory, the dynamic entrepreneur is the person who innovates and makes 'new combinations' in production (Hébert & Link, 1989). The pursuit of self-improvement and the exploration of new opportunities reflect the convergence between 'conatus' persistence and the proactive stance of the entrepreneur.

Sarasvathy et al. (2020) introduced the concept of effectuation theory as a fundamental logic of entrepreneurial creation. This theory resonates with philosophical ideas of active agency and purposeful pursuit, aligning with the essence of Spinoza's 'conatus'. The authors emphasised the origins and development of effectuation theory, showcasing its relevance in understanding entrepreneurial decision-making

processes. This connection underscores the philosophical underpinnings of entrepreneurship, where the entrepreneur, much like Spinoza's entities driven by 'conatus', engages in persistent actions that reflect an intrinsic inclination for innovation and expansion.

Furthermore, the emphasis on interpersonal connections and social networks, which can be inspired by Spinoza's 'conatus' philosophy, resonates in the contemporary understanding of entrepreneurship as an activity deeply influenced by collaboration and the building of robust networks. Just as living beings are driven by 'conatus' to adapt to the environment and interact with other organisms, the entrepreneur engages in complex interactions and networks that can provide access to resources, information and crucial knowledge for the success and resilience of their ventures.

In summary, the affinity between the concepts of Spinoza's 'conatus' and entrepreneurship is remarkable, highlighting the convergence between the relentless pursuit of continuity and the drive for innovation, collaboration and expansion in the business context.

The Role of 'Affects' in Entrepreneurial Networks: A Philosophical Perspective

According to de Spinoza (1955), 'affects' are the affections of the body that either enhance or diminish its power to act, stimulate or restrain it and concurrently generate corresponding ideas. Spinoza's conceptualisation of 'affects' offers profound insights into the intricate interplay between human emotions and knowledge. The author contends that 'affects', encompassing emotions and feelings, are deeply influenced by encounters with the world, whether they are planned or serendipitous. These 'affects' exhibit varying intensities, spanning the spectrum from positive to negative, and directly impact the capacity to act and persist, signifying a transition from one state to another, taking into account the correlative variation of the affected bodies (Deleuze, 2002).

In simpler terms, interpersonal relationships become a crucible where individuals mutually influence one another, potentially leading to an augmentation (joy) or depletion (sadness) of their capacity to act, as articulated by Spinoza: Joy signifies a transition from lesser to greater perfection in a person, while sadness signifies a transition from greater to lesser perfection (Spinoza, 1955).

In this context, de Spinoza (1955) identifies three core ‘affects’—joy, sadness and desire—and contends that comprehending these ‘affects’ is pivotal to grasping how individuals interact with both their surroundings and one another. He underscores the significance of discerning how these ‘affects’ shape perceptions and choices.

For Spinoza, unravelling these ‘affects’, and making them easier to identify, is a key to thriving in collective life. Collaborations among individuals undoubtedly amplify their capacity to confront challenges and attain objectives. Nonetheless, these collaborations also carry the risk of diminishment. The author underscores that when individuals find common ground and unite, their collective power surges. This collaborative synergy empowers individuals to exercise greater influence over nature than they could individually.

Spinoza also asserts that comprehending ‘affects’ is indispensable for recognising the intricate web connecting human emotions and knowledge. He argues that, rather than attempting to suppress them entirely, individuals have the potential to harness ‘affects’ to their advantage. For the author, knowledge emerges from the intricate interplay of ‘affects’ and passions, and acknowledging this interdependence is pivotal to a deeper understanding of reality.

Understanding the practical implications of Spinoza’s ‘affects’ in entrepreneurial scenarios is essential for applying these philosophical insights. In the entrepreneurial context, ‘affects’ play a pivotal role in overall venture dynamics, as follows.

Decision-making

Entrepreneurs, influenced by ‘affects’, make decisions that align with their emotional states. Positive ‘affects’, such as joy, can enhance creative thinking and risk-taking, leading to innovative business strategies. Conversely, negative ‘affects’, like sadness, might prompt cautious decision-making but could also stifle entrepreneurial creativity.

