

Construing the Small Business and its Market: A Heideggerian Perspective

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*A thesis submitted to the University of Gloucestershire in
accordance with the requirements of the degree of PhD
in the Faculty of Business.*

July 2009

Abstract

This exploratory research considers the difficulties that are associated with understanding market knowledge in a micro firm. The majority of micro firms gain their rewards from mutual beneficial exchange with their customers. The focus of this mutual exchange is often the product that is the basis of their business. The gaining of new customers is often difficult and requires a considerable degree of effort. The standard business approach is to apply cognitive rationality to this task. Some businesses succeed with this approach, but it is possible that other approaches might reveal a greater understanding of the small business situation. Research suggests that small business owners/managers develop tacit utilitarian, cognitively immediate and undetachable knowledge. In a developing business this is contingent with the entrepreneurial task. It can usefully be conjectured that this task is related to the introduction of new business areas. The entrepreneurial task can be seen as involving a qualitative introduction of new business into a market that has not existed before. The situational interplay of these two factors is investigated using a phenomenological research method and deep analysis of a small number of interviews. This research has found evidence that the development of market knowledge in a micro business can result from a leap into a new engagement. The possible grounding for such a leap is explored in the light of the philosophy of Heidegger. Heidegger's philosophy is noted for the exploration of being and time. He adopted hermeneutic and phenomenological approaches to discuss the leap into the grounding question of being. This leap into a new engagement requires a break from the content but not the methods of small business understanding and can be enabled by the developing attunement of the business owner. This is a different method of investigating the nature of market development in the small business. It is expected that this work will be found to be of value when undertaking further research in this business situation.

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by a specific reference in the text. No part of this thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other educational institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University of Gloucestershire.

Signed _

Date 11 September 2009.

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Acknowledgements

For a considerable amount of time the thinking applied in this work seemed to be outside the main stream of entrepreneurial studies. This was partially because it became very personal and partly in a deliberate intention to attempt something new.

When I got to the end I was grateful to my examiners in that they provided a confirmation that this work was of some value as a contribution to the theory of small business development.

I am grateful to my supervisors for getting to that decisive encounter with a work that was sufficiently robust to be able to examine. One of my supervisors got me started in that he made me think it was possible for me to achieve a work of value on this topic. One of my supervisors enabled me to finish, and got my thinking into a shape that would be recognisable to others. This was not just in the format of the work but in refining how the work could be articulated. My other supervisor provided the emotional buoyancy through the middle part that enabled me to stay afloat in the difficult periods of doubt and reworking. The buoyancy provides the force that is able to withstand the ups and downs of any project such as this that requires an individual to test what he really knows.

Further beneath this, at a deeper and more secure level, is the support of your family. This is the heartbeat of the work. At times you accept this heartbeat because it is always there but without this kind of unquestioning support from them the whole project would have failed in very short order. I am unable to thank my wife and family enough.

One final acknowledgement is to my interviewees who gave me their time. Time is important in business but if there is to be any development of knowledge about small businesses then the people who agree to give their time are the real heroes. I thank them for what they have done.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Starting on the research journey

In both a temporal and a personal sense, this research has been a challenging journey. The journey, if it can be so described, somehow felt like a random walk of digressions and progressions. It was never simply going from here to there, forwards rather than backwards. In some respect it was difficult to decide with a great degree of certainty, which was which in the progress of the research, it not being obvious which way was forward. It was the sense of immersion that seemed to be the most prominent in seeking a greater understanding of the research topic. While immersion is often characterised as flow, the process was too disjointed to be totally absorbing. There were times when it was difficult to keep the process going. So while this study starts with a series of personal reflections this will not be entirely an indulgence but will set the scene for the journey as an important trope of this research. It also acts as a narrative theme in describing the development of an understanding of this particular subject and the path to the conclusions. The other aspect of this journey is that to express your thoughts is to somehow dispossess yourself of them; they become less personal during the rigours of the construction into a narrative. It is perhaps the case that through this change they are somehow not felt so keenly, but I hope they are just as valid and a great deal more coherent.

This research began for me with the feeling of disquiet about how small firms develop their business. This feeling developed as a result of two factors. I had been in business myself for eighteen years that covered the period where there was an expansion from being a small trader. This led through the creation of a

new business as a partnership in a new city, to being company director of a much larger business that operated on a number of sites. The biggest problem, and the most interesting and relevant, was business development and market understanding. This is by no means unique to me and the organisation that I created. For many other businesses, this issue is the predominant one. I sold the business and decided to return to study to gain qualifications that the time pressures of business expansion had precluded. The completion of my MA also left me with the feeling that the existing knowledge in this area was unsatisfactory. Most business discussion at the Masters level was based on examples and solutions that suited a larger business. This seemed often to be predicated on the assumption that the theory and practice of business was independent of size; the espoused theory could be applied to a variety of contextual situations. With the appointment of a chair of Entrepreneurship at the University, it seemed as if the moment was right to pursue this research.

It did not seem so at the start, but undertaking this research became, in a very close sense, a personal journey for me as indicated above. The two elements of discovery were a different situation in being a research student from that of absorption in the 'constant now' that is business life. There was a feeling that there was a lack of appreciation of my existing skills by potential employers, adding a true-life veracity to the feeling that life in small businesses really is a different world. Firstly, there is the question as to what extent my experience was typical. It is not possible for one person to experience everything about small business. To what extent was my experience of any value as a research base? This journey felt intensely personal in the way it produced multiple stages of development as a researcher. This is not however just for me to judge, but I hope it is at least reflected in this thesis. Following Cavarero (2000) I like to consider that the journey is the temporal progression of events that can be used as the visible signs of personal development. The production of a journey as what we are, it reflects but cannot reveal who we are. It is also the case that when we have no maps, or we feel that the ones we have are unreliable, we look for signs to guide us. Is there a sign that will give either one's position or the direction of travel?

From the initial discussions on the subject, several of the parameters of the study were outlined as a product of research seminars. This difficulty with business development from a marketing point of view came to be envisioned as one of the problem of 'understanding the market'. So the two main areas of theory that informed this study were marketing and knowledge. The context of this research was the micro business, one that was both under researched and also one for which I had some implicit understanding as a result of my previous experience. The theory of entrepreneurship was also relevant as it is, in brief, the theory of business creation. It seemed as if the lacunae in the existing research would be best appreciated through a qualitative research study that would explore the current level of market knowledge within micro businesses. This study started with a review of the existing literature within the marketing domain on the development of understanding about the market. This follows in the next chapter.

In conjunction with this review, a narrative analysis of interviews was undertaken with seven micro businesses. The aim was to refine and further develop an understanding of the market and the methods of exploring the existing understanding of micro business owners. The interviewees were selected from micro business owners who had previously met the researcher and it was felt they would be suitable. Three other interviews were not transcribed because the five chosen were the most insightful. They were 1) the operator of the local farmers market, 2) the owner of a local engineering firm, 3) a partner in a bio-fuels supplier. These transcribed interviews are recorded in the fifth chapter as a first phase of the empirical research. These interviews produced a rich picture of the level of knowledge development in the small business. This knowledge development could result from a multitude of factors; knowledge that already exists, the degree to which such knowledge was formal taught knowledge, or was in some way experiential or tacit. How was such knowledge developed – through conversation with others, the type of product and their understanding of it, the dependence on others for business success? The comment that 'no one knows anything', attributed to the scriptwriter William Goldman, seemed to be true, but of course what is not known at the time are the *outcomes* of business activity in an uncertain market. It seems to me that there has to be some knowledge inherent in the activity and an attempt to discover some part of it seemed justified. Russell

once compared starting a philosophical investigation to watching an object approaching through a thick fog; this seemed a good metaphor for how this study was developing.

The Relevance of the Small Business

This research is focused on the small business, in particular the micro businesses at the smallest end of the business spectrum. The personal and situational factors contributing to this choice of topic have been already discussed. One of the primary reasons for the development of research in this field is the substantial contribution that small businesses make to the economy (Deakins & Freel 2003; 38; Macpherson & Holt 2005; 3; Moriarty et al 2008; DTI 2004; 15). This is the case in both developed and developing countries, where the trends towards consolidation of businesses seem to be particularly active. The vitality of small businesses is impressive. They remain a significant part of economic life.

Secondly a greater proportion of small businesses in an economy are considered to bring social benefits such as economic participation and income distribution (Amini, 2004). One of the normative assumptions incorporated into this study is that this ability to be organisationally independent is valuable in itself. A characteristic of small business operation is the sense of personal enhancement, obligation and maturity that comes from the ability to be responsible for making a success of earning one's own living and the ability to provide employment for others. The cultivation of an enterprise culture - a culture in which everyone with entrepreneurial talent is inspired- is now national policy (DTI 2004; 20).

Thirdly, as explored in the literature review, there is the appreciation that the understanding and operation of marketing within this economic sector is not sufficiently understood. This is not to overlook the particular problems that occur in the marketing of large organisations, but the development of market understanding in a small firm, as discussed later, is qualitatively different. An understanding of this difference would have significant economic and social benefits if such a development led to an improved understanding of the complex activities involved in the marketing activities of a small firm. This point is a

central part of this thesis and will be explored in much further depth throughout the work.

These exploratory interviews took place in conjunction with the literature review in the fields of marketing, knowledge, and entrepreneurship that is included in the following chapters. This literature review became extensive and detailed, often exploring avenues that might provide the critical insight that I was seeking. During this process and in the study as a whole, it became harder to mentally manipulate the concepts and approaches in the field. At this stage, the writing seemed to become more important as a mechanism to capture the development of my thoughts. Writing is a more considered activity because it removes the immediacy of application of thought to the moment and allows a more considered inspection.

In this manner the topic became spread out before me, both in the way it became the terrain on which I was situated – and observing that it was ‘a spread’, a meal to be consumed and hopefully digested.

Research questions:

Do some entrepreneurs running small businesses become so engaged with the product and skills in their work, that they perceive customers as singular and in isolation from any market?

Alternatively do some entrepreneurs running small businesses perceive the purpose of the business as a means of engaging in a market with the object of achieving progress in the market?

This thesis seeks to understand the relationship between these two modes of engagement and their implications for market success.

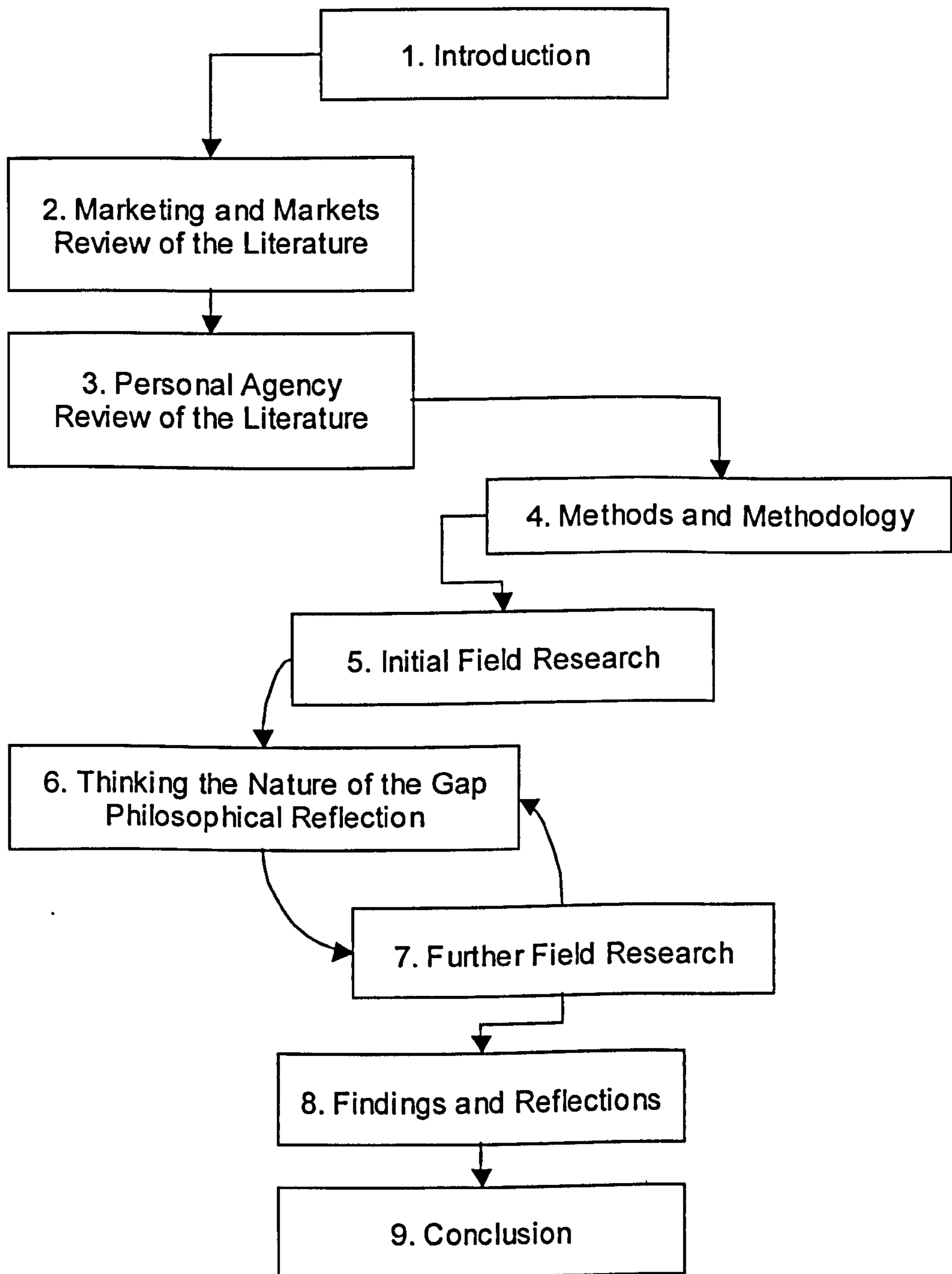


Figure 1 The Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2

Marketing and Markets

The normative nature of the marketing concept

A core area of theory that both motivates and underpins this study is the academic discipline of marketing. This chapter explores the literature on marketing that considers the development of market knowledge in a micro business. The motivation for studying marketing is that it can be defined as the discipline that covers exchange relationships. There is also the question whether existing marketing theory is adequate, especially with regard to small businesses. The academic discipline of marketing both informs, and is developed by, the conduct of marketing in the existing business milieu. This chapter explores existing marketing theory to describe, respond to, and in some ways uncover, the premises about market knowledge that are a central part of marketing, in its interplay with current business practice.

