Enacted metaphor: the theatricality of the entrepreneurial process

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Abstract

The paper proposes the value of theatricality as an addition conceptual tool to aid analysis and understanding of the entrepreneurial process. It explores the application of dramatism and dramaturgy and argues that the application is a useful addition to our repertoire. In particular, the idea of spanning the boundaries of space and time, of truth and fiction, the liminality, of entrepreneurship lends itself to such theatrical analysis. This allows a fuller appreciation of the entrepreneurial act in the duality of concepts of the world as stage and the world as staged. The metaphors of theatricality offer an alternative medium for understanding.

Enacted metaphor: the theatricality of the entrepreneurial process

Introduction

Mangham (2001:295) argues that "theatre and other performance genres are forms of activities through which we get the opportunity to look at ourselves- at our values, principles and modes of conducts." In this paper I attempt to turn the theatrical device upon itself, a *deus ex machina* to consider how a theatrical approach can aid our understanding of entrepreneurship. If theatre is a mirror to society, how can it reflect upon enterprise? First as Mangham proposes, theatre is a resource for helping understand how human beings get along with each other, how they work with each other. Of course, to be useful, this requires us to see entrepreneurship as a social process, where enterprise arises from social and economic exchange (Holmquist and Lindgren, 2002). It is easy to envisage how as social actors, we enact entrepreneurship. However it takes a little more stretching of imagination to accept that entrepreneurship is performance, but later in the paper I shall try to justify that claim. So a theatrical approach may help us to, if not understand, at least appreciate the entrepreneurial spectacle as performance. Secondly, theatre can make us confront the everyday, to reconsider the taken-for-granted and mundane. It can point out previously unconsidered aspects. Thirdly, a theatrical approach can perform the task of making the familiar become unfamiliar in a similar form to that of the anthropologist. Paradoxically dramaturgy can also produce the unfamiliar, and present it so that it becomes familiar. This aspect is certainly typical of the literature which uses theatre as a mechanism for change.

The purpose of the paper is to propose the use of theatrical metaphor as an addition to our repertoire of aids to understanding entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is complex and any addition tools in our conceptual toolbox which aid understanding are valuable. I am not suggesting that a theatrical approach can ever fully explain entrepreneurship, no more than a mechanic can fix our broken car with only one spanner. Each conceptual tool merely offers a different way of gaining purchase on the nuts that seal the black box we call entrepreneurship. In using this analogy I am reminded of the law of the instrument, that if you give a small boy a hammer, everything becomes a nail! (Kaplan, 1980) Nonetheless, Wood (2002:13) claims that the theatre metaphor, as an analytical approach, can provide tools for exploring social encounters and can distinguish form content, structure, significance and grammar. "Such tools help systemize the study of events and to place the observer in a different relation to the subject of the study." In other words, the tool provides a different sort of grip, a lever to crank up our understanding. Like all tools, dramaturgy cannot diagnose an issue, In particular,

dramaturgy can only help explain, it still requires the skilled analysis of the mechanic to comprehend what is going on within the black box. However, if we accept that a tool will enable us, researchers, to analyse the issue, this tool must be beneficial. A reviewer of an early draft of this paper kindly proposed that the benefit of the theatrical metaphor is that it helps to view entrepreneurship as not merely a one off event, but as a performance for different audiences and to see the entrepreneur not simply as an economic agent but as an individual performing different roles.

The paper will first consider the nature of theatricality and make a case for its value in entrepreneurial appreciation. The term, *appreciation*, has a particular resonance in this paper because of its dual but related meanings; the sense of a theatre critic who comments on the performance of the play; but also appreciating in the sense of valuing the performance. Turner (1982) talks about carving out a piece of space and time to look honestly at society, not as an objective scientist, but with the supreme honesty of a creative artist. Kaufmann (1968:65) notes how Hegel observed that Shakespeare's tragic characters develop, "by virtue of the image in which they contemplate themselves objectively, in theoretical reflection, like a work of art". Indeed, taking on the role of theatre critic enables us to actively participate in the performance, but from a reflective distance and not devoid of our own criteria for evaluation, (Kostera and Kominski, 2001). The dramaturgical perspective teaches us to be both analytical of the plot but also critical of the actors, it sensitizes us to be critically analytic of the link between appearances and what is really happening, as Weigert (1981) says, to think like a sharp theatre critic.

