

Spirit Transcendence: Entrepreneurs' Ego Development

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Abstract

Traditional literatures have analyzed entrepreneurship in terms of its characteristics under the frame of social-economic development, lacking discussions from individual's perspective. This paper, based on the theories of Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind and Marx's The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, explores common features of entrepreneurs' ego development. It can be concluded that entrepreneurs' ego development encompasses three stages, the first stage, desire Consciousness, the second, morality Consciousness, and the ultimate stage humanity Consciousness.

Keywords: Entrepreneurs, Ego, Spirit transcendence, Consciousness

1. Introduction

Since the introduction of the concept "entrepreneur" by Jean-baptiste Say (1767-1832) in 18 century, numbers of literatures have been working in exploring entrepreneurship. Generally, most of the literatures, from the viewpoint of economics, have taken entrepreneurship as a one of the production factors and involved it in micro static model, focusing on the influences and contributions of entrepreneurs' ideas, consciousness and minds to economic development. According to Austrian American economist J.A. Joseph Alois Schumpeter (1883-1950), economic development in modern industrial countries is a changing innovation and creation process, hence the core value of entrepreneurship is the innovation sense. Some other literatures examine entrepreneurship from Business Ethics and Business Culture, rather than from economics. One example is Marx Weber (1864-1920). In his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber explored how Protestantism ethics have affected the emergence of modern European capitalism. Marx defined human nature as formed by the totality of "social relations". Therefore, external factors such as economic base, culture, business model and ethics are determinants of entrepreneurship. Former literatures have made great contributions.

However, external factors can not explain entrepreneurship thoroughly. Spirit is a typical feature of human being. Individual is a taker of outside spirit (objective spirit) as well as a giver of spirit (subjective spirit). The interaction of the two fills up one's spiritual activities. Comparatively, former literatures have focused on objective (impersonal) environment, unfortunately missed the consideration of entrepreneurship from "ego's perspective, such as, what are the basic characteristics of entrepreneurs' Self- Consciousness, how do they interact with the outside world, etc.

What Drucker has brought us is that entrepreneurship is not only an economics matter but also a philosophy issue of complicated Self-Consciousness, psychology. This paper, with the help of humanity theory in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* and Marx's *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, explores the nature of entrepreneurship from the perspective of entrepreneurs' Ego and their development.

2. Human Being's Ego and Its Development

According to Marx's *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, animals is the life form dominated by the nature, so animals muddle with the world, having no concept of "ego". In contrast, human beings are self-conscious and disengaged, who are conscious of selves and in charge of selves, which, in this paper, is defined "ego", including Self-Consciousness, will and emotion.

What are the features of human beings' ego and its development? Marx (in his *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*) and Hegel (in his *Phenomenology of Mind*) have made in-depth research. First, the relation between "ego" and the world is object-oriented. In German classical philosophy, having "ego" separates human and the world into two separated worlds rather than a "oneness" between the human and natural worlds. "Ego" enables human to exert self willingness to the outside world; consequently, human's practical activities become ego's "object". This "object" reflects characteristics of "Ego". For example, a piece of art reflects the "ego" of the artist, and a architecture reflects the "ego" of the architect. Therefore, in the world of self willingness, "ego" is the "object" and the "object" is "ego"; "ego" and the "object" are peer-to-peer related. In the case of entrepreneurs, the ego's "object" is capital and wealth, which follow the peer-to-peer relationship. That is, "ego"=capital and wealth, or capital and wealth="ego".

Secondly, every individual wants to realize "ego" in the outside world and proof the existence of "ego" through participating practical activities. Practical activities include social, political, economic, scientific, technological, cultural and artistic ones. Correspondingly, different people exert Self-Consciousness, will and emotion into different activities. The bigger the "object" of "ego", the stronger the "ego" can be seen. There wouldn't be great scientists without great discovery, no great artists without great works of art. Identically, excellent entrepreneurs wouldn't be in place if no capital or wealth had been being generated.