Marketing, as an academic field, has the objective and the intention of developing a coherent body of knowledge that provides the theoretical base for the encapsulation of understanding about market interventions. It started from the study of the determinants of market success (Addis & Podesta 2005). The domain of marketing, to the extent that it attempts to be this coherent domain, possesses two types of understanding. It contains both knowledge of the world it seeks to understand and knowledge of the principles applicable in the discipline – ‘the continuous interaction of theory and research’ (Alderson & Cox 1948). In the same paper, they also propose that group behaviourism, the system of group interactions, is able to be the integrative approach to a theory of marketing. In their view this incorporates a functional stance, in that processes are designed to

achieve objectives; the sequential structured approach to management that, as discussed later, may not apply to entrepreneurs (Collinson & Shaw 2001). Returning to the relationship between the principles and the facts, the 'real world' and the constructions that we produce, will be a major part of the discussion throughout this thesis. This topic tends to be thrown into the foreground because marketing is appreciated as an applied discipline, (Hunt 1994; Ottesen & Grønhaug 2004) and that a central part of this thesis is about knowledge and its contextual employment. Part of the aim of this thesis will be to avoid precluding discussion of this knowledge development from the outset and seek to explore the implications of different epistemologies throughout the thesis.

Marketing has its roots in the activity of economic distribution: how to get the goods from the producer to the consumer (Blackman 1963), and the original description of marketing as purchasing or shopping still survives in some usages. Marketing is, in this view, about business transactions in a market where producers and consumers exchange for mutual benefit, or to rephrase that, they maximise their individual satisfactions (McLarney & Chung 1999). What our ideas are about the nature of a market becomes the basis for our understanding of marketing. This understanding often includes some ideas about the location of, in a broad sense, the market for our products. The original view of a market as a *place* to buy and sell has continued, even though the modern conception of a market is people not places. However the use of the term marketplace has continued, with it now more often meaning a conceptual region often differentiated by product; the product-market. So that for some the meeting ground for the buyers and sellers of products is a bounded arena occupied by the demand for a particular product (Rosa et al 1999). The product-market becomes the trading space. New products can be seen as filling a 'space' in the market (Lien 1997: 239). We can also see that the market is not a physical object that we might gain knowledge of through direct experience. It is a complex construct with its only ideal type being that of perfect competition which assumes that markets are about competition rather than satisfaction. A triangle can be easily defined, but a market less so. Alternatively we could appreciate the market as a collective noun that describes a series of transactions (Hunt 1976). The market although it does not physically exist, it allows for the understanding of a

succession of multiple events. In this way the market contains the idea of temporality and counting or summation. We can think of a realised and a potential market that amount to different things. The market has also the aspects of temporal continuity that transcends individual transactions. Although particular transactions are relatively short lived, the *idea of the market* is not temporally limited. A market of some form is always available; it is part of the human world. By appreciating this aspect of the market, and in particular to talk about the market environment, is to see it as fundamentally external. It is a totality of what is available to us in business life, which we cannot know in its totality but allows us to project our understanding of individual transactions from the market-as-a-whole. We consider what has already taken place and what might happen in the future. These ideas about the market will be reconsidered in later chapters. So it seems to be implicit in the idea of marketing that it has economic foundations and it consists of predominantly transaction based activity. Transaction based marketing is something different and, for some, it is to be avoided because it concentrates on the particular sale rather than on continuing market relationships (Gummesson 2004). The foundation of marketing in located and successive transactions leads to the genesis of the market offering residing in the product. This product was traditionally physical goods but now incorporates service based products; products categorises both goods and services. Grönroos (1997) considers that the 4P's – product, price, place, and promotion – of the marketing mix originally proposed by Borden (1964); had their roots in micro economic theory. The individual and social processes¹ that are involved in exchange are some part of nearly all marketing definitions and it is important to recognise that markets are essentially social institutions (Kay 1996; 139). This also has resonance with the view of markets as socio-material clusters of relations (Garston & De Montoya 2004; 24), that is between things and people. So we move into the activities that surround the product supply in a social setting.

Those that do not accept the foundation of marketing resting in exchange activity criticise the connection on two levels. Firstly we can conceptually stretch the idea

¹ “Marketing is the process in a society by which the demand structure for economic goods and services is anticipated or enlarged and satisfied through the conception, promotion, exchange, and physical distribution of such goods and services” (Bartels et al, 1965; 4).

of exchange; in modern society everything can become exchange (Martin 1985). Adherents of this view consider marketing should be restricted to a business function applied directly to the development of sales, and any broadening of the concept dilutes and weakens it (Luck 1974). Marketing has now become as much a social phenomena as a business activity; whether this has weakened it is debatable. Marketing has been successful, at least until 1983, in improving the outcomes of managerial practice (Anderson 1983). The real basis of marketing theory is its application in a managerial and business context. The other side of the same coin is that marketing applies to all our social interactions even on an individual basis (Levy 2002). The adoption of marketing to be successful seems to be central, in the arena of commercial business or social 'enterprise'. The broadening of marketing may result in a view of it as a generic human activity (Anderson 1983), and therefore it is a valid subject of study for that reason. As this generic human activity it seems that marketing has often prioritised the purposeful and gainful nature of marketing activity as befits an 'applied discipline'. This has acted to the detriment of a theoretical approach, so in this view, it is inessential to know the theoretical antecedents of say market segmentation to be able to adopt it as an espoused approach. Morgan (1996) discusses the current state of marketing theory and reviews a number of managerial 'philosophies', which are in fact no more elaborated than identifying the focus of current managerial effort – in either cost, product, production, sales, or being merely responsive. The marketing philosophy discussed has the advantage of being multi-focused adding the complexity of multiple objectives. Morgan further identifies the conflict between developing an expression that is communicable and one that is sufficiently rigorous. To this extent the marketing concept can be perceived as a meta-narrative that is an irrefutable world-view (Brown 1994).

The antecedents of a behavioural approach to marketing scholarship are at least as old as that located in economic transactions. The emphasis of the exchange is that it involves a psychological contract, and it is at this level not the economic that the interesting aspects of marketing lie (Alderson 1952). Early marketing moved from a rational-emotional to an operational-psychological continuum of buying behaviour (Udell 1964). The relevant aspects of this psychological

contract are the behavioural outcomes, at least in the first instance, so Hunt (1983) defines marketing as 'the behavioural science that seeks to explain exchange relationships'. The relevance of personal engagements in this contract is therefore demonstrated in – economic – behaviour. Alderson & Martin (1965) develop this further so that the primitive or foundational concepts of marketing are sets, behaviour, and expectations. The domain is behaviour within a system. A system for them is a group of interactive sets which consist of 'people and their supporting facilities' and a transvection is a linked sequence of transactions. Any transvection can be understood using these primitive concepts as 'ways of looking' at the transvection. It is worthy of note here two things about these primitive concepts. Firstly we can see that the concept of sets is elaborated to a greater extent than the other two, which reveal themselves as decision preferences about choices within the transaction system. Furthermore, what remains unexamined is the level at which these concepts work together particularly the social aspects of sets, expectations, and behaviour. Later research has revisited this conceptual field realising that so far the aim of combining this dynamic activity with a socio-cognitive stance to explain the evolution of markets is a minority pursuit (Rosa et al 1999).

In summary, it seems that the ability to predict how producers and consumers come to understand each other and hence to generate the required transaction activity, is a central pursuit of marketing. Holbrook and Hulbert (2002) emphasise the persuasive aspects of marketing: although it is based on economics, it is the need to convince others, which provides the justification for the supervision of psychology into the mix. The ability to be persuasive seems to be more of an attribute required of the supplier in a transaction. The buyer becomes the persuaded part of the dyad. The customer often needs to be persuaded by the market management activities of the firm, which wrap the brand in symbols and meaning (Patterson 1998). Persuasion becomes central to those who are professional marketers and have a managerial approach. It is interesting that the conceptual space of the marketplace that previously seems to have been a social activity is modified through a psychological approach to markets in which this space is seen as an inner realm of consumer desires.

The Marketing Concept

The marketing concept, in which the customer comes first, is one of the central foundations of the post-war operation of marketing. Barksdale and Darden (1971) date its formulation and implementation by the General Electric Company twenty years earlier. To them it is a fundamental business philosophy, which guides and co-ordinates company activity. In essence, it is effectively captured as ‘the whole business from the customer’s point of view’ (Drucker 1954; 39). It legitimises marketing (Addis & Podesta 2005) as a benign axiom (Gummesson 2002) and thus separates it from what may be exploitative selling. The driver behind this promotion of the marketing concept was that the existing commercial rationale at that time was directed towards the needs of the producer. Thus ‘we are here to provide what the customer wants’ grants the ethical justification for marketing. One seminal early definition of the marketing concept by McKitterick was ‘making the business do what suits the interests of the customer’ (Simmonds 1986). In any discussion of the central tenets of marketing, the marketing concept must be included, although its status as a marketing theory will require further exploration in this work. Goods, at least since the industrial revolution, were produced in factories and the need was to find purchasers of these goods, with changes in the product offering usually being produced by technological change. The motivation was to find sales transactions for the producer’s output. The rationale behind the marketing concept was that it would be more appropriate to discover what the customer wanted and supply that need, than to expend effort in finding buyers for the, often already decided, production output. Through this approach the characteristics and perception of the product can be revised to realise a more sustainable demand for the product; thereby developing a market for it, and thus maintaining profitability in the longer term. There is usually an elapsed time between the occurrence of customer satisfaction and profitability (Guo et al 2004). In their description of a market, the marketing concept is both a conceptual scheme and a performative device (Garston & De Montoya 2004; 229).

It is important to note here two corollaries of the marketing concept approach; the need for an external environment and the response to change. The use of the environment in business generally and marketing in particular is rooted in a

modernist worldview. The environment in a managerial sense is seen as what is outside the organisational boundaries (Matsuno et al 2005). The developments in the Enlightenment following the Copernican revolution will be discussed later. The other factor which is at least related to this is the development of a mass society. Personal trading in small societies rarely needs the idea of a marketing environment as an abstraction. So to produce theories about how we should interface with the marketing environment becomes a late modern issue.

Another well documented phenomenon is the rapid alteration of market conditions; we are managing in a time of great change (Drucker 1995). This characterisation of changing markets impacts on the idea of marketing as interacting with an evolving environment (Morris & Lewis 1995). Marketing has been succinctly described as organised rational innovation (Simmonds 1986). It can also be noted that the increased tempo of social and technological change was observed at least fifty years ago (Ohlin 1958), challenging the characterisation of the current times as being particularly turbulent. There is an expectation of change. This perception of change is the rationale for continually refining our knowledge of the consumption process, our knowledge is perishable, and is redundant unless refreshed. The purpose of marketing innovation is management for the best economic results, flexibility and adaptation. Entrepreneurship by contrast becomes the ability to see beyond the current activities (Thorpe et al 2005) to envisage new disclosive spaces of opportunity (Spinosa et al 1997; 68).

It has so far been argued that marketing resides within the sphere of business as a learned social activity of supply and persuasion. Activity in the market requires some kind of knowledge of a particular product and its exchange. Appadurai (1986) considers that there are three types of knowledge involved in the social life of a commodity: that required for production; that needed for consumption; and that which fuels circulation and exchange. Whilst the marketing approach can involve the utilisation of all three of these types of knowledge, the marketing concept privileges the utility of consumption knowledge. This knowledge gained informs the activity of business, because this knowledge tells us what the customer gains from the product. Chaston (2004) considers that customer's

expectations are the result of this knowledge, which is more than just awareness. This consumption knowledge is developed and resides with the consumer (Bengtsson & Firat 2006); businesses need adopt strategies to gain it. From a marketing perspective, the production knowledge is modified by feedback from consumption knowledge. Marketing operations are therefore enjoined to gain knowledge about the customer's requirements – their needs, wants, desires. The knowledge involved in consumption cannot be seen just as the possession of the individual but must have a community or social aspect; in this way, they both have interests. These are manifest in several ways; through the prevention of deviant consumption; the efficient use of resources; or to inform social discourse about consumption. There are multiple approaches to ways of achieving this. Thus marketing is a global system but one which is able to support diversity (Lien 1997: 242). One of the current approaches to developing this understanding of customer requirements is the market orientation concept which will be considered after criticisms of the pursuit of marketing.

Countervailing Approaches

The centrality of the marketing concept as the normative justification for the engagement with the study of marketing does not mean that the concept is universally accepted. Marketing has since its inception been subject to a number of contested interpretations. Firstly it is considered to create desires for products rather than merely responding to customer demand, and pursues a Machiavellian approach –in a manipulative sense – to this stimulation of desire (Hunt & Chonko 1984). Developing this theme Cherrier & Murray (2004) argue that the assumed 'agentive' approach in marketing is negated by practice. Rather than the assumption of consumers as independent agents they consider that marketing generates 'seduction by desire' leading to a 'dependence on objects'. The seduction by desire is a tautology– seduction is desire. It is generally accepted that the production and consumption of products has increased enormously in recent years creating a consumption culture (McLarney & Chung 1999). Arvidsson (1997) emphasises the role of this 'extensive regime of accumulation' in producing 'a pluralisation of socially sanctioned identities'. In response to this it may be the case that marketing is concerned with the generation of desires,

albeit symbolic (Grubb & Grathwohl 1967). This desire generation might be an integral part of awareness creation as the foundation of the hierarchy of effects model (Lavidge & Steiner 1961). The point is that we are presumably non-rational actors in this mode, and the assumption of informed economic agents participating in an open market should be re-examined (McLarney & Chung 1999). There is a greater emotional content to consumption that is available to be manipulated (Stern et al 1998). The perceived success of marketing in stimulating demand enforces its centrality to the modern economy. Any sustained reduction of consumption would have deleterious effects on economic wellbeing, as defined in terms of our domestic product.