The history and heritage of theatricality as method

In Shakespeare's (1564-1616), *As You Like It*, Jaque says,

> *"All the world's a stage,*
> *And all the men and women merely players:*
> *They have their exits and their entrances:*
> *And one man in his time plays many parts,"*

But this classic landmark of the theatricality of life is only midway through the long history of the world as stage (Burns, 1972; Riggens, 1993). References to humans as theatre puppets stretch back to classical Greek theatre. Plato, in *Philebus*, wrote of the "great stage of human life". Indeed Burns (1992) suggests that the *theatrum mondi* topos had become commonplace

by Shakespeare's time. Certainly examples are to be found in both Horace and Seneca's work (Curtuis, 1967) and Wood (2002) comments on the appropriateness of Cervante's (1547-1616), Don Quixote. The endurance of theatrical metaphor owes much to the idea that life is acting and everyone an actor (Riggens, 1993). In the modern terms of sociology and organisation science, theatricality has a shorter but rich history, Goffman, (1959,1981; Burns, 1972; Turner, 1982; Mangham and Overington, 1983, 1987).

In the last fifty years or so (Schreyögg and Höpfl, 2004) theatricality has also been usefully applied to organisational study, Gardner (1992); leadership, Gardner and Avilo (1998) Harvey (2001); marketing, Fisk and Grove (1996), Grove *et al* (1990) and service provision (Goodwin, 1996). Welsh (2002) suggests that dramaturgy, as an analytical tool, enables us to understand the nature of social process. Monks *et al* (2001) explain how, for example, theatrical workshops are used to develop such leadership in times of change. In specific terms, there appears to be a growing awareness of business change as quintessential, and that managers, or more particularly, the masters of change, the entrepreneurs, need to be proactive and aware. Arkin (1998), for example, suggests that businesses have become more like performing arts, requiring people to work in ensemble-like project teams and to think creatively. Moreover, theatrical improvisation figures as a management technique (Monks *et al*, 2001), so that as Crossan *et al* (1996) suggest, improvisation links the need to plan for the predictable and to respond to the unpredictable. Certainly entrepreneurs cannot read from any predetermined scripts, entrepreneurial work is, in the words of Brown and Eisenhardt (1998) a competing on the edge strategy, so that improvisation enables continuous and creative adjustment to change. Seen in this light, much of entrepreneurship is improvisation; the interpretation, response and performance in a given situation (Cornelissen, 2004) that demands a mastery of process. What is clear from Monks *et al*'s paper is that theatre is used both to explain discourse and to explore roles. We see the application of the two facets of theatricality, the world as stage and the world as staged.

The theatrical analogy in descriptions of organisational life has enjoyed a prominent position over many years and continues to offer insights into behaviour in a wide variety of roles and contexts (Höpfl, 2002). Theorist and practitioners of theatre have always seen their art as a way of investigating social life. Indeed, Schreyögg and Höpfl (2004) argue that theatre can show how a thing (entrepreneurship) is constructed, sustained and managed. As Kostera and Kominski note, the theatre metaphor is valuable, in part because of its elegance; but also because of its fit with the constructivist approach. "What we see is happening in organisations as an ongoing performance, ambiguous and paradoxical, embracing various discourses, or in the language of this study, 'theatres'" (2001:322). It is over 2,000 years since Aristotle's

poetics and over 400 years since Shakespeare and Cervantes, yet their dramatic metaphors have endured. Evidence indeed of the durability, recurrence and utility of theatricality.