Thirdly, self-fulfillment is a process of transcendence. Human's self-fulfillment is a process in which consciousness develops. It is enlightened by Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* that consciousness is featured by explosive power in its nature, always trying to break its limitations. As a result, never-satisfied consciousness and psychology become the energy source of self-development. This is the so-called "spirit transcendence" in this paper. The whole meaning of life can be incarnated in the process of pursuing transcendence, such as athletes are eager to transcend previous record, and entrepreneurs are eager to accumulate capital and wealth.

Fourthly, the process of self-transcendence is featured by regularity. In *Phenomenology of Mind*, Hegel noted that Self-Consciousness, just like other life forms, consists of birth stage, growth stage and maturity stage. Therefore it can be seen as a "negation of negation" process and this process is what we call the regularity of self development. According to Hegel, the development of one's spirit goes through three stages, subjective spirit, objective spirit and absolute spirit that combine both subjective and objective spirit.

In this sense, accumulation in capital and wealth is the reflection of entrepreneurs' self-development. A more fundamental issue is the inner transcendence. This can be used to testify from the other side why world-famous entrepreneurs' spirit usually is inaccessible by the crowd. Based on Hegel's theory, this paper breaks entrepreneurs' development into transcendence in three stages.

3. Transcendence in three stages: Entrepreneurs' Self-Development

3.1 "Ego" and Desire-Consciousness

Transcendence in the first stage refers to that entrepreneurs' work and creative consciousness transcends animals' instinct desire. Animals' instinct desire has two dimensions. The first is the instinct desire consciousness, which refers to that the possessively original consciousness to the outer material world. The second is negative act, which refers to that animals can not satisfy their own desire by consciousness and planned reform activities, instead, they live in the world Happy-go-lucky.

According to Marx's Historical Materialism, human being exists as organic life form. Therefore, desire of possession of materials is human being's fundamental living conscious. Desire consciousness, including food, drink, sex and so on, is ego's most fundamental, original and durable momentum. What differs human from animal is that human satisfy their desire by manually and creatively conscious activities, which is much more advanced than animals simple possessive desire-consciousness and passive living-consciousness.

Similarly, initial attitude towards capital and wealth also has roots in desire consciousness, with the purpose of satisfying the basic living needs of themselves and their families. Many great entrepreneurs, such as Rockefeller, Konosuke Matsushita, and Li Ka-shing were motivated in tough circumstances at first. The initial motivation of starting career were from living pressure, just as Li Ka-shing said when he was recalling the days when he was a door-to-door salesman: "I worked as a wholesale agent when I was 17, and realized ever since then the how difficult money-making was. I was working for 16 hours a day while others were working only 8 hours. I worked hard to catch up with others. (Ji, 2010)"

However, entrepreneurs' laboring process is not only a process of pursuing material needs, but also demonstrating the value and meaning of self-existence through active activities. The complexity of entrepreneurs' work determines the laboring process requires not only entrepreneurs' physical efforts, but also

moral integrity, intelligence, glamour and etc. In another word, the real spiritual satisfaction can be achieved only in their business activities when they get dignity, accomplishment as well as material reward. Li Ka-shing said: "I worked hard. My performance was 7 times of the second seller, so I was promoted to Dept. manager and two years later I was promoted again to General manager. (Ji. 2010)"

However, after the material desire has been fulfilled, entrepreneurs, from self-consciousness, emotion and willingness, start losing their excitement and satisfaction on material items. Hence, "ego" can achieve the meaning and joy of life only when it develops to a new spiritual stage.

3.2 "Ego" and Morality Consciousness

Transcendence in the second time refers that entrepreneurs' self-consciousness endow capital and wealth with morality, which transcend the limitation of material desire. Generally, morality consciousness relates to ethics among individuals and society. The transcendence here means that entrepreneurs' "ego" develops from individual consciousness to social consciousness.