Another issue is prominent in considering the symbolic production of desire. In this context it is possible to see the development of the branding theory as a method to distract the consumer from gaining details of the production knowledge – as was discussed above. The brand could be seen as a screen upon which the brand concept is projected for the enjoyment of the psychological satisfactions that the brand is constructed to portray. This attempt is continually challenged by consumer groups to get behind this view of the product and to know something about the process of production – as is the case with the marketing of running shoes.

As we are dependent on a physical world, our dependence on objects is more difficult to subject to prima face criticism. We live in a world where we use objects as part of our purposes, and human history can be seen as necessitating the production of the means of survival. The more insightful criticism might be to see the growth of commodification of objects, and the fetishism of commodities as products of our labour. This leads to relations between people becoming relations between objects (Marx 1954; 76). The means of production is the basis for the ideology. Our lives are governed by the system of control and surveillance that produces and manipulates these objects (Brownlie 1997). The ways that we exist with objects and how this impacts on the activities of marketing is important to later discussions in this thesis especially that of identity.

A further criticism of the marketing approach is that the search for and attraction of customers in a competitive environment leads one to *select out* the unprofitable sectors (Knights et al 1994). In their chosen industry – financial services – this has led to improved participation by those active and aware in such markets and the almost disenfranchisement of those who are not ‘encouraged’ to participate in the market. This can be an effect of one of the fundamental concepts in marketing; the greater returns realised by segmenting the market (Levitt 1980). Given the limited resources in any enterprise there is the justification, and strategic branding implications, for concentrating on the most profitable sectors. This view is often founded on the belief that no particular firm will control the market so actions to improve the market share of any business are justified; firms are participants in the market not controllers of it. Adam Smith’s ‘invisible hand’ will ensure the benefits to society. This could be seen as a rational position if there is general acceptance of the view that economic activity is embedded in social relations (Granovetter 1985; Zafirovski 2008). The premise of social Darwinism that is implicitly assumed in the informed economic actor thesis is one that is by no means accepted by all (Schroeder 2002; 40). If economic exchange is a central part of human society, the development of participation must be a legitimate aim. Sun (1998) calls for a visible hand of co-operation to counterbalance the effects of competition.

The development of a relationship marketing approach that emphasises the interactive and often continuing nature of market exchanges has been one response to what are perceived as manipulative management approaches (Gummesson 2002). Relationship marketing emphasises the continuing and collaborative nature of market exchanges, we should enter into them as free agents ‘characterised by trust, equity, responsibility, and commitment’ (Kavali et al 1999). There has been some evidence that the impact of automation in retailing further disenfranchises the customer who is seeking human contact in their purchasing activity (Forman & Siram 1991). The experience of shopping can be the focus of human interaction for these customers. The potential impact of technology on the exchange process goes further. It has been a criticism of the new e-marketing that the customer has to perform the greater investment in the creation of new products, and is thus locked into a relationship (Dolfsma 2004).

This is because the collection of consumer e-behaviour is automated in software routines for the intermediary. It can be argued that the reason why only a few large firms accomplish the management of customer relationship data is that they are in a position, through their collection of large volumes of customer data to locate the meaning of this process in their realisation of it. They define the use of customer data. Government statistics follow the same pattern. Marketing has also now become centralised on the collection of data. Successful businesses are enjoined to know more about their customers, and through the syndication and aggregation of data it is possible to know individual customer's market profiles (Peters 1992; 718). Through this analysis it can seem that knowledge of personal preferences is more extensive than the individual's own as they can be accurately predicted (Holbrook & Hulbert 2002), which we often are not able to do personally. We often forget what we have chosen before.

A continual object of discussion in the marketing field is the identification of a gap between marketing as it is practised in commercial activity and the creation of marketing concepts through academic study (Hunt 2002). In part this is about the relevant contributions of theory building and practical activity in developing the conceptual domain that is marketing. This discussion continues to the present day and Levy (2005) suggests the metaphor of the tree to provide a symbiotic view of the theoretical roots and the revealed, or perhaps merely visible, branches. The direction of fit of theory and practice is somehow overcome here by the mutuality of the two sub-systems.

Often the development of theory is portrayed as the development of objective knowledge. Marketing concepts are then the reification of our mutual relations. The normative stance in academic work is to adopt a third party, objective view, often with the aim of generalisation of the findings (Blair & Zinkhan 2006). The theory of marketing interposes and mediates what could be natural social relations. One stream of research is to deconstruct this objectivity and to emphasise the personal elements of academic work. Academic theory development has a rhetorical aspect, it emphasises the contribution made by the author (Monin 2004; 32). The communication of academic research aims to

persuade others of the validity of the argument promulgated, and to the extent that this is accepted it leads to personal rewards and success. Therefore the nature of marketing theory as the disinterested pursuit of knowledge is challenged by consideration of its purposes. This is particularly the case in an applied discipline where the commercial exploitation of a reputation is considered reasonable and there are more opportunities for doing so. The interesting point about this in an academic thesis not that people have personal motivations but that the texts that we study have this rhetorical aspect.

In its rationality, marketing is portrayed as a gender free activity, in its approach to both management and execution. Some consider that current practice is dominated by a patriarchal approach which conceals the benefits of the female management of marketing which is likely to be more consensual but as effective (McDonagh & Prothero 1997; Freeman & Varey 1998). It is argued that abstract rationality is not gender free (Belenky et al 1996; 217). The element of active persuasion is eschewed by some female business people (Hytti 2005). Others have failed to find a significant difference in management practice depending on the gender of the owner (Catley & Hamilton 1998).

Discussion on the contested nature of marketing has the effect of undermining what might be considered to be the received approach; breaking down the monolith. It also has the effect of reinforcing the view that marketing matters, not only on a theoretical level but also in the way that it impacts directly on the conduct of our daily lives. The tendency of marketing is to adopt a received approach regarding the marketing concept and the externality of the environment. The acceptable way to run a business is thus promulgated. This has the effect of reducing the diversity of approaches. One of the other contested aspects of marketing theory not yet discussed in this section is, if it is universally applicable to all sizes of business – how are small businesses different? Has the development of current marketing theory been unduly biased towards larger businesses? (Hogarth-Scott et al 1996; Gummesson 2002) There is evidence that general business research concentrates on the domain of the larger business (Macpherson & Holt 2005; 8). Whilst the discussion of differences in market

knowledge in a micro firm is the topic of some research, there might be motivations towards the concentration of effort on larger businesses. This could occur because they are considered to be more important to the economy, more likely to display the principles of marketing in a non-personal framework, or are they are preferred – to return to motivations – by academics because they are more likely to pay for research and consultancy?

Market Orientation as an exposition of the marketing concept.

The adoption of a market orientation in some form has become the *sine qua non* of marketing. In a general form, it is the method of making the marketing concept viable as a business activity. Market orientation theories occur in a number of variants, but they all raise the question what do we mean by an orientation? Smith in his study of entrepreneurial types uses the idea of orientation derived from the sociological literature as ‘the theme underlying the complex of social roles performed by the individual’ (Smith 1967; 12). The idea of market orientation incorporates this idea of a theme that gathers together the varieties of activity undertaken, but in this case is applied at an organisational level. Marketing orientation as such is the organisational co-ordination of the marketing concept. The effective method of co-ordination is to instil beliefs. The requirement of a market orientation was initially that of seeing the consumer as the first base point of reference (Moore & Hussey 1965). In this respect, it is opposed to what might be termed a production orientation, which tends to engender the necessity for exploitative selling. It was adopted to respond to the rapidity of market development, and to address the need for customer solutions (Lear 1963). Some accretive mechanism is needed to fix our attention onto the dynamic consumer. There is therefore attached this developing normative aspect to the issue of market orientation; this is what someone who ascribes to the marketing concept *should* do. One of the most examined theories of market orientation is that proposed by Kohli and Jaworski. In this theory the three pillars of the marketing concept are customer focus, co-ordinated marketing, and profitability (Kohli & Jaworski 1990) – the latter two resonating well with marketing as purposeful

economic activity. Deshpandé et al (1993) use the term 'customer orientation', a similar concept as that termed market orientation by Kohli & Jaworski (1990).

This view was supported by Narver & Slater (1990) who sought a framework for the implementation of market orientation, and thus the ability to measure it. The idea was to discover from an analysis of current commercial activity the individual components that comprise a market orientation. Kohli & Jaworski (1990) discover three entailments of a market orientation, an understanding of customer needs, interdepartmental sharing of information, and activities designed to meet those needs. The antecedents of the adoption of a market orientation are those of senior management, interdepartmental dynamics, and organisational systems. Narver & Slater (1990) explore their identification of three behavioural factors within the literature; customer appreciation, competitor awareness and inter-functional co-ordination that inform the decision criteria of long-term sustainability and profitability. Through this analysis these and other authors consider that market orientation is a central attempt to determine and clarify what is involved in the process of interacting with the market, and its effect on business performance. The ability to unpick the concept into separate factors that are understandable at a more detailed level is central to these studies. These ideas of identifying needs, information interpretation, and responsiveness are parts of a theory of organisational cognition (von Kroog & Roos 1995; 20-21). The activities of information processing, filtering, and responsiveness are for some the components of the concept of adaptability (Stoica et al 2004). This research and debate has continued to this day (Deng & Dart 1994, Morgan & Strong 1998, Pelham 2000, Matsuno et al 2005).

The market orientation concept operates at a managerial level as an organisational objective. It assumes a corporate identity and an organisation that is sufficiently coherent and purposeful to develop an integrated view of the market. The organisational implications of a market-focused approach have changed over the decades. Early journal articles in the management field concentrated on the organisational structures that would promote market orientation, such as the adoption of market managers rather than product

managers (Lear 1963). The adoption of managers that handled products or groups of similar products seemed intuitively correct, as it was the economic exchange of these products that produced the revenue for the company. With the development of a marketing approach the method of managing both was a more developed strategy (Ames 1971). An alternative approach, supervening the product-market focus, emphasised the need to gather and process information about the larger environment (Duncan 1971), structures are not enough in conditions of uncertainty; it is adaptability or openness that is important. The adaptability has moved from a concern about organisational structures to the requirement for managerial information about the market (Sinulka 1994). The employment of the larger amounts of information is now what is important. The extensive amount of information could emphasise a connectionist view of organisations. Co-ordination of activities through information is now important, downgrading the role of cognitive strategy (von Kroog & Roos 1995; 23). Daft and Macintosh (1981) adopt the definition of information as that which alters a mental representation. The greater volume of information either decreases the proportionate risk of something important being missed or increases the confidence level of the actor. The volume of information required will be an accurate indicator of the level of uncertainty. The expansion of the need for information is driven by this uncertainty, and also has been enabled and facilitated by the growth of information technology. So instead of promoting flexibility, the collection of data will enable us to predict trends and not be surprised by them. The adaptability will result from this environmental awareness. There is also the implication that we can reinforce trends to our advantage (Morgan 1988). However our capacity for information is finite. The amount of data available is more than we can handle (Gummesson 2002). Drucker (1959) nearly fifty years ago identified that the amount, diversity, and ambiguity of information is difficult to handle. Perhaps to address these human limitations information handling now often occurs at an organisational level as knowledge management.

The market orientation approaches are not homogeneous in their outlook. Day (1994) identifies a difference between the behavioural (Kohli & Jaworski 1990, Narver & Slater 1990) and cultural approaches (Deshpandé & Webster 1989;

Deshpandé et al 1993). Both these approaches have been continued in further research, the cultural approach is continued by Harris (1998). Matsuno et al (2005) consider that culture is an antecedent of the activities involved in market orientation; they are sequential in that the approach drives the analysis. It has also been suggested that both the behavioural and cultural approaches are situated within an information processing view (Bell et al 2002). The cultural approach resides at a softer organisational level. The information processing procedure of gathering, interpreting, and synthesis of data is now the dominant theoretical schema (Tushman & Nadler 1977), and is explicit in Kohli & Jaworski's 1990 paper. It is arguable whether the frequent adoption of this schema as an approach to understanding – or in Tushman & Nadler's case the fit between the process and the environment – is an imposition on our views that has the effect of concealing the viability of other approaches. This discussion will be developed later in the thesis.

One approach to this superior performance /competitive advantage is the ability that market orientation provides a focus for these activities of the organisation and is an integrating mechanism; Barksdale and Darden's (1971) guiding and coordinating characteristics. Day (1994) incorporates individual knowledge, technical systems, management systems, and norms into a capability approach, these capabilities then become organisational resources that are difficult to counteract by competitors. This articulates a resource based view of market orientation. Other studies have undertaken research that identifies a four factor approach to market orientation existing in a sample of small businesses. The factors of concern for staff, awareness, profitability, and customer service are claimed to be consistent with the original concept and are not moderated by firm size (Blankson & Cheng 2005). These behavioural and cultural approaches perhaps can be seen as syncretic in their attempt to meld various factors, behavioural and cognitive into one concept. Unfortunately the ability to be able to analyse customer relationship management data is still only accomplished by a very few large firms (Xu & Walton 2005). As noted above the complexity of the task inhibits implementation (Ottesen & Grønhaug 2004). There is a view that a significant proportion of firms find this implementation very difficult, particularly

smaller firms and observations on this situation will be made as a result of the research in this study.