The theoretical "props" of theatricality

Berger and Luckman (1966:36) explain how the reality of everyday life is organised around the "here" and "now", but this reality is not exhausted by these immediate presences. Reality also embraces phenomena that are not present here and now. Yet nonetheless, we live in a common world with an ongoing correspondence between their meanings and my meanings. Berger and Luckman talk about "commutations" between these different forms of realities. They note how play and theatre provide excellent illustrations of this commutation. "As the curtain rises, the spectator is transported to another world" (1966:39). Yet, as the curtain falls the spectator realises how tenuous and ephemeral the reality of the staged performance. (Interestingly, Goffman refers to these shifts in realities as "brackets", to distinguish each episode of focused interactions. How like an act, and scene change in theatrical practices these are!) Foss (2002) shows how theatre can connect and show the interplay between the individual, historical conditions and local context. Similarly, Westrup (1996:25) demonstrates how metaphors of drama, "assist in showing the social processes that are acted out". The theatre is a literal frame for action. The proscenium arch is a framing and a threshold, a portal between "worlds".

Mangham and Overington (1987) describe the active role of audience in theatre. They explain how literary script is written for actors who in turn transpose into a system of theatre signs. The role of audience is to apperceive and restructure these signs and to make it part of their fund of aesthetic knowledge. Theatre produces signs to create a meaning which has to be perceived and interpreted by the audience (Schreyögg and Höpfl, 2004). Accordingly, theatre as enactment provides a mechanism for the audience to build their own informed social construction. Thus theatre casts its audience into an interpretative posture. What seems significant about this re-creation of realities is the unique ability of theatre to be both here and there. To bind together the then and the now; yesterday, today and tomorrow can become imminent, present or absent. But the bridging of time and space are not the only dimensions which can be set aside, put together or suspended in the metaphor of theatre. Truth and falsehood; fact and fiction, even the absurd and the rational can merge convincingly in performances. As Wood (2002) notes, theatre can present the facts beyond appearances and is a time machine.

This "in-betweeness" has been referred to by Victor Turner, (1974) as "liminality". Tempest and Starkey (2004:509) define liminality as the ambiguous condition of being between, at the limits of existing structures and where new structures are emerging. For Turner, liminality is a transformative stage where a thing is in process of becoming something else. I would argue that this describes the entrepreneurial condition so well. Trubshaw (1995) discusses how boundaries of time and space are liminal spaces. He describes how fairy tales begin with "Once upon a time", a time that is undetermined. He draws attention to the Arabic equivalent, "It was so and not so". This juggling of space and time allows a setting which crosses ontological thresholds, so that meaning is not anchored in space or time, but instead is illustrated in both space or time. This fits well with any notion of processual understanding, and fits even better with the concepts of theatre and entrepreneurial performance. As Turner puts it, "Structure is always ancillary to, dependent on, secreted from process. And performances…are the manifestations par excellence of human social process" (1987: 84).

For theatre, liminality suspends the restriction of being time or space bound, it allows the use of the interstices, those explanatory spaces that may fall between the cracks of events, since such boundaries serve to keep things in and keep things out. But theatricality can comfortably fit into liminal spaces to create a dimensionless centre which becomes a viewing point. And it may be necessary to go outside, to see what is going on within. The following is the "motif" for the 2001 IDEA congress on drama and theatre, it tells how theatre uses the concept of liminality-

> *"By the motif "Playing Betwixt and Between" the congress convenors wished to provide a metaphor that allows many interpretations, still focussing on some important peculiarities of the whole complex field, such as the cultural context of practices or the fiction-reality relationship. The fictional element of drama and theatre gives us the opportunity to see and reflect our cultural and mental capital from different viewpoints. In a play, we create transitional space here and now, in which we have the freedom to twist and play with our conceptions and where we are temporarily free to create new realisations and new levels of understanding. Drama and theatre as a cultural and educational practice use dramatic play and changes of perspective as central tools for instigating change and development."*