Consumption theory and Kenys's Law of diminishing MPC in modern micro-economics have testified that human's material consumption needs have limitations. According to Chinese ancient ideologist GUAN Zhong, Good Consciousness of courtesy is premised with adequate grain stock, while correct sense of honor and disgrace come after enough food and clothing. This says reflect the nature of self-consciousness, which is to pursue new spiritual needs. As a matter of fact, when entrepreneurs get enough wealth, their previous material consciousness will alter. For example, famous entrepreneur Sun Dawu mentioned transformation in his feeling on money during a Peking University speech, "Back in 1986 when my monthly salary was only a little more than 50, we raised 1000 chicken, and made 30,000 in that year. After repaying 20,000 loan, we still have 10,000 left. My wife had never seen that so much money. She asked her money to count the money. They were both so excited. In the second year, we made 100,000, and immediately bought a safety cashbox; years later, we make 1,000,000, and our excitement for money became weak. When the day that we made 7,000,000 came, that money has become just a number to us. (Sun, 2003)"

Economist Nassan William Senior says: for the majority, pursue of wealth is the source of moral improvement (Skousen, 2006). After the material need being satisfied, entrepreneurs' consciousness tells them that not only they have desire themselves, other people, as well, have desire. Therefore, self-consciousness of entrepreneurs starts focusing on the society's interests because of the realization that "me" belongs to "us". Correspondingly, social-responsibility consciousness has become the main focus of entrepreneurs' "ego". The accumulation process of capital and wealth has become the process of both self-satisfaction and society satisfaction. They combine "egoism" and "altruism". In consequence, entrepreneurs proof and realize the value and meaning of the existence of their "ego" in a higher level. This is the inner spiritual momentum of many great entrepreneurs to keep forward. What SUN Dawu has said can help to get better understanding: "I'm billionaire. I make money in a righteous way, never hurt others, so people approve me. The wealth is being used by others, such as the public gardens, school, hospitals that I have built. Everyone benefits. No one hates the wealth. This is easy to understand. What people care is whether their livelihood can be guaranteed. Employees in Dawu Group can enjoy up to 20,000 per person health insurance by paying 2 Yuan per person premiums. All of our staff have this welfare. Besides, two Sauna tickets per person per month is offered to our staff, by which, they can go Sauna in winter and swimming in summer. 45 m² free housing space is provided to every employee. This standard will be increased to 60 m² in next year. (Sun, 2003)"

On the other hand, morality consciousness is also one of the prerequisites for entrepreneurs' capital and wealth to increase. Entrepreneurs are not isolated in this world. They are members in the social system. Caring for one's own desire and saddle one's own desire on others, society and even the world will lead to conflicts and opposition between oneself and the outside world. American tycoon Rockefeller made vast wealth in his middle age, but his spirit still stayed in the desire stage. He finally became the public enemy of the States and got a strange disease. Until he realized where his problems were, he started donating and has won supports from the society, his families and friends and become a healthy entrepreneur both physically and mentally.

3.3 "Ego" and Humanity Consciousness

However, morality consciousness has its limitations as well, because it achieves altruism after satisfying the need for self-survival. Therefore, further development "ego" will definitely go into a stage of caring for human being's spirit, which is humanity consciousness stage.

Humanity consciousness is the stage at which individuals transcend geographic, ethnic, cultural and time boundaries, focus on the nature and meaning of people's lives and existence from the whole human being and

even the cosmos's perspective, emphasize on concern for human's lives, dignity, value-pursue and destiny. Humanity is the highest value of human beings' spirit. Despite the fact that different cultures have different expressions for humanity consciousness, the nature of it is the same. For example, both Confucius's "The benevolent loves others" and Christianity's "love others as self" emphasize the philanthropism that individual is ought to love others consciously. This is because humanity consciousness can eliminate the barrier and conflicts between "ego" and the world, and enable people to reach the freedom of "Nature and Man in One". Humanity consciousness is the highest spiritual pursue of people since the nature of human being's life is consistence in spite of individually singularity; every individual experiences birth, aging, sickness, death and every one want to acquire love, concern and dignity. When coming to entrepreneurs who have humanity consciousness, pursuing capital and wealth is not for meeting material desire or seek fame, instead, it is a process for fulfilling the mission of benefiting mankind, and eventually achieving ego's prevalent concern and selfless help to human.