One of the primary reasons given for the adoption of a market orientation is its efficacy, firms that adopt a market orientation perform better, and they produce greater value. The improved performance is a justification for the resources employed in achieving a market orientation (Jaworski & Kohli 1993). A market orientation approach allows for the delivery of superior customer value, which is the foundation of competitive advantage (Slater & Narver 1994). This view is complementary with an explanation of commercial success being based on a resource based comparative advantage (Hunt & Morgan 1995). However it has been noted that the development of this comparative advantage theory remains within the exchange paradigm of the market. Its difference is that it has the advantage of concentrating on the epistemic nature of the firm's capabilities – of which marketing is a major part (Deligonul & Cavusgil 1997). This link between competitive advantage and superior performance has to be actively maintained and developed, with such activity necessitated by the evanescence of value (Mason 2003). Our value provided as an enterprise is eroded by competitor activity, or customer trends, in line with the transitory nature of data discussed above. The value of market orientation is derived from its rarity (Hunt & Lambe 2000); in practice it is rarely effectively realised. It has been observed that it can still yield results when it is achieved. Like superior performance, it requires effort. However, the ability of market orientation to produce improved performance has not been conclusively demonstrated (Noble et al 2002, Bhuian et al 2005), so the connection between a market orientation and stakeholder value continues to be explored.

Perhaps we can accept that the epistemic activities of marketing and knowledge are another complex relationship which needs further explication. Tzokas & Saren (2004) offer us the view that the adoption of a market orientation makes knowledge the basic tenet of marketing. The idea of a market knowledge competence (Li & Calantone 1998) is a related idea to market orientation in that it contains the processes that generate and integrate market knowledge. This

knowledge development as an outcome of the adoption of a market orientation often starts with the use of market intelligence as an integrative factor. Information becomes market intelligence when it produces an understanding of customer needs (Kohli & Jaworski 1990). The transition from intelligence to knowledge is problematic. The intelligence on which we base our decisions is generative of openness in decision-making – the information is not corrupted by sectional interests, and co-ordinated decisions with committed implementation (Shapiro 1988). The use of the term intelligence incorporates the view of knowledge development as a stage process from data via intelligence to knowledge. This conceptualisation of knowledge as based on a development from data to intelligence will be explored later, in the chapter on knowledge. Good intelligence, it is said, can release us from mere opinion. Lien (1997; 238) identifies the dual mode of information translation occurring in developing a product into a market. Firstly, there is the translation of the customer requirements into product attributes, and then the translation of product attributes into the marketing campaign. There is hence a double mode of production involved in the marketing activity. The vision of customer service becomes the integrative mechanism through building customer relationships (Gummesson 2004). Whatever else we disagree on, we can agree that we are here to serve the customer! The identification of this theme does not, of course, underestimate the very real difficulties of achieving a customer focus even using internal marketing (Piercy 1995). This situation is perhaps incorporated into other interpretations of marketing that consider it to have a boundary role between the customer and the organisation, and the view discussed in the literature about whether marketing is customer led or market driven (Slater & Narver 1998; Connor 1999).

Current research on market orientation has been criticised as being complex and abstract (Ottesen & Gronhaug 2004). The nature of the concept is that it an attempt to theoretically incorporate the whole idea of engagement with the market into a single indicator. This review of marketing orientation has raised questions about the role of information, intelligence, understanding, theory, and knowledge that are both implicit and explicit in the literature. To this extent it can be seen how it becomes central to one vision of marketing theory development, and also becomes both complex and abstract. In management practice there is the

tendency to adopt the instrumental use of marketing knowledge – to improve outcomes – rather than an abstract conceptual use (Ottesen & Gronhaug 2004). This approach adopts a pragmatic method in which we should concentrate looking towards consequences rather than back to principles (James 1917; 204). As indicated above the latter may be more associated with entrepreneurial vision.

It has been said that market segmentation (a concept similar enough to market orientation for our current purposes) is ‘an instance of meta-language which categorises a set of questions and activities ... [this] concept also encourages managers to think more strategically about customers’ (Zaltman et al 1982). The benefits gained from using the term are a ‘clarifying effect’ and ‘it pulls together and highlights’ but it also enables a ‘development and evaluation of solutions’. They also note that a word symbol such as market segmentation can be used to communicate about marketing phenomena. This meta-language is a semantic categorisation of the world, the development of scientific thought is pursued through an agreement of what it is important to study. The ground rules of this study have been described as a discursive formation (Foucault 2000; 143). This use of discourse produces a worldview that is developed through use of joint language. This language is what we can all agree on (Quine 1969; 87). However market orientation, interpreted as meta-language is a complex phenomenon, it will not predict the efficacy of actions at a lower level (Zaltman et al 1982). For instance will the adoption of a problem resolution attitude lead to coherent market orientated stance? A customer-problem orientation will have a greater likelihood of the customer accepting the salesman’s advice (Zaltman et al 1982; 115). The adoption of this orientation is more likely ‘that the salesman’s products are to be used’.

The resource based view of the firm has been introduced above. Recent refinements to this view of the firm see the inclusion of knowledge as one of the key productive resources (Penrose 1995; 79). Whilst the economic effects of knowledge have a long history origins of the theory of the knowledge-based economy came to prominence in the 1980’s (Harris 2001). This approach is widely adopted in research into knowledge in a small firm (Thorpe et al 2005).

The value of knowledge lies not in its abstract purity but in its application so that the dominant approach to competitive advantage is that based on capabilities. These are more likely to provide successful outcomes by matching the firm's capabilities to the desires and structural conditions of the market, this might be termed a case of fitting abilities to the existing or potential opportunities. Productive knowledge lies here at the level of the firm in both the market orientation and resource management views. It can be accepted that one of the aims of market orientation has been that of understanding the market through the division of the concept into its perceived constituent activities. Given the initial normative nature of the idea these activities have come to be the concept.

Market Orientation and the small business.

The Bolton Report defined the small business as having a small market share, a personalised management, and independence of approach (Stanworth & Curran 1976). The impact of this report represented a turning point in the awareness of the small business sector and as such its influences would be difficult to overstate (Curran & Stanworth 1982; 3). These factors, considered symptomatic of small businesses, have been reinforced by further research which was given its initial impetus by the research for the Bolton Report. This subsequent research into the situation of small businesses reinforced these conclusions; the situation in small businesses is characterised by a low incidence of formal market planning (Birley & Norburn 1985; Kraus et al 2006); their marketing is different (Moriarty et al 2008). This is often to be the result of a more subjective approach (Carson & Gilmore 1999); the personal situation, previous learning, values, experience are relevant to the construction of a small firm (Pelham 2000; Reuber & Fischer 1999). Churchill & Lewis (1983) find that success factors in small businesses are divided between the personal and the organisational. So we can see that the characteristic of direct personal involvement by the principals in the operations of a small business has been a defining characteristic of such firms. This situation has been seen as both weakness and strength.

Over a century ago Veblen (1904, 31) noted the close engagement of producer and consumer in the craft economy which also could allow an element of 'petty

knavery and huckstering' as transactions were less formalised. The consumer experience of either systemic or personal 'rip-offs' often characterises their dealings with organisations by size. It can be seen that this personal element has continued to describe the nature of small businesses. The small firm, it is to be noted, is not entirely personal. There is an organisational element that maintains the firm. The activities of a small organisation are often directly responsive to customer demand (Birley & Norburn 1988); they have a sales orientation (Hill & Wright 2001). This reaction to customer demand suggests firstly a demand-led *modus vivendi* – responding to customer requests – or secondly a sales operation that is product-led. In new small businesses this could be a result of the necessity to make their business idea commercially viable, to find sales potential for what they wanted to do (Bridge 2006; 3). Successful start-up requires commercialising the product idea (Romanelli 1989). There is some evidence that this sort of product delivery as operational planning leads to better outcomes than strategic planning (Robinson et al 1986). The potential is there for this to become established as the marketing mode of the business. What we are interested in governs the way we construct our knowledge of the world (Vignali & Zundel 2003). This product-focused engagement seems to remain true despite the acknowledged fact that the opportunities for the collection of environmental data have increased markedly in recent years. This is noticeable through the growth of ICT in our social life. It has been found that small companies often disregard formal sources of information and they prefer informal –personal– reports about the market (Smeltzer et al 1988; Fann & Smeltzer 1989). This may be driven by individual preference, or it could be that a more rational approach is inimical to their business model. Research findings indicate that small businesses are able to thrive in a dynamic environment, the difficulties they have are with high levels of environmental complexity (Carson et al 1995; 62). This seems to connect both with their flexibility of response and their identifiable lack of analytical persistence. This characteristic method of marketing has even been described as haphazard, loose and reactive (Gilmore et al 2001). Of course it may be the case that particular organisations thrive through the ability of the principal to intuitively manage complexity on a personal level, which is not available to larger organisations.

Furthermore it is contended that the information available to organisations, particularly smaller ones, is often not exclusive, it is general information that is available in the public domain or for little cost. Therefore competitive advantage can only be gained through the way such information is used (Diamantopoulos & Souchon 1999), in what need to be, particular and unique ways. So the market activities in the small business are often based on personally generated rich knowledge, and hence the use of general environmental information plays a secondary and supportive role. Hence there is an argument that marketing, to the extent that it mediates the gap in the exchange relationship, is not needed in a micro business where there is personal contact with the customers based on the generation of preference data (Holbrook & Hulbert 2002).

The general underlying approach to explaining the use of information within organisations to inform their competitive position has followed the process of analysis, co-ordination, and competitive actions (Lado et al 1998). This tripartite structure links with the factors in Kohli & Jaworski's (1990) delineation of the market orientation concept as understanding, sharing and responding. The roots of this view of the firm can be seen in a definition of a firm as bounded by the extent of its administrative co-ordination (Penrose 1995; 20) and latterly knowledge *qua* information is the stuff of this co-ordination. As she points out the reason for defining a firm is to examine its role in the setting of prices and the allocation of resources. The firm is the aggregate actor. To this end it needs to be, in some form, enterprising in its activities in that it creates something different for the market. These market-based activities can be based on an approach that chooses between competitive aggressiveness and operational efficiency (Romanelli 1989). So often the use of information as a co-ordinator of the activities is often seen as central in the view of the firm as a self-regulating system (Johannessen et al 2002). The activities undertaken become those of sustaining the firm rather than planning or market responsiveness. Sustainability in a corporate context is founded on understanding, in that a competitive advantage that is sustainable must be based on an understanding of that advantage. The description of the business as a self-regulating system is often termed autopoietic from a biological analogy (Hall 2005). The impact of a

system-based view of the small business will be revisited giving an opportunity to discuss cultural aspects of responsiveness.

It has been noted above that this application of a formal planning system is not often found in micro organisations, usually defined as having five members or less. In these organisations the situation occurs where relationships with other market constituents is shaped by less formal interaction rather than that of plan and implementation. Small business owners/managers develop tacit utilitarian, cognitively immediate and undetachable knowledge and it is generally accepted that the development into propositional, epistemic knowledge occurs as a result of the growth of the firm (Sashittal & Jassawalla 2001). Development of larger scale industry has been identified by the growth of the machine process, which is characterised by an investment in systems of production rather than investment in the goods themselves (Veblen 1904; 17). The role of the merchant who invests in goods is different. The mercantile system of trading implies a shorter decision horizon; the managerial behaviours of improvisations and adaptations (Sashittal & Jassawalla 2001), often as personal competencies. This could leave small firms in transient and more vulnerable sector of the economy with the more lucrative fields occupied by larger organisations (Mayer 1953). This more individual focus permits the foregrounding of the transactions in the business and the related view of these transactions as consisting of dynamic knowledge structures (Rosa et al 1999). These personal dynamic competencies are often based on the principal in the business. In small companies executive learning will closely influence and mirror organisational learning (Deakins et al 2000). Given the general acceptance of the personal locus of market orientation in a small firm it therefore seems appropriate to investigate the organisational epistemology at an individual level in the context of a small business. This will incorporate the understanding that is based on participation, gut feeling, and firsthand experience (Hasselstrom 2004; 152). Whether these dynamics are those of a mutual exchange or as the development of a shared knowledge remains to be seen, and would be developed further in the analysis of the concept of knowledge dissemination in a small firm.

The initial steps that a micro firm can take towards incorporating a market orientation into the operation of the business are part of the learning process. It can be contended that it is the identification of different types of customers, an emergent segmentation, is one of the first opportunities to generalise about the market. Some studies have confirmed the positive correlation of a customer orientation and small firm growth (Appiah-Adu & Singh 1998). A recent strand of marketing with potentially useful application to the smaller business is that of the challenger brand culture. This brand culture, in the words of one of its eloquent exponents is about the kind of people we are and how we become less compliant towards existing norms, which enables us to present ourselves as challenging complacency (Morgan 2004; 2-4). Often small businesses have to adopt this approach because projecting solidity and reliability does not seem to be possible in an organisation of up to five people. There are a couple of points to note about this approach. Firstly it seems to be about *being* someone, but this is described in terms of qualities and behaviour. Secondly the initial operational aspects of this approach are those of outlooking – a different kind of insight seeking (ibid; 17) – and boldly projecting a pushed idea (ibid; 41). These aspects of this marketing approach seem to be appropriate to the discussion here and later further aspects of being and outlooking will be considered.

The starting point of this section was the initial idea that market orientation is the making operational of a normative marketing concept that is considered to be applicable to all sizes of businesses (Barksdale & Darden 1971; Blankson & Cheng 2005). Some literature has been reviewed that casts doubt on this view, it is not so easily accepted and consequently merits further exploration as part of the research stage.

Models of Small Firm Development

As discussed earlier the importance of small firm development to economic life is based on the observation that they are the largest proportion of firms in advanced economies. They also support the majority of employed people (Gummesson 2002), and are the origin of the greater number of larger firms (Johnson 2007; 4). The importance of the small firm for generating employment was first noted in

the United States in the 1970's (Robinson et al 1986; Bridge et al 2003; 7). See Beaver & Prince (2004) for a current review of small business policy. Historically the economic study of small firms was taken to be unrewarding as they were believed to have no influence on their environment and therefore were unable to demonstrate any economic robustness (Johnson 2007; 7). They were merely responsive to wider economic changes that were outside their control. The view on this has now changed in line with greater awareness of the individual in creating change, the increase in technological development, the rise of the enterprise culture and the importance of knowledge as a resource. Historically one of the characteristics of small firms was that the proprietors had lower levels of educational achievement than managers of larger firms did, and any such education would not be necessary in the small business context. This is no longer universally true (DTI 2004; 12; Johnson 2007; 39). The study of small businesses has become less of an academic backwater; although the majority of research is still in larger firms (Thorpe et al 2005) The advantage of research in this area is that it may reveal aspects of business that are cast into sharper relief in the smaller firm. It must be noted however that the study of small businesses as such, accepts that the factor of size is an important characteristic of the nature of firms (Welsh & White 1981). This size factor is generally regarded as being non-linear, small businesses are not microcosms of larger enterprises (Burns 2001; 9). The differences are often qualitatively different. In this context the commonly accepted account of economic progress residing in the development of complex large organisations, with smaller organisations being backwaters out of the main flow, was not historically justified (Granovetter 1984). It is even less so now given the increases in technology since then.