For entrepreneurship, liminality emphasises the process of becoming something different. In part, bound up with the past, but also presenting a possible future. Schumpeter (1934:85) talks of entrepreneurs having "the capacity of seeing things in a way which afterwards proves to be

true, even if it cannot be established at the moment". So one reason that entrepreneurship is so elusive to explain is that it too is a tranformative condition. When we talk of entrepreneurship we treat it as noun, an objective thing; when we talk of entrepreneurs, we treat them as in state of being- *she is an entrepreneur*. Neither of these is a true or accurate account. Entrepreneurship is a process of creating, not a thing in itself. If pushed to reify it, it may be said to be a condition, a state of economic creativeness. For entrepreneurs, our habitual reification is doubly misleading. Being an entrepreneur is an ephemeral event, one can only entreprende temporarily, when actually creating or changing a business; anything after this crystallisation event is not entrepreneurship. Of course when we talk of entrepreneurship we usually mean the process of becoming, thinking, planning, conspiring, doing the things which may lead to entrepreneurship. In consequence it seems reasonable to claim that entrepreneurship, as we use the term, is the performance of the process of becoming. But becoming is not fixed in time or space; the aspiration may have germinated in childhood; the idea may have resulted from a fleeting thought and gathering the physical, mental resources and courage may have taken half a lifetime. To appreciate entrepreneurship, in the sense I used earlier, we need to acclaim or criticise it as a processual performance. So entrepreneurship as a performance of becoming is transitive, transitory and ephemeral. It fits, and may even fill, the liminal spaces between the here and then. Indeed, the literal translation of entrepreneurship - "*going between*"- proposes such a boundary spanning activity. As Grant and Perren (2002) have argued, the boundaries of entrepreneurship as practice or as a research domain, blur into one another.

Johannisson (2002) points out how entrepreneurship is associated with anomalies and irrationality. Moreover as he comments, entrepreneurial venturing is reflected in the multiple social constructions where individual and collective forces interplay. These constructs, our understandings of the phenomenon, are complex. However, metaphors such as the theatricality of entrepreneurship, and indeed all figurative language, play an important process role in how we think and learn about phenomena. Of all the entrepreneurial discourse, metaphor is the most vivid. In explaining one thing in terms of another, attributes are produced and expectations developed. This sense-making role is particularly important for entrepreneurship because of the inherent problems of defining entrepreneurship. Even entrepreneurs themselves, as Hill and Levenhaugh (1995) suggest, operate at the edge of what they do not know. At root, entrepreneurship is about creating new realities; transforming ideas into new ventures, transposing old ideas into new situations. Entrepreneurship may thus be recognised as enacting a future. To be truly entrepreneurial, this Schumpertian act must be unique and must reach into an unknowable future. With such an intangible characterisation, it is no surprise that descriptive entrepreneurial metaphors are needed to "generate insight into

how things are"(de Koning and Drakopoulou-Dodd, 2002:2). As Cornelissen (2004) has shown, the extensive body of literature on metaphor has emphasised that the role of metaphor cannot be dismissed as sheer embellishment or as rhetorical alternative for what could otherwise be framed in literal, less ambivalent and more explicit terms. It is purposeful because metaphor provides fresh insights (Tsoukas, 1991). Seen in this way, metaphoric reasoning is creative. It is not simply about comparisons of similarities between things, as in "entrepreneurs are performers"; metaphor can create new meaning about things by "seeing as", (Cornelisssen, 2004), so that we can appreciate the characteristics of performance within the entrepreneurial act. Metaphors can thus provide a repertoire of concepts (Nicolson and Anderson, 2004). So where else but in the spectacle of theatre, save in entrepreneurship itself, might words, symbols and behaviours coincide so well with ways of thinking, ways of showing, ways of understanding?

Theatricality in the Context of Change

Commentators on theatricality recognise the significance of change as the forum for acting out the interplays of the social, the individual and context. Kostera and Kominski (2001) argue that in times of systemic change, when old values, symbols and institutions transcend into new ones, the ability to improvise and to learn is even more important. This is probably the best explanation for the durability of the application of the theatre metaphor, since change as a problematic has been so often used in theatre. Theatre was a natural element of the political life and public discourse in the Greek Polis; a forum for forming an opinion and for keeping the system open to changes. Drawing on Berger and Luckman's (1996) notion of an institution as a pattern of social action, Kostera and Kominski (2001) claim that such institutions are based on taken for granted assumptions that certain types of actions will be carried out by certain types of actors, a result of the interplay between the actor and the environment. De Tocqueville (1961:95) put this elegantly, "when the revolution that subverts the social and political state of an aristocratic people begins to penetrate into literature, it generally first manifests itself in the drama". Falco, (1999) discussing tragedy as a dramatic subset, shows how it captivates the imagination as a process that generates disorder, but that these "engines of disorder" are the fuel of social life. For entrepreneurship, note the similarity between the notion of engines of disorder and Schumpeter's "creative destruction". Entrepreneurship is inevitably bound up in change.