Collaboration and Networking

The ‘affects’ individuals experience in their interpersonal relationships significantly impact collaborative efforts. Positive ‘affects’ foster a conducive environment for cooperation, trust and shared goals among

entrepreneurs and their networks. On the contrary, negative ‘affects’ may introduce challenges in communication and collaboration, potentially hindering entrepreneurial endeavours.

Adaptation to Challenges

Entrepreneurs, facing the inevitable challenges of the business landscape, draw upon ‘affects’ to navigate uncertainties. A positive affective state can fuel resilience, determination and adaptability, enabling entrepreneurs to overcome obstacles. Negative ‘affects’, if not managed effectively, may lead to risk aversion and hinder the ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

Perception of Success and Failure

Success, for entrepreneurs influenced by Spinoza, may be seen as the realisation of joy and expansion of their initiatives. Failures could be viewed as temporary setbacks that provide opportunities for learning and future growth.

However, Spinoza acknowledges the existence of divergent views on this matter. For example, Schopenhauer believes that ‘affects’ should be excluded from the realm of knowledge. In contrast to Spinoza, the author sees ‘affects’ as an obstacle to objective knowledge. Schopenhauer also deems that emotions interfere with the search for an impartial and true understanding of things. Schopenhauer argues that passions, such as fear, anger and joy, cloud the original intuition of things and distort the objective view of reality.

Schopenhauer (1966b) posits that the fundamental characteristic of a genius lies in the ability to discern universality in particular details, a capability that remarkably distinguishes entrepreneurs. In contrast with the common perception focused on specific details, the genius concentrates on the essence of things—the universal aspects and the totality. This perspective of seeing the bigger picture is crucial for the entrepreneur, who is adept at identifying commercial opportunities where others see only the ordinary. This ability allows entrepreneurs to explore uncharted market niches and anticipate future trends, transforming simple observations into innovative business strategies. This also emphasises the unique cognitive capabilities of entrepreneurs.

It highlights how entrepreneurs can see beyond the minutiae to grasp broader opportunities, aligning well with the entrepreneurial need for vision and foresight.

In exploring the role of philosophy in entrepreneurship, Fayolle et al. (2018) examined the philosophy of entrepreneurship itself. This book offered a comprehensive overview of various perspectives, revealing how philosophical inquiries enrich the understanding of entrepreneurial phenomena. The authors further discuss the development of critical reflexivity, showcasing how philosophy can foster deep introspection and awareness in entrepreneurial pursuits. Gross (2023) extended this exploration by discussing the development of critical reflexivity, showcasing how philosophy can foster deep introspection and awareness in entrepreneurial pursuits. This reflects Schopenhauer's emphasis on the introspective journey and aligns with the contemporary shift towards valuing personal growth and ethical considerations in entrepreneurship. This alignment highlights the relevance of philosophy in explaining the determination and persistence displayed by entrepreneurs.

Indeed, both philosophy and entrepreneurship are driven by a shared objective: the aspiration to surpass the existing boundaries of reality (Hjorth, 2014). Moreover, whereas philosophy empowers contemplation to forge distinctive links in the imaginative envisioning of its materialisation, entrepreneurship prepares individuals for practical endeavours aimed at establishing deliberate connections in the imaginative pursuit of tangible, valuable opportunities.

The exploration of philosophy's contributions to the study of entrepreneurship reveals a compelling narrative. From the intrinsic drive of 'conatus' to the intricate interplay of emotions and cognitive orientations, philosophical principles converge with entrepreneurial dynamics, offering profound insights into the pursuit of innovation, collaboration and purpose. This approach underscores the value of philosophy in shaping a holistic understanding of entrepreneurship in the post-individualist context, where networks, 'affects' and diverse perspectives intertwine to define the entrepreneurial journey.

The intersection between ideas of social networks, entrepreneurship and 'affects' is also reflected in Nietzsche's analysis. His argument that more perspectives and 'affects' enrich knowledge highlights the importance of the diversity of ties in entrepreneurial networks. Strengthening relationships and the exchange of ideas can lead to a deeper understanding of challenges and opportunities.