One of the normative assumptions of small firm development is that they should demonstrate this economic value through some form of financial growth. By this means, they demonstrate their achievements and contribution to society. To be unproductive is to be wasteful. There is a meta-narrative in the small business field that divides them into the high growth ones that generate economic benefits and the lifestyle businesses that have a negligible contribution to business life (Glancey et al 1998). True entrepreneurs are those that create 'sea-change' movements and other micro entrepreneurs have limited impacts which only have

local value (Bolton & Thompson 2000; 5). Presumably in this formulation, true entrepreneurs are those that conform to a concept of entrepreneurship that values the extra economic output achieved. Growth is often measured by an increase in sales turnover, or size in terms of people employed; or in the profits achieved as a measure of the value in the business. Both of these are quantitative economic output measures. The universal acceptance of the normative association between high growth and success should be challenged, if only, as noted earlier, on the basis of the increase in social esteem as a result of economic participation (Gibb 2002). Owners of firms that grow at a lower rate or have a no-growth policy may have made this trade-off (Glancey 1998; Greenbank 2001), or may be genuinely unsure about when to change the business and adopt a watching brief. The roots of this division can be traced at least as far back as a study over forty years ago of the entrepreneur and his firm (Smith 1967²). He identifies two ideal types the first of which is the craftsman entrepreneur who values the importance of practical accomplishments and builds a reputation for adeptness (Smith 1967; 14-16). This type is often 'pushed' into entrepreneurship by circumstances. The other type is the opportunistic entrepreneur who is socialised into the values of business and internalises them (Smith 1967; 31), they develop an attitude towards business rather than a skill. The reputation he develops is of intelligence and the ability to relate to management, what could be called acumen. His move into entrepreneurship is one that he has long dreamed about and prepared for (Smith 1967; 40). This description seems to incorporate the idea of business acumen and envisioning possibility – to the extent that the dream is not an idle pipe-dream. This is a thorough piece of research but it may have its roots in wider social trends. It has been observed that the development of America in the 20th Century was predicated on the standardisation of mass production but in the smaller firms that led them to concentrate on innovation and service (De Grazia 2005; 98). European culture at that time venerated the craftsman approach to the production of goods. There is a possibility that entrepreneurial truth can be seen in a different way such as envisaging new outcomes (Spinosa et al 1997). A section on entrepreneurial vision follows in the following chapter.

² Penrose notes a similar 1952 study in her discussion of empire-builders and product minded entrepreneurs (Penrose 1955; 40)

One of the primary motivations for small business research is to be able to understand how small firms grow, how they are different as they change. The benefits of this systematisation are at least twofold. Firstly, that it would provide an understanding of the phenomena of small business growth sufficient to provide support and advice to particular firms. Secondly, to develop an economic policy environment that is conducive to small business development, as they are seen as the feedstock of economic growth. To this end there have been a number of studies proposing small business growth models, and they mostly adopt a staged approach. An early publication in this field (Steinmetz 1969) adopted categories that emphasised changes in the requirements for control of the business. As a consequence of growth the locus of control of the principal moves from direct to indirect as the degrees of separation from the customer transaction increase.

Greiner (1972) has an organisational focus that develops recent (at that time) work on structural issues in organisational development. Business growth occurs through a series of crises of leadership, control, autonomy, and 'red tape'. The emphasis in this model is the difficult nature of the transition between phases. Growth is not just difficult to manage, problems are inherent in the solutions adopted, and each phase carries the seeds of its own destruction. This study is almost dialectical in its approach, in that each structure develops its own antithesis and subsequent to a crisis/revolution a new synthesis is adopted. Greiner's research approach is not restricted to small businesses and is developed from earlier research on organisational growth through revolution (Greiner 1967). Greiner's research has been criticised by advocates of the value of economic structures as being too internally driven. The situation of growth is often managed through use of entrepreneurial networks (Larson 1992; Hjalmarsson & Johansson 2003). Churchill & Lewis (1983) consider that a systematic approach is needed to develop this understanding, and they propose to refocus the discussion away from size on to the identification of underlying factors that influence this growth, such as management style, structure, formal systems, goals, and owner's involvement. Flamholtz (1980; 35) importantly considers that the emphasis in the early stage is on defining markets and developing products. Another interesting factor of Flamholtz's research is that he considers the decline

of the organisation. The acceptance or realisation of an organisation's temporality is an aspect of growth that is often overlooked. The normative aspects of growth often prevent a discussion of 'decline'. The injunction to grow or die is perhaps emotionally closer to the situation of a small business.

	<i>Business Development Stages</i>
Steinmetz 1969	Direct supervision, Supervised Supervisor, Indirect Control, Divisional Organisation.
Greiner 1972	Creativity; Direction; Delegation; Co-ordination; Collaboration.
Churchill & Lewis, 1983	Existence; Survival; Success; Take off; Resource Maturity
Flamholtz 1986	New Venture; Professionalisation; Consolidation; Diversification; Integration; Decline and Revitalisation.

Figure 2 A tabulation of business Development Stage theories

These models seek to portray business growth through a series of sequential stages these are adopted, either implicitly or explicitly, as a requirement for small firm development. Growing firms are often characterised as 'going to the next level'. This might not be the case (Churchill & Lewis 1983). For instance, stage 4 could follow stage 2 and not just because growth is so strong that stage 3 was completed before it was observable. Churchill and Lewis' solution, of focussing on a combination of what are presumably more fundamental factors, implies that these factors are inherent in business development. This combination of factors, mentioned above, whilst not claiming to be an exhaustive set, are a combination of personal (goals and owners involvement) and organisational (structure and formal systems) plus the elusive style factor. Bygrave (1989) considers the factors involved to be personal, environmental, and organisational. Entrepreneurship requires innovation (Shane 2003; 8) and entrepreneurial development proceeds by discontinuous change 'quantum jumps' (Bygrave 1989) echoing Baumol's (1968) distinction between managerial optimisation and entrepreneurial revolution. This does not necessarily occur at particular

developmental stages. It would seem that this discussion on the stages of business growth is based on the generally accepted observation that as the business grows, more extensive managerial structures are developed. This is especially when they adopt an internal growth model reducing dependency on external contractors (Glancey et al 1998). This view also governs the approach adopted by a large number of business support programmes (Sullivan 2000). The micro business is often at what is proposed as the initial stage of these models where the individual entrepreneur develops the idea for a product or service (Stanworth & Curran 1976). This process is offered as part of the start-up of a new business, but start-up is a unique event (Bygrave 1989) and the exceptional circumstances are not part of this study. This product or service idea' does seem to be integral to the idea of market engagement, and market knowledge.

There is the question of the operation of entrepreneurship in the context of small businesses, which is the theme of the next chapter. In the context of small business growth it is possible to see the product as sharing the entrepreneurial spirit which is considered to reside in being innovative, individualistic, and having a perceived excellence (Hirschman 1990). The market offering seems to acquire these entrepreneurial characteristics almost as an embodiment of the principal such as Richard Branson and Virgin. The product emplaces the entrepreneurial vision. But a large part of the marketing discourse is concerned with the identification of market trends – new tastes and activities, which will be the key drivers for the acceptance of new products. Entrepreneurial activity is perhaps a separate domain to this activity as it can concentrate on unperceived needs or unfamiliar environments (Collinson & Shaw 2001). Thus the business owner, the product supplied, and the consumer create between them the positive cultural values of social development through this type of economic activity. These judgements can be illustrated by the attention that is paid in entrepreneurial discussion on the high tech small firm (Boussouara & Deakins 1999).

In conclusion, the views of Bridge et al (2003; 32) on the subject of enterprise seem appropriate, in that they echo the views of Levy about marketing in proposing that enterprise is applicable in all walks of life. We all have some

opportunity or ability to involve ourselves in enterprising activity. This involvement is based on participation, being personally present and engaged. It is activity based, transient and shares these characteristics with market knowledge (Hasselstrom 2004). There is therefore some justification, given the conjunction of these two concepts in considering the nature of personal knowledge and its applicability to the market situation of a micro business. The next chapter therefore investigates personal knowledge and personal agency in this context.

Chapter 3

Personal Agency in Business.

The role of self and identity in business development.

The personal nature of small businesses has been noted already and therefore it seems appropriate to adopt the view that business development, perhaps particularly in the small business, is about the activities of significant people (Stanworth & Curran 1976; Carson et al 1995; 81; Bolton & Thompson 2000; 5; Shane 2003). In this way the business is considered to prosper through the personal efforts of the principal actors. In the primacy of individual agency, the discussion of small businesses more closely resembles that of entrepreneurship, in that they both incorporate a view on the importance of individual activity and personal involvement (Nooteboom 1988). In fact a considerable proportion of the discussion on business development that results from the efficacy of personal activity is discussed under the term of entrepreneurship. The two areas have been described as overlapping sets (Burns 2001; 19) or intertwined (Das & He 2006). Johnson (2007; 20) warns us against conflating them and hence narrowing the focus with the danger of precluding a richer perspective including the contrast between entrepreneurship and management (Gartner 1989; Watson et al 1998; Jack & Anderson 1999). In this respect Gibb (2002) highlights the frequent adoption of the 'heroic' ideology of entrepreneurship which undervalues the challenging conditions within which small businesses operate because they are not in the sectors of perceived economic importance, such as rapid growth or high technology. It is a commonplace to say that there has been little progress on the definition of the typical entrepreneur (Morris & Lewis 1995; Mitchell 1997; Greenbank 2001; Howorth et al 2005). This provides a justification for a different approach to the investigation of this activity.

In pursuing this distinction between entrepreneurs and managers one of the key factors in small businesses remains the issue of ownership. This is a personal, and arguably a managerial, aspect of micro business operation and development and is indicated by the continuing relevance of the idea of ownership in small businesses (Penrose 1995; 28; Kuratko et al 1997; Stokes 2000); 'the small businessman (sic) is the owner (Birley & Norburn 1985). This ownership has both active and passive elements. There are the formal accoutrements of ownership in title, but there is the ability or power to choose the direction of the business because it is within the remit of the owner. It grants control over the resources (Shane 2003; 161). In larger businesses with a broader group of shareholders, there is an identified divorce between ownership and control. Traditionally ownership, being your own boss, incorporates opportunity to a greater extent than mere making money (Mayer 1953; van Gelderen & Jansen 2006). This view on the importance of ownership seems to introduce the important aspect of the small business entity and the relationship of the owner with the owned business. It is thus different from the ownership of the idea or opportunity. The perception of the business as an owned 'object' can be interpreted as the creation of a locus for the development of knowledge. This, it is suggested could occur through a process of interpretative understanding about the business entity which is emerging as a topic of this research. There is also the issue of the description of the owner/entrepreneur. The terminology adopted in this work will be to use the word principal for the important individual in the development of the business. This avoids the use of owner, with the assumptions of possession of assets that may not be the case and the use of entrepreneur may not be justified in all micro business contexts.

The idea of ownership of an enterprise implies the power to allocate the rewards. In a previous section the view was offered that the nature of business activity, including that of marketing, can be considered to be dependent on personal gain, at least in the minimalist sense that we need to acquire enough resources in order to survive. This personal gain may be, and often is, mediated through an organisation or some other form of social structure, although this becomes vanishingly small in the case of many self-employed people. The investigation of personal agency or business activity is often usefully thought of in terms of the

concept of intention. The nature of intentionally is connected with deliberate planned choices. In the first instance the start-up of a business is recognised as an intentional act (Krueger et al 2000; Shook et al 2003), and often this act in itself is taken to indicate entrepreneurship. Although this occurrence is one of the more salient events in the life of the enterprise, the business operation would seem to contain a whole series of intentional acts of varying import. The evidence from the Bolton report was that autonomy and independence were often more important than personal gain in the case of small business (Curran & Stanworth 1982; 13). This relative importance may have been altered by the prominence of the enterprise culture and the concomitant economic rewards (see Hirschman 1990).

Following on from the identification of the individual business proprietor as an important factor in the small business setting, it seems appropriate to discuss what other proposals have been made about how the development of knowledge in the small business could be understood. One of the methods of exploring this is through the entrepreneurial identity (Stanworth & Curran 1976; Curran & Stanworth 1981), which they consider to be socially based. In their research Stanworth and Curran (1973; 97) discern three latent social identities the artisan, the classic entrepreneur, and the manager. The motivations of the entrepreneur and the manager are economic returns and social recognition respectively. The artisan values autonomy, the creation of a good product, and personal service to the customer. The role of the artisan is perhaps influenced by the work of Smith (1967), but they emphasise the social aspects of these roles. These identities are adopted by the small business owner to place themselves in the social milieu; as this development has a large personal aspect it has been seen as an investment in the self (Cope 2003b). The investment in the self has led to an interpretation based on role performance (Stanworth & Curran 1973: 106). This adoption of identity in the same way as a role enables it to be seen as situational dependent upon previous experiences and objectives, often by the use of narrative (Cavarero 2000; Hjalmarsson & Johansson 2003; Hytti 2005). This perspective further opens up a space for the view that effective personal business productions are not based on inherited traits. Some research has shown that the distribution of trait indicators is such that the drawing of conclusions on these measures is difficult

(Carland et al 1996). Others emphasise the 'learning through practice' nature of this identity formation (Rae 2004). The aspects of activity and autonomy, together with personal exposure and vulnerability, succeeding against the odds, could be central aspects of the entrepreneurial 'way of life' (Mitchell 1997; Gibb 2002). These views have the common perspective that this social identity is emergent through activity. The nature of entrepreneurial identity needs to be further refined.