Two conceptual approaches to theatricality

There are two distinct approaches to the theatricality metaphor, these mirror the two analytical qualities of metaphor, similarity and seeing as described above. The first conceptual formalisation was Burke's (1945), which draws the world *as if* it were a stage. Burke's approach, dramatism, is normally applied to illustrate the components of social interaction, and to demonstrate their interplay. Goffman's approach, the dramaturgical, is probably better known. It provides a conceptual tool to interrogate the conduct of social roles, the focus, in contrast to dramatism, is about the word *as staged*. Social actors, in reality, act out many roles, dramaturgical analysis allows us to see them as the roles they are. Although these analyses have different assumptions and different levels of analysis, both are linked to the idea of the world as socially constructed; both use active metaphor to explore this world. Pocanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1982) note the two distinctive uses of the idea of *performances*. The first use is drawn from the French root *parfournir*, loosely meaning to accomplish. It fits Burke's dramatism, in the sense of bringing the sense of meaning into a structural form- "reality is brought to life" (Pocanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982:131). The second form of "play-acting" invites one to look at the organisation as staged, thus the dramaturgical shows how actors choose to act. Dramatism illustrates the world by showing it as a stage, whilst dramaturgy demonstrates the world as it is staged.

 Dramatism

This approach was developed by Kenneth Burke, primarily in his "Grammar of Motives", first published in 1945 and developed later 1972. His notion of dramatism was proposed as a way of interpreting human action and social intercourse. Burns (1992:108) notes that this was not planned for an analysis of motives (a psychology of social action) but "offers a key to the way in which we normally and habitually interpret behaviour and impute motives". Importantly Burke's approach is not intended to provide objective analysis, but as Burns points out, rather as if we were members of a critically aware theatre audience. Burn's suggests that this offers a fresh eye, so that we can come to "know" rather than "knowing about", hence by providing a way of unfamiliarising the familiar, by making ourselves "exiles from the familiar" (1992:109), we can understand what other people are up to. Boje (2002) notes the similarity of these questions to Aristotle's poetics, but adds a further aspect. He notes that "Frames" act as contesting ideologies. Boje's view is not unlike that of Welsh (2002), discussed below, that theatrical analysis should seek to uncover some more sinister motive to social interaction. Boje (2002:6) proposes that instead of asking, "what's the story here", we should ask, "why and how did this particular story emerge to dominate the stage

Dramaturgical

Like Burke, Goffman (1959) was interested in the hermeneutic twist, of using theatrical analogy to develop better or deeper understanding. However, Goffman's classical analytic form was about the micro management of social interaction. So although Goffman was informed by Burke's schema, his unit for analysis was much more focused on individual interactions. Goffman's technique uses the theatricality analogy as a heuristic device to explore the ways people conduct themselves. Rather more than simply "putting on an act", a dramaturgical analysis employs devices such as front and back-stage, to distinguish between the space and time set aside for social interaction and for preparation. It also, through the use of the *topos* of theatricality (Burns, 1992), emphasises the world as stage and our roles as social actors. Moreover, it becomes clear, as Shakespeare and Cervantes had noted so long ago, that each of us performs a range of roles. Like Burke's contribution, the power of Goffman's analytic form lies in making the familiar strange. Goffman's categorisations of roles, though simple, allow us to realise such things as audience complicity, how they may conspire with the actor to sustain his role and even emphasise the moral obligations of doing so. Sometimes criticised as providing only trivial, superficial analysis, (Gouldner, 1970; MacIntyre, 1981), Goffman was not concerned with meta theory, but in the micro engagements of everyday life. As Goffman claims, theatricality reflects how people sustain their social interaction. Dramaturgy provides an alternative perspective to comprehend and fathom what is going on. Welsh (2002) argues that Goffman's later interpretations (1981), along with those of Perinbanayagam (1982) and Gonos (1977) are positivistic because they do not use dramaturgy as metaphor, but as an accurate, literal reflection of social life. The following Table 1 attempts to compare and contrast these two conceptual approaches and to demonstrate the distinctive analytical purchase of the conceptual tools.