The intertwining of philosophy and entrepreneurship is further exemplified in Damsgaard et al. (2024) exploration of being, becoming and being-in-action. Drawing from philosophical concepts, the authors highlighted how entrepreneurship encompasses notions of existence, evolution and proactive engagement. This perspective resonates with Nietzsche's emphasis on diverse perspectives, as entrepreneurs navigate a multifaceted landscape, shaping and evolving their ventures based on interactions and experiences.

Hjorth (2014, 2022) extended the discourse by proposing a reciprocal relationship between philosophy and entrepreneurship, where each field informs and enriches the other. This speculative approach aligns with Nietzsche's idea that perspectives and 'affects' mutually enhance understanding. Moreover, the conceptual model of opportunity development as a recursive process of translation between abstract and concrete entrepreneurial ideas adds depth to understanding how entrepreneurs think, reflecting a speculative exploration into the cognitive processes that parallel philosophical inquiries (Clausen, 2020). This dimension of thought connects with Schopenhauer's critique of emotions distorting objective knowledge, paralleling how entrepreneurs balance affective connections with rational decision-making.

From Schopenhauer's philosophical point of view, tangible expressions in the entrepreneurial domain can be found, influencing how entrepreneurs navigate challenges, interact with collaborators and perceive the nature of success, as follows.

Decision-making Under Uncertainty

From a Schopenhauerian standpoint, entrepreneurs may adopt a more cautious approach to decision-making. The emphasis on asceticism might lead them to perceive uncertainties as potential sources of suffering, prompting a more risk-averse stance.

Interpersonal Relationships and Collaboration

Entrepreneurs subscribing to Schopenhauer's asceticism may approach collaborations with a focus on minimising suffering. This perspective could lead to more reserved and calculated interactions, with an inclination towards relationships that align with a stoic, detached view.

Perception of Success and Failure

Entrepreneurs aligning with Schopenhauer's views may view success through the lens of ascetic renunciation, valuing a more subdued and inward-focused approach. Failures might be seen as necessary steps in avoiding unnecessary suffering.

According to Nietzsche (1887/2008), one should reject the idea of the existence of a pure subject of knowledge, free of will and insensitive to pain and time. Avoiding contradictory concepts like 'pure reason,' 'absolute spirituality,' and 'knowledge in itself.' All of this would require an impossible-to-imagine eye, an eye without direction, where the interpretative forces that give meaning to vision are absent. Only the perspective matters; the more perspectives and 'affects' used, the more complete the understanding and objectivity about something will be. Furthermore, eliminating will and 'affects' entirely would harm the mind.

Approaching the Nietzschean perspective, entrepreneurs give precedence to diverse viewpoints and emotions, acknowledging their pivotal role in enhancing understanding and objectivity. Avoiding a complete elimination of will and emotions is considered crucial for maintaining a healthy mind. Emphasising the significance of perspectives and emotions, this perspective profoundly influences social interactions and decision-making. Nietzsche's rejection of the idea of a pure subject of knowledge aligns seamlessly with the focus on diverse perspectives. The interpretation of success and failure is intricately tied to diverse viewpoints and emotions. Within the entrepreneurial journey, there exists a network of perspectives, resonating with Spinoza's belief in the influence of emotions on human action.

Recapping, when analysing the entrepreneur as someone whose personal journey is intertwined in a network of perspectives, an interesting convergence with Spinoza's philosophy becomes evident. Spinoza's theory of 'affects' highlights how emotions and feelings influence human action and understanding. This perspective correlates with the emphasis on interpersonal connections in entrepreneurship, as these relationships can be filled with emotions that shape social interactions and, ultimately, decisions.