The classical concept of identity is that it applies in two contexts, identity per-se or accidental identity (Aristotle 1998; 127). Firstly it is either a quality of things that are by essence the same and as such only exhibit variations in their attributes. The creation of difference is dependent on the adoption of enduring objects as the focus of our language (Quine 1969; 8). We can use identity as a descriptor that enables us to identify a specific object or individual, and identity is the uniqueness of the individual; revealed through a combination of characteristics. These two ideas see identity as a referent or as meaning something. The idea of identity remains linked to uniqueness, but it can either refer to some unique person, or produce a unique meaning. There are considerable differences between sentient beings that no two could be identical and we therefore mean different things to people. So therefore we are not comparing related objects, but considering an invariable object only some of the attributes of which we can determine at any juncture.

The true nature of a person is not knowable through experience. This is the root of epistemic theories of understanding; 'how much can we know apart from all experience' (Kant 1998; Axvii). This will be explored in the next chapter but we can provisionally accept here that we derive our understanding from experience. The nature of physical objects is that some combination of visual identity and functional identity will be sufficient to say they are the same. The idea of identity produces difference; things define the identity by their alterity, their otherness (Deleuze 2004; 43). The nature of reproduction implies diversity either within the reproduction, or in the response to a new reproduction. Burger restaurants are built to a standard design but a complex reproduction will contain both elements.

There will be differences in the service offered, and the experience will alter as response to those differences. This is also modulated by their alterity to the traditional café. The identity of being a small business owner is extensively replicated but also contains the idea of diversity. It can be observed that to see the owner 'as' their identity objectifies their position. Objects contain a general functionality made more specific when designated as a product. This idea of the functionality of objects will be explored later in the thesis, but it seems inappropriate to ascribe a functional use to human identity, and thus to treat people as an information object (Himma 2004).

To return to a human level we can say that our identity is both a unique label – in the Aristotelian view – and a concept that emphasises our persistence – our continuance of memory (Hume 1969; 309). The development of identity is interdependent with that of society (Hogg & Michell 1996). There is the granting of identity through some process in which one arrives, often through birth. Very often this now takes the form of data identifiers leading to the idea of identity theft. In social learning theories that are located on a more interpersonal level, identity as social selfhood is both the power to belong and the vulnerability of membership (Wegner 1998; 207). The difficulty of discussions on the latter idea is that the person is self-conscious of their identity (Williams 1973). The difficulty here is the nature of the identity becomes changed to one of the self-awareness of identity by the individual. What we end up discussing is not the nature of the identity but the awareness of it. This is grounded at an internal level, in 'who we are' rather the means by which we identify individuals. This view has been recognised as far back as Hume who contends that identity is a quality created by the 'union of different ideas in the imagination' (Hume 1969; 307). In the romantic philosophy, particularly of Fichte, this identity is the self ascribable 'me', the I is not revealed through reflection but only by being impacted upon by the external world (Berlin 1999; 94). This external world exists because it constrains me, stopping me from achieving all my aims, and in this way we come to know it as the not-self. On a logical level Williams (1973) calls this the looser form of identity. Lewis (1983; 140) considers that self identity is the self ascription of properties. We describe to ourselves what we are like. So in this view, the idea of self is dependent upon the reflective nature of consciousness on

our memories. However, can we be sure they are ours? This connection cannot logically be derived. The argument presented by Strawson is that we have no means of knowing the direct connection between mind and body; it is logically possible that several souls could occupy one body (Strawson 1974). Therefore the uniqueness of our consciousness is dependent upon the physical identity of the person and is not some purely psychological entity. Deleuze denounces the view of the 'I' as a form of personal identity and the self as a continuity of resemblance. Individuation is a concatenation of different points. These are produced as a result of a theory of understanding through sensual awareness such as Kant's (Deleuze 2004; 320). The arguments that attempt to unravel this view are expanded in a later chapter.

It is often argued that we are the result of some combination of what we were born with and as a result of our experience; nature and nurture. Ricoeur (1992) explores this distinction and labels the two forms of identity using the Latin terms as *idem* (sameness) and *ipse* (selfhood). The *ipse* form of identity is free from all connotations of the unchanging core of personality (ibid; 116). The project that Ricoeur sets himself is to explore the difference between these two expressions of identity and thus to clarify our ideas of the self. The function of narrative identity is to explore the imaginative variations (ibid; 148) that are produced in the identity as selfhood. One of these variations is that we often use nature to describe the essence of something. It was in his nature to do such a thing; it was part of his identity. We have two concepts of nature, that one, and the view of nature as an external given environment; the sum total of natural things. Earlier it was noted that this latter view is part of the modern outlook. So when we talk about personal identity as being summative or as generative then we are adopting a stratagem similar to that of our views about nature.

These ideas on identity can be merged. The social identity of the small business owner has already been examined. The literature on entrepreneurial identity usually incorporates the concept of identity that creates an understanding of identity as a signifier, indicating the presence of certain attributes. Bolton and Thompson (2000, 15) agree that the entrepreneurial identity, which for them is

personal uniqueness, has components of inheritance and construction; it is both born and made. In this construction the concept of identity is related to the notion of self-concept and often in the consumer marketing literature self-concept replaces identity in the discussion. This is often because identity does not seem to capture the reflexive nature contained in the idea of self-concept. The idea that our identity is something that persists over time implies that it is conscious and it is embedded in a social context. We produce a view of ourselves in the minds of other people, which will be re-employed in subsequent encounters, and the social identity will thus be dependent on some proportion of deliberate construction and spontaneous generation. This social identity can also be seen as social capital in a resource based view of the firm (Runyan et al 2007).

Earlier it was noted that the construction of the identity can be facilitated through the use of a narrative about what happens to us, and what we have done (Cavarero 2000). This approach to the interpretation of actions is to see them as constructing an identity as the story of one's life. The central tenet of this approach is that each individual self constructs a life-story that captures and explains their uniqueness (Down & Warren 2008). To see the understanding of business as a discursive formation is to see it as containing both the original and regular, the 'systematisms' and the chronological successions (Foucault 2000; 164). Although the narrative identity relies on a temporal foundation, in that it is recollected and has an extended form, it is not necessarily conscious or coherent. We can separate here the roles of the author and the protagonist. A life story has no author, it is not written by someone, but it results from the actions of the protagonist. In this view identity is the product of actions "the constitutive coinciding of being and appearing that defines the totally exhibitiv character of identity" (Cavarero 2000; 23). However the protagonist does not write their own story, they live it through their actions. Actions are not 'laid out' before us, they are not self-revelatory; interpretation is required. So although narratives are not necessarily coherent we impose our coherence on them. A coherent system of truths is vulnerable to the criticism made of epistemology that the project is to 'establish the unity of what has been estranged from the subject' (Adorno 1982; 144). This constructed unity is not therefore the direct appreciation of beings the narrative becomes the object of attention. Steiner (1992) considers that language

is the main instrument of man's refusal to accept the world as it is. There is thus intentionality in the use of language to reshape our story. This is appreciated in a business context, so that everything about an organisation talks (Rae & Carswell 2001), the outcomes of business activity says something about what it is. But this is often not what we desire to achieve, between identity and narration ... there is a tenacious relation of desire. This desire can be manifest in the desire for posterity, or the desire to hear one's own story. One of the earlier observed limitations of business behaviour is the omission of the interaction of expectation and desire (Cyert et al 1958).

The assignation of social identity, on the other hand is produced by others in their observations of behaviour (Gouldner 1957). It is noticeable in this work that the concepts of social roles and identities are considered to be substitutes, thus confirming the conjoint nature of these two concepts. As noted above the pluralisation of socially sanctioned identities has occurred in parallel with increases in consumption. The idea of self-identity is evident in the consumer marketing literature where the idea of self-consciousness allows us to create an objectification of ourselves (Grubb & Grathwohl 1967); it is our idea of who we are. So there is a multilevel impact through the patterns of consumption, and the reflection on that consumption, that is important in the production and position of any social identity (Bengtsson & Firat 2006). To the extent that, in the modern world, we have more choice over the self-referent groups to which we subscribe we can choose our community identity, it becomes defined by our commonality of interests with whom we associate. The idea of small business identity seems more summative of a number of associations. Entrepreneurial identity seems to be more generative in that it is about bringing ideas forward.

The ascription of a coherent identity is challenged in the production of multiple identities. Hogg & Michell (1996) consider that there are multiple levels in the idea of identity from micro to macro responding to the forces of symbolic-functional, expressive-instrumental, and esteem-self actualisation. Nagel (1979; 207) considers the clash between self viewed identity, subjective identity, and the ascription of identity by others. Does the idea of a multiplicity of identities

undermine the notion of the uniqueness of identity (Brubaker & Cooper 2000)? Albert & Whetten (1985; 89) suggest that organisations tend to acquire dual identities that exist concurrently. To produce this true identity, one identity will not be subject to the other but they will mutually interact with each other; a non-hierarchical dependency. This is also the case with the notion of self-concept that is ambiguous and confused (Sirgy 1982). The confusion seems to be about which of the multiple factors should be included in the concept an area of central importance to Deleuze's study of difference and repetition discussed earlier (Deleuze 2004).

Social and Economic Identity

It has already been noted that identity can be considered to have both summative and generative elements. In marketing literature, the consumer identity is explored in some detail, and perhaps this literature can contribute to this question. Often this construction of identity in contemporary society focuses on the knowledge entailed in consumption, because this is what marketing feels it needs to understand. We develop our identity in a social context, and at this level the consumption is symbolic, and locates the self in society (Wattanasuwan 2005). This has often been to the neglect of the post-consumption experience, and the understanding of the development of relationships with one's possessions would be important research (Sivadas & Venkatesh 1995). The effect of participation in business on the development of social identity has been discussed already. A different view on the production of the self through exchange activity has been through research on the possession of goods in consumer markets. This, it has been noted is the process of consumption (Patterson 1998), and this activity makes us what we are; consumption creates 'difference' between ourselves and others (Baudrillard 1998; 79). How is this economic identity manifested within the ideas of participation and exchange?

The idea of participation through consumption and exchange is important. The use of recognisable personal characteristics in marketing has often focused on the idea of the self that is in some way developed by the things we have. So identity, or self-concept, is also related to our possessions in an extended self; we are what

we have (Belk 1988), or what we do not have (Baudrillard 1998; 79). This can take place on several levels, and there has been a greater emphasis recently on the experience conferred by ownership rather than the actual possession (McLarney & Chung 1999). It is now generally accepted in common parlance that we alter our selves through the experiences that we, in some way 'consume'. In consumer marketing, this idea of self is employed to describe the formation or enhancement of an individual through patterns of consumption (Belk 1988; Hogg & Michell 1996). This has been described as a consumer product dyad (Martin 1998); consumption and production are mutually generated. We can be identified and to some extent create our self, both through our purchase and the use of the goods that we buy, either at a functional or symbolic level; an object 'serves as an appliance and acts as an element of prestige' (Baudrillard 1998; 77). This consumption allows us to co-produce our identity (Belk et al 2003), through the mechanism of selection. It has also been suggested that we have moved from a view of consumption as generating status to a more experiential consumption; we facilitate personal experiences (McLarney & Chung 1999). A large part of this generation of self through consumption is not a considered process; it can take place in a non-rational or emotional mode (Stern et al 1998; Gummesson 2004) or by the very purchase activity itself. One of the dominant ways of analysing this situation in marketing terms is to divide knowing into cognitive, affective, and volitional elements (Kupers 2005). Through this alteration in the concept of identity the interpretative aspects, a hermeneutics of the self, is more important than the selection by characteristics. The extent to which this has been changed by the increase in identity security is a developing issue. Identity theft allows, at a minimum, the appropriation of consumption. It was noted earlier that marketing has been applied to the supply of non-commercial benefits this view is also incorporated in to this consumption identity. So whilst many of our experiences were not counted as consumption if that means they were not purchased, an increasingly large part of experiences can be seen in this light. In fact this may be a relatively explicit part of the 'broadening marketing' movement, discussed above. To consider that marketing helps improve the achievement of the goals of not-for-profit groups seems to be based on the self-developmental nature of exchange experience, and the managerial awareness of this in pursuing the organisation's aims. The marketing thrust is to deepen the modernist pursuit of

self-fulfilment through consumption (McLarney & Chung 1999). The idea that we derive some part of our self-concept – the internal reflexive part of the concept of identity – from the consumption of commodities, whilst being generally accepted within the marketing discipline, introduces an additional dimension into the discussion the physical activity of consumption. Our use of a garden spade or a motor car is a process of competent activity. We learn from interaction with objects, not just through accepting the social status that they are expected to bring. Learning and a sense of identity have been considered to be inseparable (Lave & Wegner 1991; 115).