Theatricality - contrasts and comparisons in the application and use of theatre metaphor   Table 1

Origin	*Burke*	*Goffman*
	THE WORLD AS STAGE - DRAMATISM	THE WORLD AS STAGED - DRAMATURGY
Proposition	*All the world's a stage*	*The world as it is performed*
Level	macro	micro
Analogy	Enactment- *like theatre* (as if) hence- *perspective*	Re-enacting- *using theatre* (as is) hence- *method*
Applications	**Illustration** A mirror to reflect a reality	**Demonstration** A mirror to reflect roles and performances

	A critic's stance to appreciate the interplay of unfolding drama Sense making Learning about	The audience share and develop the enactment Sensegiving (to the roles) Learning how
Spotlights	Social organisation The social construction of meanings The cultural reproduction of meaning	Social roles and role playing Elements of interaction The cultural production of self
General utility	Allows a suspension of • The taken-for-granted • The boundaries of space and time • The boundaries of truth and fiction	Highlights • Existence of many presentations • Changing presentations of self • Micro social organisation • Creation of truths and fictions
Problems	Can it be applied to all circumstances? Not quite a "theory", model is descriptive, but less fruitful in explanatory terms and lacks causation elements	Does not relate the roles to other frames of explanation A micro model of symbolic interactions, but lacking in predictive power
Specific applications to enterprise	Aids appreciation of the social constructs of entrepreneurship, Change as the entrepreneurial context	Allows us to appreciate entrepreneurs as acting out their roles "War" stories can be contextualised

Act 1, Scene 2 - Applications of theatricality to entrepreneurship

One recent application of the dramaturgical perspective, Mason and Harrison (2000) provides a useful example of the metaphor in action. In their examination of the decision making criteria of Business Angels, citing Baron and Marksman's (2000) identification of four social skills which contribute to entrepreneurial success, (social perception; persuasion and social influence; social adaptability and impression management), they employ dramaturgy to show that impression management skills are critical in raising finance. In fact, Mason and Harrison took this research further to created a video, "You are the product" to demonstrate the importance of performance. Baron and Marksman (2000:107) also illustrate the value of impression management in a dialogue cited in their paper, "I could see that you had

something new. But it was the way you handled yourself during the meeting that mattered most". So clearly presentation in entrepreneurial practice is significant.

These examples of the application of the dramaturgical metaphor exemplify the theatricality of practice, showing how the roles that entrepreneurial actors take up need to be convincing. Mason and Harrison's example uses metaphor effectively, by showing one thing in terms of another, it goes beyond simply relabelling one thing as another; it provides an alternative metaphoric explanatory framework. However, our purpose is to delve a little deeper and to explore the broader benefits of a theatrical approach to understanding entrepreneurship as an enacted social process. In the broadest terms theatricality offers a way of seeing how enactment works. This is dramatism, the world as stage. In recognising entrepreneurship as a social process of enactment we can begin to discern an intrinsic instability of enterprise. As argued earlier, entrepreneurship is about tomorrow, possible future states of being, so entrepreneurship is "becoming". However each "event" may be new and idiosyncratic, but it needs to have some basis in our existing meaning systems. I would like to propose that dramatism can provide a basis of understanding the relationship between this here and now and the imagined future state. The metaphors of dramatism provide a background frame for analysing this process.