Spinoza's idea of cooperation and the amplified power through collective life also aligns with the reorientation of post-individualist entrepreneurship research. When entrepreneurs come together in networks, their individual powers can be increased, allowing them to more effectively face challenges. For Spinoza, political and social life involves the organisation of relationships between human beings, creating a network

of emotional connections through interactions and encounters. Spinoza's perspective defines the collective body as a single entity, in which conflicts and differences exist. Thus, it emphasises that the constituent parts or particular powers of this collective entity may vary in terms of their strength or power. Some parts may be stronger or weaker compared to others, indicating disparities in their ability to act and thrive. The terms 'strong' and 'weak' refer to the intensity of individual powers within the constituent parts of the collective entity. These parts can align and reinforce each other, increasing their power, or they can conflict and weaken, reducing their intensity.

In the business context, a governance structure based on strong ties promotes trust, the sharing of detailed information and collaborative problem-solving (Rowley et al., 2000). However, strong ties have disadvantages, such as over-embedding and the risk of isolation in the face of external shocks (Uzzi, 1996). Furthermore, they can also lead to a lack of awareness of new developments (Johannisson, 2000). Weak ties, on the other hand, connect people from diverse contexts with sporadic interactions, increase diversity, and provide access to new information and opportunities, as well as create bridges to distant segments in the network (Granovetter, 1973, 1982).

Social networks, as discussed earlier, are critical to the success of entrepreneurs, providing access to valuable resources, specialised knowledge and financial support. Granovetter's analysis (1973, 1982) of weak and strong ties in networks finds parallels in how Spinoza understands 'affects'. Weak ties, equivalent to encounters that feed the power of entrepreneurs, can be equated with active joys, those that come from within and increase the ability to act. Strong ties reflect the idea of emotionally intense bonds, similar to passive joys that are determined from the outside.

Converging Philosophy and Entrepreneurship: Reflections and Prospects

Analysing the Confluence Between Philosophy and Entrepreneurship

This study aimed to explore the confluence between philosophical principles, particularly those of Spinoza, and contemporary considerations related to entrepreneurship, emphasising the relevance of

interpersonal networks in the entrepreneurial context. Through an examination of Spinoza and Schopenhauer's perspectives on 'affects' and a review of social network and entrepreneurship theories, conclusions that underscore the significant intersection between these fields can be reached.

While the theoretical exploration provides a foundational understanding of the integration of philosophy and entrepreneurship, real-world examples and case studies further illuminate the practical applications of these philosophical concepts in entrepreneurial journeys.

For example, Elon Musk's approach to innovation and risk-taking can be analysed through the lens of Spinoza's 'conatus'. Musk's persistence in pursuing ambitious projects, such as electric vehicles and space exploration, reflects a philosophy of continuous effort and expansion. Like Spinoza's 'conatus', which perceives challenges as opportunities for innovation, this entrepreneur, embracing the intrinsic drive for persistence, consistently seeks to expand their initiatives, introducing novel approaches in response to industry uncertainties. This case illustrates that an entrepreneur shares the journey of overcoming significant challenges in the business landscape. In terms of narrative, philosophical principles inspired resilience, portraying a Spinozian perspective of confronting difficulties with a determined effort for continuity.

It is observed, therefore, that Spinoza's philosophy, with an emphasis on 'conatus' as an intrinsic propensity for persistence and the pursuit of continuity, finds resonance in entrepreneurship. The entrepreneur, much like entities driven by 'conatus', seeks not only self-survival but also expansion and innovation, characterising an effort to overcome challenges and shape new paths. The intersection between the intrinsic drive of 'conatus' and the intricate interplay of emotions and cognitive orientations reveals how philosophical principles converge with entrepreneurial dynamics, offering profound insights into the pursuit of innovation, collaboration and purpose.

Spinoza's theory of 'affects' highlights the influence of emotions on human action and knowledge, which has parallels in the dynamics of social networks in entrepreneurship. Affective relationships sustained by weak and strong ties correlate with interpersonal connections in entrepreneurial networks.

While Spinoza argues that 'affects' can be harnessed in individuals' favour, Schopenhauer warns of the risks of letting emotions distort objectivity, complementing that the world belongs not to the joyful and

conquerors but to the ascetics. Contrasting with ‘conatus’, failures in entrepreneurship can be seen as ascetics, as other representations of will.