"For Melinda and for me, the challenge is the same: how can we do the most good for the greatest number with the resources we have. During our discussions on this question, Melinda and I read an article about the millions of children who were dying every year in poor countries from diseases that we had long ago made harmless in this country. Measles, malaria, pneumonia, hepatitis B, yellow fever. One disease I had never even heard of, rotavirus, was killing half a million kids each year – none of them in the United States. We were shocked. We had just assumed that if millions of children were dying and they could be saved, the world would make it a priority to discover and deliver the medicines to save them. But it did not. For under a dollar, there were interventions that could save lives that just weren't being delivered. If you believe that every life has equal value, it's revolting to learn that some lives are seen as worth saving and others are not. We said to us: "This can't be true. But if it is true, it deserves to be the priority of our giving. (Gates, 2007)"

4. Reflection of "Transcendence in Three Stages": Priority of Humanity Consciousness

The ideology of "three times transcendences" shows the general developing mode of entrepreneurs' ego. In different stages, entrepreneurs' ego's endowment to capital and wealth can be expressed as follows:

The first time transcendence: ego=capital and wealth=individual consciousness

The second time transcendence: ego= capital and wealth=society (group, nation) consciousness

The third time transcendence:ego= capital and wealth=society=humanity consciousness=human being's spirit

During the development, development in each stage is the other transcendence of the former stage. It should be noted that transcendence can not be done in once, as it is difficult and arduous. It requires individuals to overcome all the straits during the development of self spirit. It is a process of suffering, just as Mencius said, "When God want to put an important mission to a person, He will first let him suffer and frustrate, give him heavy labor. (Liu, 1988)"

Yet, are there quick approaches to improve the level of self-spirit? "Transcendence in three stages" tells people that during the development of self-spirit, if we develop humanity consciousness prior to develop "ego", we can achieve highest level of self-spirit in a quick manner. This is because when an entrepreneur has humanity consciousness, he/she definitely will have conscious morality consciousness, which, in turn, can alleviate the conflicts between individual interests and social interests. In return, society will provide the entrepreneur with more opportunities of self-realization.

This is definitely possible. Because human are advanced animals, they are active, consciousness and reflective life forms. Individuals improve their humanity consciousness actively by learning and reflecting humanity heritage left in history. One of the reasons for entrepreneurs to be successful is that they have accepted humanity edification when they were young. As a result, they can realize the self-value in a surprisingly short period. People talk Li Ka-shing's story of success and probe his strategies for success, but tend to ignore the fact that his knowledge foundation is Confucianism which makes his business pattern partly featured by Confucian humanity spirit. As a result when dealing with "ego" and others, Li Ka-shing always combines "interest" and "benevolence" and shows humanity consciousness. Same as Bill Gates, in his speech in Harvard University, Gates said: "My mother, who was filled with pride the day I was admitted here? She never stopped pressing me to do more for others. A few days before my wedding, she hosted a bridal event, at which she read aloud a letter about marriage that she had written to Melinda. My mother was very ill with cancer at the time, but she saw one more opportunity to deliver her message, and at the close of the letter she said: "From those to whom much is given, much is expected. (Gates, 2007)"

5. Close Remarks

Confucius had a remark on human's nature: "By nature all men are alike, but by education widely different." This means human's natures have both things in common and things in individualities. Individuals certainly have different personalities. Talents, dispositions, environments, physical conditions and cultures all will have influences on the development of individuals' spirits. Even under the same historic and social conditions, entrepreneurs' spirits will show diversifications.

It is noteworthy that this paper, based on the exploration of rationalism and regularity of rationalism, discusses theoretical model of entrepreneurs' Spirit Transcendence, so as to expand and enrich the research vision of entrepreneurship.

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