Whilst every process of action is a production of something new, a fresh act, at the same time all action exists in continuity with the past, which supplies the means of its initiation (Cassell, 1993). However, to enact a social practice, participants must draw on a set of rules. These rules can also be seen to structure and to shape the practices they help organise (Jack and Anderson, 2001). Actors draw on rules in the enactment of actions, although the capacity to modify the rule is an ever-present possibility. As Jack and Anderson have noted, the process of embedding is about establishing those social relationships which enable the entrepreneur to become part of the local structure. Embedding is a way of joining the structure. By and in joining the structure, one enacts it. So in acting out the rules, behaving in a way that may comply with expectations, entrepreneurial actors stage their performances in ways that make sense to others. Thus dramatism, in this sense, can operate as a macro background theory to appreciate the roles and expectations of the entrepreneurial stage. As a background theory, the world as stage, dramatism reflects the idea of change and continuity. Enactment works by engaging with the world as is, those rules and practices that constitute our understanding of how things are, but enactment allows a freedom to change the script, to adapt and improvise. Most importantly it illustrates the roles that entrepreneurial actors play in bringing about change. Enactment stages both the social and the business world, the environments that we operate within, but yet allows the free play of change and continuity. Whilst dramatism lacks

any great predictive power, it serves to illustrate the mechanisms and restraints of entrepreneurial change.

Dramaturgy, the world as is, appears to offer scope in interrogating and explaining the micro levels of entrepreneurial social interaction. One useful example of this is the role of entrepreneurial metaphor which has been a recent focus of academic interest (de Koning and Drakopoulou-Dodd, 2002; Drakopoulou-Dodd, 2002; Nicolson and Anderson, 2004; Koiranen, 1995; Hyrsky, 1988). These studies vividly show how entrepreneurs are associated with super action and heroic metaphor. Whilst such metaphors are part of the entrepreneurial discourse, the dramatic portrayal creates an opportunity for acting out these images. Taking Richard Branson, entrepreneur extraordinaire, as an example, we can readily discern how role playing and impression management builds and sustains his image as a swashbuckling but decent guy. We can see how a circular process of depiction as brave new hero of the business avant-garde is created, recreated and reinforces by acting out the images. Powerboats, ballooning and clowning are all staged performances to realise the image. Media and audiences play back and glorify the roles in a circularity of presentation, appreciation and performances. In this example, dramaturgy helps explain both why and how the role of entrepreneurial celebrity is acted out in spectacle.

On a more mundane but every-day level let us consider the embryonic or nascent entrepreneur, living in that half way house of becoming. They are not established, they have no track record to substantiate themselves, yet need the confidence of suppliers, financiers and customers to become established. Existing today only as would-be entrepreneurs they need to build an image which is beyond becoming. Baron and Brush (1999) puts this rather well, "convincing others to share their beliefs about what the emerging organization can, and will, become". Entrepreneurs seek cognitive legitimacy by developing trust in the promised new venture (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994). This process of convincing is a boundary spanning activity, in this case time spanning, making today's position appear "as if" it were tomorrow, and the business was established. Nascent entrepreneurs, in consequence, need to *enact* the new venture. This obviously follows Weik's (1979) classic theory of organising, as a process of interactions between individuals, of enacting the new venture. Gartner, Bird and Starr (1992) suggest that this enactment, "acting as if", helps demonstrate that the business is "real". They also note how entrepreneurial sensemaking is important to venture initiation; 'acting as if' the venture is unequivocal allows entrepreneurs to proceed where others might be paralysed by uncertainty. When entrepreneurs enact their venture with confidence, they increase its chances of success, because their actions create and reinforce the reality they perceive.

This argument shows that nascent entrepreneurs enact, as if it were a real business. But how does the application of dramaturgy help explain this becoming series of events? First we can recognise that this is role playing, acting as if. A dramaturgical analysis allows us to recognise it as such, we can see that the role is indeed a role and a performance and judge it on that merit. Consider the earlier discussion on Mason and Harrison's work. We saw that prospective financiers of the new venture were actually critics of the performance. Venture capitalists cannot know if the business will be a success, they can only judge a performance of the actors as if they were actually doing the business. Such critics know that that the entrepreneurial role in new business is not fixed but determined by contingency. Thus financiers will estimate how well the role is performed, and make a judgement about how these actors will perform, if they have they acted as if they know the part, have they portrayed the depth of character to enact as if, in the imagined circumstances of the new business. As Schreyögg and Höpfl (2004) it is the actor's skills which have to carry the action.