According to Schopenhauer’s ascetic ideals, an entrepreneur may adopt an ethical approach to business. This could involve conscious decisions to minimise environmental impact, prioritise fair labour practices and contribute to social causes, aligning with Schopenhauer’s emphasis on compassionate, selfless actions. Yvon Chouinard, founder of Patagonia, exemplifies Schopenhauerian asceticism through the company’s commitment to environmental sustainability and ethical practices. The focus on minimising harm to the environment aligns with Schopenhauer’s ideals of renunciation. This narrative illustrates the entrepreneur’s commitment to ethical business practices and how this aligns with Schopenhauer’s emphasis on minimising suffering.

In the debate that spans both philosophical and business fields, there is a convergence around the importance of human relationships and the dynamics of interactions. Whether in political or entrepreneurial contexts, the inequality of strength or power among individuals shapes relationships in profound ways. Philosophically, the variation in the intensity of life impulses, or ‘conatus’, resulting from this inequality leads to a structure of internal integration and differentiation within the political body. This understanding of conflict as an internal phenomenon arises among parts with varying strengths and intensities. The notion of strength and weakness is not only related to individual power but also to the ability to act and exist within the context of relationships. In the business scenario, a parallel concerning the significance of relationships is observed. A governance structure based on strong ties fosters trust, the sharing of detailed information and collaborative problem-solving. However, this approach also carries disadvantages, such as the risk of over cohesion and a lack of receptiveness to new ideas. In this context, weak ties emerge as an alternative approach, connecting individuals from different contexts and forming a diversified network of interactions. These weak ties facilitate access to new information and opportunities, as well as the creation of bridges between different segments of the network.

Within this scope, Sarasvathy’s effectuation theory, resonating with Spinoza’s philosophy of active agency, finds application in start-up ventures. Entrepreneurs leveraging effectuation principles focus on leveraging existing resources, forming partnerships and adapting to unforeseen challenges—a practical manifestation of Spinoza’s idea of persistent action.

By weaving Spinoza's philosophical insights into Sarasvathy's theory of 'effectuation', an often-overlooked dimension comes to the fore: the role of emotions. Sarasvathy's model emphasises the entrepreneur's capacity to forge opportunities by strategically leveraging available resources. However, incorporating Spinoza's perspective infuses the 'effectuation' framework with a critical evaluation of emotional dynamics within the entrepreneurial journey. This synthesis not only broadens the scope of 'effectuation' but also contests the notion that entrepreneurship is solely driven by strategic rationale, advocating for a holistic approach where emotional intelligence plays a pivotal role. This groundbreaking perspective has the potential to redefine the understanding of entrepreneurial success, emphasising the necessity of honing emotional competencies for effective engagement with stakeholders, thereby adding a richer, more nuanced layer to the 'effectuation' process.

Therefore, whether in the philosophical or business realm, the debate on the nature of human relationships and their influence on the structure and dynamics of systems highlights the complexity and interconnection underlying how individuals relate, collaborate and evolve in various contexts.

The intersection between Spinoza's concept of 'conatus' and entrepreneurship, viewed through the lens of natural order, unveils insightful perspectives on the dynamics of business success and failure. 'Conatus', understood as the intrinsic impulse to align actions with one's essence and to seek harmony with the surrounding world, suggests that deviation from this natural order might significantly hinder an entrepreneur. Such a discrepancy might manifest as a divergence between an entrepreneur's fundamental values and their business practices, potentially leading to unsustainable decisions in the long term.

Therefore, alignment with the 'natural order', in terms of pursuing knowledge, virtue and harmony, emerges as a crucial element in preventing failure and fostering sustainable and ethical entrepreneurship. This viewpoint underscores that true entrepreneurial success transcends financial profit, encompassing alignment with ethical principles and positive contributions to society and the environment. Thus, overlooking these philosophical and ethical aspects could be a fundamental reason for many entrepreneurial failures, proposing a reevaluation of how entrepreneurship in the contemporary era is conceptualised and practiced.