Whilst the focus in consumer marketing has sought to understand the antecedent factors to customer purchase, it has been observed by (Trentmann 2005; 17) that the knowledge in use by producers in the consumption experience has not been as extensively studied. One of these producers is the micro business owner who does not operate in isolation, they are the result of exchanges between multiple actors –customers and suppliers at least– whose role and transactions are supported by differing access to knowledge. This is the identity interaction model which was identified by thinkers as early as the 1920's (Albert & Whetten 1985; 87). So whilst the marketing theory concerns the 'consumer' that is developed by all the actors in the situation, we can see the knowing self-identity of the small business owner coming into being. The aim of this thesis is not to aim for new insights from further exploration of the nature of producer self-identity, but to explore the nature of 'provider knowledge' in this business development. Another view on the social interactivity of businesses and their customers is to characterise it as social capital (Runyon et al 2007). This social capital was enabled as a resource through the identification of reciprocity. The determination of interactivity as a resource, rather than an identity construct, moves the activity into an organisational setting, as an asset. These authors consider this resource to be non-economic but this presumably means it is non-tradable as the determination of its existence is so that its economic benefits can be revealed. They also think that the value of these trading patterns is the consequence of a perceived hostile environment. The dominant view in this field sees knowledge as a configurable resource (Thorpe et al 2005) and this idea of entrepreneurial identity is a challenge to this view. To have a resource reifies the issue of

occupation. The situation existing in small businesses is that the discussion of the creation of identity through the ownership of possessions is somewhat different. The products that they sell are therefore some part of their ascribed identity, and it could be argued that they possess them before sale. But more crucially they possess them to sell and to an extent they dispose of them. Occupation is a significant element of social identity. This occupation is often described in terms of the product supplied – traditionally butcher, baker, or candlestick maker. So the construction of identity through the possession or relationship with objects per se seems not to be the seminal factor. The important point is that the personal identity is developed through engagement with their trade. This is what used to be described as their ‘calling’; what they do. This could be viewed as an appropriation of physical objects to human social needs; a form of totemic use (Lien 1997: 240). There is of course the question as to whether the proficiency of the business is a response to the temporality or the finitude of the business. The greatest understanding existing in a start-up business is the spectre of failure. The practice of entrepreneurship is not defined by, and thus distances itself from, success or failure (Shane 2003; 18). It is possible to postulate that the development of proficiency in activity as a psychological response to the perception of failure and to see it in terms of a need. What might be more productive would be to see this more in terms of sheltering ourselves that needs to come into a knowing awareness (Heidegger 1999; 273); we can see the business as a time limited endeavour (Thornton 1999). This is both in its span and its operations.

Following on from the discussion of entrepreneurial identity, another key factor in a discussion of personal agency is the ascription of efficacy. It has been observed that one of the core benefits of the Marketing Mix model discussed earlier is that it combines economic value with managerial action (Addis & Podesta 2005). One of the rationales for studying action in economic enterprises is the extent to which it can produce the individual gains mentioned at the start of the chapter. The social success that is the result of entrepreneurial achievement can be seen as a demonstration of personal efficacy (Hirschman 1990). The material results of my activity are the demonstration that I have been effective, often in several areas, and this is socially accepted, in general. Hirschman also

observes that this activity develops through the demonstrated personal control over the external environment. Others emphasise the opportunities in the current environment to exploit rather than control (Shane 2003; 18). The dependence on rational choice in classical economics has been challenged (Lane et al 1996). Entrepreneurial activity aims to produce results and this is the motivational aspect of success. In this view, one of the differences between entrepreneurs and 'dabblers' is that the former have belief and commitment (Bolton & Thompson 2000; 12). The concept of achievement is closely related to the idea of entrepreneurial activity; many dream but the admiration is for those that take the risk (Burns & Kippenburger 1998; 8). It is the risk taking that is valued in this interpretation, not the hard work per-se. The abilities of entrepreneurs are hence the ability to produce control over the situation in which they find themselves. They are seen to possess the ability to deliver if they have been successful at some level. An alternative to the emphasis on control is the ability to envision the future, a way of expressing the greater predictive ability of such individuals (Burlingham 2007; 218). Personal efficacy in either respect is therefore valued in a business development situation, and some of these situations may be categorised as entrepreneurial. This discussion on personal efficacy introduces the view held by Ricoeur (1992; 303) that the understanding, in his hermeneutic phenomenology of the acting man, is expressed in the language of act and power; actuality and potentiality. These themes of efficacy and control are developed and explored in a later chapter.

Personal motivations of business owners have been characterised as external or internal (Paige & Littrell 2002). Personality in Lien's (1997; 254) view of modernism resides on the inside, so it becomes something that can be revealed to a degree by our engagement with others. It has often been considered that the particular aspects of personality, the traits, are internal and therefore are commensurate with the modern view. The links that we maintain in the social networks are often considered to be less in the 'atomised' modern economy. A later chapter will discuss this distinction in terms of the development of rational understanding by Kant. In his work on the embedment of economic activity Granovetter (1985) denounces this distinction between the pre-modern social

economy and modern rational business. Social ties remain important in the operation of modern business life.

To this extent the micro business owner can be complaisant in the production of his identity. It may be that the owner is to a greater extent aware of this adoption of an identity. This can occur through an aspiration to become a micro business owner, and may to that extent be aided by a process of self-reflexivity that is assumed to be characteristic of the late modern age (Giddens 1991; 75). For Giddens this identity is constructed in a temporal frame, as a trajectory; and, of particular note here includes the body (Giddens 1991; 77). Thus the identity is in some part revealed through the body as a practical mode of coping with the object world, a day-to-day praxis (Giddens 1991; 57). Nooteboom (1988) considers that the entrepreneur's attitude is less cognitive-instrumental but more practical-expressive which fits well with the research described earlier on the small business situation. The expressive nature of entrepreneurship is central to a certain view of entrepreneurship. It sees the ability to persuade others that the vision is achievable as the key to success. Implicitly accepting that the attitude is linked to actions, their deeds are as a result, less systematically constructed than linked to the idea of a 'lifeworld', a straightforwardly intuited world (Husserl 1970; 35). The direction of this causation might be reversed in that the practical nature of practical purposive activity might produce an identity that demonstrates this character of small business owners being less systematic. The possibility that there is interplay between action and identity is considered by Hytti (2005) so that entrepreneurs develop their status and identity, through a process of shifting between conflicting identities.

The entrepreneurial role is one that is considered to be central to our economic future; a new paradigm (Bolton & Thompson 2000; 258). The power behind any discussion of social identity has to consider to what extent it is the acting out of social truths from the immediately preceding era. The multifaceted consumer that has been an identified characteristic of recent modern society can be a realisation of its difference from Austerity Britain. In this way the entrepreneurial identity

springs from what we are distancing ourselves from and in entrepreneurship studies this is the corporatism of the post-war period.

In conclusion, to have an idea of the self is to be a subjective being (Rose 1992; 142). To raise the self in this context is to be able to interpret events from a subjective perspective. In common discussion on these issues the idea of the personal self becomes one of being self-motivated, self-aware, self-directed, and having self-understanding (Kayes 2002). This view of personal identity as selfhood, to use Ricoeur's distinction, seems to fit well with a development of an understanding of personal agency in small business. We should have no need to remind ourselves that the life of business is not just self-conscious reflection but must have some connection with things; the factive life. The next chapter will include a review of understanding and knowledge as part of the methodology of this research. The subject of knowing and truth is developed in much greater depth in the second phase of the research.

Entrepreneurial Vision

One of the important concepts in considering the role of personal agency in business is the development of entrepreneurial practices. These practices are those that are able via personal intervention to create a new business or improve the results achieved by an existing business. Entrepreneurship has in the recent past, been accepted as a key factor in the development of economic wealth (Johnson 2007). The cultivation of this personal agency is often seen as more important than a managerial approach of optimising outcomes for the firm, or of an 'iron rule' of an economic structuralism. It is not possible to determine the extent of entrepreneurial opportunities, their existence being dependant on entrepreneurial appreciation of particular situations. Whilst a new situation produces the common phrase 'that seems like an opportunity for someone' its existence as an opportunity is often judged in retrospect, by its successful outcome or a missed opportunity. This places the prospect of opportunities within time. Acknowledging this shows the irredeemably human aspects of envisagement.

The link between entrepreneurship and vision has often been drawn in the management literature. For instance, Mintzberg et al (1998; 123-147) consider that the entrepreneurial type of strategy is based on the central concept of *vision*. The entrepreneurial situation is characterised by the formation of a *perspective* that is based upon the innate qualities that include intuition and insight. These ideas are often used in a phenomenological context. In the Kantian use of these concepts, intuition is the formation of sensible impressions (Kant 1998; A50/B74). If intuition is allocated to the production of objects of perception, then a place for insight is the observation of difference, what might be seen differently. This imagination is focused on the rearrangement of phenomenological intuitions. Innovation then becomes dealing with them in new ways (Spinoza et al 1997; 35). The idea of thinking as 'seeing' is explored and is said to be a guiding idea similar to that of envisaging new outcomes (Spinoza et al 1997). The use of seeing as a description of discovery of new ideas has been in use since early Greek thought and will be a central part of the later discussion in this thesis. The observation is also made that the vision is always a future state and needs to be integral to action, it is not a dream. It also often implicitly relies on the understanding that knowledge is 'out there' to be discovered in an objective world but is realised through insight. It has been proposed that we consider the idea of entrepreneurial vision as the ability to 'see what is not there' (Carland et al 1996) or to be sure about what you don't want to do (Burlingham 2007; 219). Johnson (2007; 27) attributes the importance of seeing opportunity in entrepreneurship to Kirzner. This seeing is placed in the context of market alertness and hence discovery. Schumpeterian opportunities rely more on rational exploitation (Shane 2003; 21). Entrepreneurship has very commonly been thought of in terms of drive, a collection of behaviours, some mystical or magical qualities (Mitchell 1997; Burns 2001; 25) or managerial style that exploits opportunity (Thompson 1999). It is often the case that the vision of the organisation is seen in terms of an encapsulation of the long-term strategic direction of the organisation (Finch & Dinnie 2001). Plans are used, in this case to articulate the direction, but the process of this articulation seems to be more appropriate to the elaboration of a direction rather than a vision. A vision becomes a rich picture of the business direction, rather than seeing it as

something that is not there. In taking this approach they may have missed the opportunity to explore the potential offered by envisioning 'what is not there'.

All too often, psychological factors are dominant in the search for the basis of entrepreneurial success. Johnson (2007; 21) considers risk taking, co-ordination, innovation, and market alertness as entrepreneurial functions. The role of intention has also been noted and some researchers also emphasise the psychological factors that underlie it (Bird 1988; Shook et al 2003; Krueger et al 2000). This emphasis on drives and behaviours fits well with a development of research on personality and cognition in entrepreneurship (Ensley et al 2000). Carland et al (1996) in their paper locate the primacy of intuition within the framework of a cognitive typology. Whilst they express the difficulty in entrepreneurial research created by normally distributed psychological traits, they appear to identify a more fundamental psychological factor that will overcome the difficulties inherent in previous research. The difficulty in which they place themselves is that identification of intuition, as a factor will tend to emphasise the cognitive schemas used to produce intuition (Schutz 1967; 83). In this vein intuition becomes the interaction of domain competence and entrepreneurial alertness cognition (Mitchell et al 2005). Both Schumpeter's and Kirzner's entrepreneurial types are responsive to changes in technical and social factors and thus per-se environmental (Shane 2003; 23). The psychological factors here affect the decision to exploit so the successful entrepreneur acts in accordance with the situation, the environmental developments. We can see entrepreneurship as not only having a vision but disclosing it through resoluteness (Smith 2007). If true entrepreneurs are efficacious then the factor of their 'truth' seems to be an environmental attunement. It will be argued later that this view of the external environment is to a large part predicated on the Kantian view of the world as a perceived manifold. The correct perception of this environment is not guaranteed. The efficacy of the entrepreneurial action is *ex ante*, it cannot be known beforehand and many ventures fail. It has been observed that success is not an entrepreneurial criterion. The entrepreneurial essence is not a rational choice model but a forward leap. The venture at the start can be characterised as a movement from rapid experiential encounters to the development of a technological control. This seems a productive idea for consideration in this

thesis and will mesh with ideas that are developed later in the discussion on the development of personal knowledge.

If entrepreneurship is about some form of vision, the vision could be that of a picture and therefore holistic. Abratt (1989) discusses the relationship between corporate personality, identity, and image. The conclusion about corporate image is that it serves as a communication interface upon which stakeholders interact. For Olins (1989; 116) visual identity is the outward sign of inward consistency upon which it is dependant. Although not explicitly drawn out in the book the importance of the visual is in providing an overarching impression of strategy. The visual in this way is a holistic interface for the communication and there is a tacit acceptance that we develop understanding through an exchange with the visual. It also seems to have the ability to be projected – pursuing the visual aspect. The interesting thing about the role of vision in this context is that it retains the holistic nature of an image. It is usual to interpret visual signs as signifiers of an idea (Christensen et al 2008), but it is also possible to see a visualisation of the situation as a canvas upon which we continually interpret our understanding. In her ethnographic analysis of a Norwegian food manufacture Lien (1997) makes the following observation.

“Entering the marketing department, one immediately notices a huge glass cabinet which is filled with all the products of the marketing department. Neatly organised according to their respective product categories, the products in the cabinets serve as a visual display of what the activities in the marketing department are all about” (Lien 1997; 98).

This paragraph attracts our attention in a number of ways. Firstly, it considers the products to be of the marketing department, not immediately of the whole company. Marketing seems to own these products. What is interesting is that this display of products is a manifestation of the activities of the marketing department. It can be said that the product is everything, the vision and the definition (Peters 1992; 551). It may be that this passage reveals nothing more than the adoption of a symbolic interactive approach towards material artefacts, but what is noticeable is that the marketing department chose the display of products to present what they do, their participation in the market. This does not

seem to be unusual, and most foyers seem to take this approach. So even in a larger firm, it seems to be implicit that the product can say something about what the firm does. It is an image of the firm. In the case of corporate image, there is a tendency to react to deliberately constructed views. The image has been chosen to say something about the company. Alternatively, it seems possible that the appreciation of non-constructed situations requires a greater need on our own part to remain open to suggestions.

The use of vision in the development of knowledge is employed in talk about understanding – ‘I see what you mean’. This can be considered metaphorical, but more interesting this use of visual descriptors in the process of gaining knowledge perhaps indicates the centrality of seeing to understanding. This may be a result of the fact that vision is the most powerful of our senses, but this is a consideration in favour of a discussion on this topic. So in his discussion of science Blumer (1931) considers that an orientation is a ‘point of view’, which is equivalent to a new conceptual framework. The idea of a point of view provides a double meaning here that of seeing something from a particular location; we face towards it, and that of having an opinion about a situation. The idea of seeing as a trope for understanding has a considerable philosophical heritage, at least as far back as Plato’s analogy of the cave. So implicit in the idea of market orientation is that of taking a view of the situation. But if we consider this proposal in the light of the previous discussion then the notion of viewing becomes much more complex.