Consider the business plan, the ubiquitous script of make-believe future businesses. It, like play, is both fact and fiction. The market research is a scene, a particular presentation of a chosen form of reality, it represents the scenery in front of which the act is performed, the background which helps substantiate the imaginary business. On this basis the actors present, they perform the marketing strategy. This is that so this will be so, it is a plot, an unfolding new reality, in which we, as audience, are invited to join. Actors then perform the business model. They show how revenue will, or could, be generated. Thus we see in the performance the mingling of fact and fiction, of real and imagined futures. But best of all are the financials, the end point of the drama. These are crystal balls thrown two, three years into an imagined future. So like a theatre audience, we first suspend disbelief, becoming immersed in the drama, engaging with particular points that resonate with our own experiences, but raising eyebrows at the most outrageous propositions. It is as critics that we rejoin reality, the return to here and now. We have taken the role playing as the real, but now we appraise the performance, we then decide whether to boo or to applaud. Have we been inspired to believe the business plot?

As Harvey (2001) argues, applying the concept of impression management reveals how actors project desired images of trustworthiness, credibility, moral worth, esteem, all of which resonate with audiences own perceptions. Audiences perceive notions of shared identities, histories and values, thus creating congruence. For entrepreneurs, we can see them acting out success. So dramaturgy does help us to appreciate the nature of the embryonic business, this business that is both real and yet unreal. We can see how the different parts interplay, how

scenes are constructed. We can recognise and appreciate the interdependencies of fact and fiction, and the binding up of images of possible futures. Significantly we can see how the business plan is a master plot, but in the acting out each performance is different, reflecting the performing abilities of different actors.

Conclusions

The metaphor of theatricality provides us with some conceptual tools for understanding enterprise. The functionality of the enacted metaphor's utility lies in its ability to address particular types of questions and to consider certain types of issues about the setting of enterprise. By framing the sort of questions that we discussed in Table 1 within the metaphoric lens we may be able to find new and different answers. For example, by taking the dramatism perspective, that "all the world's a stage", we can ask, what is going on here? We can see the interplay of the perceptions of rules for entrepreneurship; we can sense the unfolding of the entrepreneurial process. We can learn what it means to be an entrepreneur. If we apply the dramaturgical perspective, "the world as it is performed", we can readily discern the entrepreneurial performance, watch, learn and critique the micro social actions of the entrepreneur.

Although we know that entrepreneurship, as a social construct, contains both fact and fiction, we need some way of engaging with the enactment of enterprising. At one level entrepreneurship is the enactment of a future, the creation of new realities. At another level it is performance, the acting out of the rhetoric of a socio-economic role. This is because entrepreneurship as process stands on boundaries of time, it is about today and tomorrow; boundaries of real and yet to happen; boundaries of rational and irrational and bridges gaps of incongruities. Thus we need a liminal mechanism which will allow us to span these boundaries. We need a way of suspending our beliefs in the all too commonsensical. The theatricality of dramaturgy and dramatism analysis provides us with a useful tool to explore the phenomena that make up entrepreneurship. Change is the environment of enterprise, in both creating and reacting to change. It is a process of re-creation, but change and changing circumstances are difficult to understand when one stands in the midst of change. Seeing entrepreneurship as a spectacle provides a lucid way to set enterprise into the backdrop of change and to highlight entrepreneurship as a process of change. Drama can demonstrate how the plots of entrepreneurship unfold in time. In practice entrepreneurship is a creative performance and deserves to be "appreciated" as an art form. Theatricality provides a device which permits this, in so doing it enhances our understanding.

Theatricality works as an alternative medium of explanation. It is an inductive tool that enables us to see things which might otherwise be invisible. It makes manifest the latent role of performances in the social construction of entrepreneurship. It operates as a stage spotlight, it illuminates, albeit selectively, some elements which we might not have otherwise have seen. We cannot say that all entrepreneurship is "acting", but we can say that it is acting out a socio-economic role.

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