In parallel, Spinoza's insights into the nature of human emotions and their role in collective life provide a complementary perspective

on fostering success in entrepreneurship. Recognising the intricate web of relationships among primary 'affects' such as joy, sadness and desire, Spinoza highlights the importance of cultivating positive emotions and collaborative endeavours. By emphasising collaboration and agreement among individuals, Spinoza argues that individuals can expand their capacity for action and influence over the world around them. This potency is further strengthened by collective wisdom, which arises from discussions and collaborations, highlighting the vital importance of social interaction for human flourishing. However, he also warns about the dangers of negative emotions, such as sadness, which can not only weaken collectivity but also undermine the ability to achieve goals. Therefore, Spinoza vehemently advocates for the cultivation of active joy, propelled by collective life and collaboration, as a powerful source of energy and fulfilment capable of lifting individuals above challenges and driving their collective success. Ultimately, this holistic approach, integrating philosophical insights into human emotions and collective action, offers valuable guidance for navigating the complexities of entrepreneurship in alignment with natural order and human flourishing.

Networking emerges as a linchpin for entrepreneurship, yet its impact is not uniformly effective. Drawing from Spinoza's theory of 'affects', it becomes clear that only those relationships fostering joy and well-being can genuinely enhance an entrepreneur's capabilities. This viewpoint steers individuals towards valuing connections that bolster their professional objectives while also harmonising with their inner selves, fostering holistic growth. Emphasising a discerning approach to networking highlights the necessity of forming support networks in sync with individuals' goals and values, underscoring the idea that positive interactions are fundamental to cultivating a thriving and sustainable entrepreneurial landscape.

The seamless integration of the philosophical insights of Spinoza and Schopenhauer offers a profound exploration of entrepreneurship's essence, revealing the critical balance between forming joy-nurturing partnerships and exercising caution against emotional disturbances based on rational judgement. Spinoza encourages individuals to cherish relationships that amplify their action capacity and joy, highlighting the pivotal role of selecting collaborators, partners and customers who resonate with their objectives and contribute positively to the venture's emotional and motivational climate. This strategic alignment is essential for bolstering business resilience and fostering a supportive

organisational culture. Conversely, Schopenhauer's cautionary perspective on 'affects' reminds individuals of the potential for emotions to obscure clear judgement, advocating for a balanced approach where emotions are acknowledged but managed to prevent interference with rational decision-making and strategic planning. This synthesis of philosophical thought into the entrepreneurial discourse serves as a guiding light towards a harmonious blend of emotion and reason, advocating for a business model where sustainable success is achieved through a nuanced understanding of emotional dynamics, underscored by a steadfast commitment to thought clarity and purposeful action. Incorporating these philosophical principles into the fabric of entrepreneurship not only enriches the field with a deeper ethical and humanistic dimension but also paves the way for a more effective and fulfilling entrepreneurial journey.

In conclusion, Nietzsche's analyses enrich this approach, highlighting that the diversity of perspectives and 'affects' enhances knowledge. Entrepreneurial networks, with their diverse ties, reflect this multiplicity, enabling a deeper understanding of challenges and opportunities. All of this contributes to a transition from imaginary to intellectual knowledge, sustaining the success of 'conatus' and entrepreneurship, both dependent on harmony with the natural environment and social relations.

Implications

Integration of Philosophy and Entrepreneurship

The study concludes that there is a significant overlap between philosophical concepts (such as Spinoza's 'conatus', Schopenhauer's asceticism and Nietzsche's perspectives) and entrepreneurial dynamics. This connection is non-obvious, as it bridges two seemingly unrelated fields, suggesting that philosophical insights can inform entrepreneurial theory and practice.

Role of 'Affects' in Entrepreneurship

The study highlights the role of emotions and 'affects', drawing from Spinoza's philosophy, in shaping entrepreneurial actions and decisions. It suggests that understanding and harnessing these 'affects' can be a

non-trivial aspect of entrepreneurial success, going beyond traditional business theories that often focus solely on rational decision-making.

Divergent Philosophical Views

The study explores the contrast between Spinoza's 'conatus' and Schopenhauer's asceticism in the context of entrepreneurship. This highlights that philosophical perspectives on life and human nature can have contrasting implications for entrepreneurial behaviour, challenging conventional assumptions about entrepreneurship being solely profit-driven.

Implications for Theory

Expanding Entrepreneurship Theory

The study suggests that entrepreneurship theory should not only focus on economic aspects but also incorporate philosophical and emotional dimensions. This implies a need for a broader and more holistic approach to understanding entrepreneurship that considers the role of human emotions and philosophical worldviews.

Integration of Interdisciplinary Perspectives

The study advocates for the integration of philosophical ideas into the study of entrepreneurship. This implies a shift towards more interdisciplinary research in entrepreneurship theory, where insights from philosophy can be integrated to provide a more comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurial behaviour.

Complexity of Human Interaction

By emphasising the importance of interpersonal relationships and emotional connections in entrepreneurship, the study implies that entrepreneurial theory should consider the complex nature of human interactions and the impact of emotions on decision-making. This adds depth to the understanding of how entrepreneurs navigate challenges and opportunities.

Implications for Practice

Emotional Intelligence and Relationship Building: Foundations for Entrepreneurial Success

The preceding sections delved into the theoretical underpinnings of Spinoza and Schopenhauer's philosophies and their integration with entrepreneurial practices. Now, actionable strategies are detailed, providing entrepreneurs with practical insights derived from these philosophical frameworks.

Variable 1: Emotional Intelligence in Decision-making

Strategy 1: Cultivating Self-Awareness in Entrepreneurial Decision-making

Entrepreneurs can leverage Spinoza's emphasis on self-awareness by engaging in reflective practices. This involves regularly assessing one's emotions, motivations and biases in decision-making. By cultivating self-awareness, entrepreneurs enhance their ability to make informed and emotionally intelligent choices, contributing to the overall resilience of their ventures.

Strategy 2: Empathy as a Catalyst for Innovation

Schopenhauer's emphasis on compassion and empathy can be translated into an entrepreneurial context. Entrepreneurs who prioritise understanding the needs and perspectives of their stakeholders, including customers, employees and partners, can foster an environment conducive to innovation. By integrating empathetic insights, entrepreneurs can identify unique opportunities and develop solutions that genuinely resonate with their target audience.

Variable 2: Relationship Building and Collaborative Entrepreneurship

Strategy 3: Building Authentic Connections

Entrepreneurs can draw inspiration from Spinoza's concept of 'conatus' to build authentic connections with others. This involves recognising the inherent drive for persistence and collaboration. Entrepreneurs who prioritise building genuine relationships with their team members, mentors and collaborators create a foundation for sustained success. Authentic

connections contribute to a supportive network that aids in navigating challenges and seizing opportunities.

Strategy 4: Collaboration and Shared Values

Schopenhauer's ascetic ideals highlight the importance of shared values in collaborative ventures. Entrepreneurs can strategically align with partners and collaborators who share similar ethical principles and long-term objectives. This ensures that collaborative efforts are not only productive but also grounded in a shared commitment to ethical business practices.

Practical Application of Philosophical Insights: Entrepreneurial Case Scenarios

To further elucidate the applicability of philosophical insights in entrepreneurial practice, consider the following scenarios.

Scenario 1: Navigating Uncertainty with Emotional Resilience

Context: An entrepreneur faces a sudden market downturn, challenging the viability of their venture.

Philosophical Insight: Spinoza's concept of 'conatus' encourages persistent action in the face of adversity.

Practical Application: The entrepreneur, drawing from Spinoza, maintains emotional resilience and proactively seeks innovative solutions. This could involve diversifying product offerings, exploring new market segments, or redefining the value proposition.

Scenario 2: Ethical Decision-making in a Competitive Landscape

Context: A startup encounters pressure to compromise on ethical standards to gain a competitive edge.

Philosophical Insight: Schopenhauer's ascetic ideals emphasise ethical conduct and minimising harm.

Practical Application: The entrepreneur, inspired by Schopenhauer, makes decisions aligned with ethical principles. This may involve

refusing unethical collaborations, prioritising sustainable practices and communicating transparently with stakeholders.

Philosophical Mindfulness in Daily Entrepreneurial Operations

Entrepreneurs can integrate philosophical mindfulness into their daily operations to cultivate a holistic and sustainable approach to business. This involves:

Strategy 5: Regular Philosophical Reflection Sessions

Entrepreneurs can schedule regular reflection sessions to contemplate the alignment of their actions with philosophical principles. This practice fosters a sense of purpose and ensures that decisions resonate with the core values derived from philosophical insights.

Strategy 6: Team Engagement in Philosophical Dialogues

Creating a culture of philosophical dialogue within the entrepreneurial team encourages collective reflection. Entrepreneurs can organise periodic discussions on philosophical concepts, fostering a shared understanding that permeates the organisational culture.

Relationship Building

The study underscores the significance of social networks and relationships for entrepreneurial success. Entrepreneurs can focus on building strong and diverse networks to access resources, knowledge and support, aligning with Spinoza's emphasis on collaboration.

Ethical Entrepreneurship

The intersection of philosophy and entrepreneurship offers a unique lens for understanding ethical dimensions in entrepreneurial endeavours. This study takes an exploratory approach, delving into the influence of Spinoza's 'conatus', Schopenhauer's ascetic ideals and Nietzschean perspectives on ethical entrepreneurship.

Spinoza's emphasis on persistence provides a foundation for ethical considerations. Entrepreneurs guided by Spinoza prioritise ethical decision-making during challenges, evaluating potential impacts, ensuring transparency and aligning actions with long-term ethical goals.

For his side, Schopenhauer introduces ethical conduct beyond profit, focusing on minimising harm. Entrepreneurs influenced by Schopenhauer engage in collaborative ventures with shared ethical values, vetting partnerships based on ethical considerations, practicing responsible sourcing and contributing to community welfare.

Nietzsche's emphasis on diverse perspectives adds nuance to ethical entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs, inspired by Nietzsche, actively seek diverse viewpoints in decision-making, encouraging inclusive forums and embracing a pluralistic approach to ethical considerations. Recognising the intertwining of 'affects' and understanding, they foster an organisational culture that values ethical reflection.

Real-world scenarios illustrate ethical considerations. For instance, a manufacturing startup influenced by Schopenhauer's ideals chooses sustainable practices over cost-cutting, aligning with ethical responsibility. In another case, a tech company prioritises transparency, drawing from Spinoza's 'conatus' and recognising the importance of long-term ethical credibility.

Ethical Entrepreneurship as a Continual Journey

This section emphasises that ethical entrepreneurship is an ongoing, dynamic journey. Entrepreneurs, drawing on philosophical foundations, navigate the intricate ethical landscape, contributing to a sustainable and responsible business environment.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research and Reflection

The interconnection between philosophy and entrepreneurship reveals an intriguing and unconventional perspective in the field of entrepreneurship research. As a result, this study takes on an exploratory character and justifies further investigations to delve into topics such as the specific influence of 'affects' on entrepreneurial decisions and empirical analysis of the impact of emotions and social network connections on entrepreneurial performance. Furthermore, exploring cultural variations and case studies can further enrich the understanding of this intersection.

It is also important to note that the article primarily focuses on Western philosophical traditions (Spinoza, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche). Future research could extend the exploration to include perspectives from various philosophical traditions, offering a more comprehensive understanding of how diverse worldviews influence entrepreneurial thinking and actions, such as Taoism or Confucianism, which may provide insights into alternative perspectives on individual agency, community dynamics and ethical decision-making. Understanding these perspectives could contribute to a more inclusive framework for entrepreneurial studies. Conducting a comparative analysis of Western and Eastern philosophical influences on entrepreneurial resilience could reveal contrasting approaches. This analysis may contribute to the understanding of how cultural philosophies shape responses to challenges and uncertainties in the entrepreneurial landscape. To achieve this goal, two research questions are proposed: (a) How do entrepreneurial networks manifest when scrutinised from the perspectives of non-Western philosophical traditions? (b) Within the Dynamics of Ethics in Global Business Networks, what ethical considerations arise in entrepreneurial networks when influenced by diverse philosophical perspectives?

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