Consumer marketing research has focused on the power of the image in ‘illustrating’ the product, and visual representation is often seen as clear and unproblematic (Schroeder 2002; 26). The power of advertising images, such as Warhol’s soup tins, is to create a disjunction between the image and what we expect – our lived experience. Schroeder (ibid; 58) sees the gaze as an epistemological method to connect the ‘looked at’ with the looker. This appeal to the visual as a method of epistemic creation is not therefore just about the physically seeing but it is about reconstructing connections. However the visual appeal in consumer marketing is transient and begins to fall apart under close

inspection. It is perhaps a non articulate idea. This gaze is the type of viewing that can be used to further visualise the small business approach to the market.

To what extent is this vision connected with the idea of salience? Salience in early consumer psychology was used to indicate the extent to which something may be readily seen and recognised (Burdick et al 1959). The salience is determined by a person's 'point of view' –their sensory experience (Taylor & Fiske 1975). The use of the concept of salience is not rigorously defined but is clustered around perceptual importance as an equivalent meaning.

The identification of a visionary aspect to entrepreneurial or individually dominant organisations introduces a very productive development into the discussions about personal agency in a micro-business context. The linkage between entrepreneurship and business creation is strong (Shane 2003; 234). This is often through the creation of a new organisation but can be the introduction or withdrawal of new product service offerings, giving product strategy a leading role. This can often be done by *anticipating* consequences of market transformation, in a Schumpeterian mode (Cadeaux 1996; my emphasis). There is a natural tradition to maintain existing business operations beyond the period of their economic vitality, to avoid the finite. The role of the business doctor is to save the patient, but creation can involve destruction. The entrepreneurial role of creation can often involve the termination of non-viable business units; a creative destruction associated with Schumpeter that is endemic to a capitalist economy (Zafirovski 2008). The avoidance of closure is in contrast to the anticipatory nature of entrepreneurship the relative safety versus the leap forward. This leap, where outcomes are not known is often non-rational choice (Zafirovski 2008). Entrepreneurs have been identified by some as less personally competitive; they concentrate on their idea rather than comparing their relative rewards with others (Begley & Boyd 1987). The foundations of entrepreneurship could be based on a choice between the reassurance of activity and a holistic vision as a means of producing understanding. It can be argued that this aspect of active economic behaviour has not been studied in very great depth.

The positive role of entrepreneurship is not accepted by all. It is a personal, often non-rational activity. The idea of entrepreneurialism is a construct that has developed in line with the growth of individualism in society. Personal innovative behaviour now has a greater emphasis in recent social policy, enterprise is personally and nationally rewarding. Some have pointed out that the social costs of individualism are high. Through the emphasis on economic rewards for entrepreneurship there has been a greater emphasis on protecting the property rights thus earned; this has often been challenged by individuals and groups (Kay 1996; 139). Linked to this there has been a rise in the belief that rewards are there for the 'taking' and based on the outcome of chances. The Schumpeterian view is noted for the idea of creative destruction, but in this context it emphasises choice rather than the rationality of marginal utility (Shane 2003; 21). Emphasising choice produces the view that 'he who dares wins' in the execution of a venture, which are sometimes of dubious legality such as the allocation of returns from premium rate telephone revenue in competitions. Entrepreneurship can sometimes become the need to succeed at the expense of others (Bolton & Thompson 2000; 125). In conclusion, it may be the case that a discussion of personal agency in small business underestimates the communal aspects of the genre such as the co-operative movement in small businesses. The impact of these enterprises on the economy has been small but has not disappeared (Chaplin 1982; 107). This now often takes the form of employee share ownership. Developments that are more recent have been the rise in social entrepreneurialism, or community based enterprises (Shaw 2004). In line with this view of entrepreneurship, Gibb (2002) makes the case for broadening the 'entrepreneurial paradigm' beyond the association with narrow economic rewards. It could become a general ability to adapt and develop 'to cope with, create, and perhaps enjoy uncertainty and complexity'. This seems to then become the adoption of life skills for the modern age. In this way the individual business owner, who values autonomy and uncertainty could be said to adopt the authentic life.

Entrepreneurial Learning

There has been a gradual development in the understanding of learning in an entrepreneurial context (Gibbs & Angelides 2004; Harrison & Leitch 2005). This thesis is located in the general field of entrepreneurial learning and this juncture is an important one in the development of the thesis.

Within small firms the personal characteristics of the principal are dominant and govern the marketing activity (Wong & Aspinwall 2004, Siu & Kirby 1998; Bolton & Thompson 2000). These personal characteristics such as personal values, motivation and goal setting are implicated in entrepreneurial learning (Rae & Carswell 2000). This individual learning development becomes entwined in small business development through the entrepreneurial process; individual and firm developments are parallel processes (Cope & Watts 2000). These factors may be embedded in the individual (the knowledge user). Personal factors are often considered more important than the characteristics of the knowledge, but these two factors are primary in the generation of knowledge use (Menon & Varadarajan 1992). Often the approach is adopted that the utilisation of knowledge in terms of outputs is what is valued, not knowledge itself and the knowledge utilisation is produced from a retrospective analysis of decisions taken. The importance of the individual is reinforced by further research. "The strategy content is shaped as much by the subjective interpretation of manager's immediate situation as they are by their vision and longer term objectives" (Sashittal and Jassawalla 2001; 53). A view of marketing orientation is that it requires both behavioural and attitudinal factors (Avlonitis & Gounaris 1999). It could be argued that in entrepreneurial learning the factors are activity and vision. To the extent that knowledge is implicated in activity and development, individual and organisational knowledge are therefore intimately connected, particularly in a small firm. Like financial market traders there is an unarticulated awareness of the market that is based on participation, gut feeling, and firsthand experience (Hasselstrom 2004; 152).

One approach to personal enterprise-relevant knowledge is to consider it to be the central to an entrepreneurial orientation (Bhuian et al 2005). This orientation,

contrasted with a market orientation brings to the foreground these market-altering activities, what can be termed manipulative proactive behaviour. This can be seen as the basis for entrepreneurial zeal, and in popular debate this can often morph into the appearance of zealotry; obsessive behaviour. This personal commitment can only take you so far, as discussed earlier. Flamholtz (1990; 217) considers that as the business grows this concentration on outcomes – a performance orientation – will need to change to a managerial approach, that of supervision. Technical product based knowledge will become less important during this time. This has been characterised as a move from ‘we’re smarter than anyone else’ to ‘engagement in the learning opportunity’ (Peters 1992; 386). Spinosa et al (1997; 46) discuss the move from craftsmanship to co-ordination in an entrepreneurial situation. For them, this later activity is based on conversation, the discourse that produces complementary actions. If the product knowledge is tacit this discourse can be a method of capturing it (Nonaka & Takeuchi 1995; 85)

An understanding of entrepreneurial engagement needs to be further developed. A consistent finding in the entrepreneurial literature is that small firms rely to a greater extent than larger organisations on interpersonal learning from their customers (Specht 1987) such as word-of-mouth marketing (Stokes 2000). This situation is frequently associated with the phrase closeness to customer (Bjerke & Hultman 2002; 106). The information gained from personal interaction is rich in that it includes immediate feedback, a variety of cues, and is contextual, and is good for dealing with equivocal choices; i.e. ambiguity (Baumard 1999; p3): uncertainty about a situation (Runyan et al 2007). Weick (1985) points out that actual events are richer than the data that represents them, they are noisier and less orderly; data cannot capture the whole picture, there is a residual element discernible through personal appreciation. Dialogue is unique in that it has the ability to produce a shared mental model (Tzokas & Saren 2004). The benefit of dialogue appears to be that it is able to develop a shared understanding in equivocal personal interactions. It would seem that this is what is captured in customer conversations; and their vitality in small businesses. The proponents of a theory of practice approach would see this in terms of the small business owner

or entrepreneur having an enlarged sense of entitlement as a result of their position; talk legitimises participation (Lave & Wegner 1991; 111).

Some also see entrepreneurship in this context as enabling the emergence of shared meanings in the business (Gartner et al 1992). The vision can be communicated and modified in this way. One analysis of conversations is to distinguish between conversations for understanding and conversations for performance (Ford & Ford 1995). Sometimes we seek to appreciate the other's situation, other times to instruct and ensure compliance. In a situated learning perspective there is talking within and talking about a practice (Lave & Wegner 1991; 107). This distinction can be thought of as the difference between refining activity and the outcomes that the practice generates. This difference is part of a discussion on the development of knowledge within any organisation – or social group – that has objectives. Each conversation will vary dependant on the relationship of the participants and the emphasis is likely to change throughout the conversation.

What is important in the entrepreneurial process and the role of vision is that it is not some form of miniaturisation, some abstraction and reduction of the world. Although it is particular and individual it is open and connected not confined and withdrawn. Often an entrepreneurial venture has the characteristic of leading onto bigger things. It is usually not an isolated occurrence. One of the possibilities is that we can investigate the ad-venture of creating a new enterprise as an opening up of possibilities. This would need to be coupled with a resoluteness to 'see (!) it through'. In order to engage in such an investigation there must be a choice of which methods it would be suitable to deploy. The next chapter looks at methods for proceeding with this research.

Chapter 4

Methodological Issues and Research Methods

Understanding Knowledge in a small firm

'No curiosity is more disadvantageous to the expansion of our knowledge than that which would always know its utility in advance' Kant Critique of Pure Reason A237

The methodology employed in this research has become more central to the completion of the task as the research has progressed. From the start of the research, the interviews were conducted in a style that was natural and open. Interviewees were easily approachable and accommodating. Undoubtedly a familiarity by the researcher with the situation of many small businesses facilitated this approachability. This style continued in the further research although a greater structure was applied. The initial view taken was that the methodological issues in research were often overplayed and time spent on a considered philosophical approach should reduce any methodological anguish. This would be especially true for a research task that explored in depth the issue of knowledge and epistemology. A large element of this research undertakes a philosophical approach, especially in the later readings. It therefore emphatically agrees with the view that all research needs to examine the philosophical and political views which are inevitably applied (Easterby-Smith et al 2002; 3); no approach is free from presuppositions. It has been noted already that methodology can be a problematic area. Hindle (2004) identifies two stances to the methodological issue the paradigm-conflict perspective and the philosophical-avoidance perspective. The former enters into discussions about the relative

merits of methodological philosophies and the latter tends to ignore methodological discussions as being too contentious leading to a preference towards the mechanics of data collection. Noting what was said above, the early phase of this research tended towards the latter with its open and exploratory manner. In fact, the theme of immersion became prominent in this research both in the philosophical inquiry and in the world of small business. This was a complex phase of the research journey.

It has been noted that the area of market knowledge in a small business needs a different conceptual engagement (Thorpe et al 2005). The position taken in this research is that a quantitative research method is appropriate for the research questions. This is not to claim that quantitative research is so different that it becomes the justification for the study but is a method that is suitable for exploring new concepts. This method is needed where the situation occurring is not well understood and there is a need to develop new approaches and insights (Shaw 2004; Moriarty et al 2008). Recently there has been an established and growing trend to accept the value of qualitative research both in marketing (Hunt 1994; Hackley 1998; Stokes 2000) and small business research (Rae 2004; Howorth et al 2005; Thorpe et al 2005; Hamilton 2006). Qualitative methods can transcend current theory because existing theoretical approaches can be taken as a starting point for a revealing innovative analysis (Curran & Blackburn 2001; 110). The distinction between quantitative and qualitative methodology is important but may not be the most important dimension (Alvesson & Deetz 2000; 61). It is the failure to consider the ontological, epistemological, and axiological implications of the research that can, have unintended effects in constricting research outcomes, which echoes the earlier point. Whilst it is eminently possible to develop a methodological stance by personal reflection there are benefits in adopting an existing methodology. Primarily it allows the work to be placed within a research methodology that acts as a template and allows the research to become more robust. Alternative methodologies are considered later in this chapter. Whilst this process of theory-data coupling places the research process in a tradition (Curran & Blackburn 2001; 32), it could also hinder the development of new approaches. To this end, it is considered that the methodology adopted

should be inductive and flexible as regards to methods as it is intended to discover new insights (Swartz & Boaden 1997).

The research method in this study uses empirical data to provide the material to inspire, develop and reshape theoretical ideas. It could have been possible to produce a critique of existing theories of market knowledge development in the micro firm and introduce new theoretical perspectives through solely reflecting on the researcher's own experience. This task would add considerably to the already complex issues investigated and was not a feasible outcome of this research. The benefit of including empirical data is that it provides the material for a more productive development of insights that would be absent from a purely theoretical study. It also avoids the danger of the researcher as a self-contained producer of pellucid insights. The inclusion of empirical data requires an epistemological stance towards the data; asking the question about how can we learn from it. The analysis of the initial field research seemed to require an interpretation to be able to provide useable results. As explained below this interpretation became the methodological framework for the research and generated an approach that was based on a Heideggerian philosophy. If through this connection, the research is based on the tradition of 'German Idealism', then it has been suggested that there are some approaches which are complementary with this tradition. These are considered a nominalist social reality, an anti-positivistic epistemology, a voluntaristic take on human nature, and an ideographic methodology (Burrell & Morgan 1979; 7). This study was written with the analysis of organisations in mind and whilst every business is an organisation we have argued that the small business contains a greater personal element than most. The voluntaristic and nominal elements seem also to have a prima-face fit. This research as a whole will tend to expand and develop this research position. The philosophical parts of this paper fit in with this discovery process as the nature of philosophy to raise questions rather than solve them (Tallis 2002; xi).

Each academic field contains existing research streams and to the extent that this research is about entrepreneurship, it needs to relate to this existing work. It can

either take a consensual or dissenting view towards the current themes, which then becomes a defining stance of the research (Alvesson & Deetz 2000; 24). Given that this research has involved an exploration of epistemological issues an overview of the more salient issues is given below. These are part of the research in that they provided a background to epistemological choices.

An Epistemological Review

Given that this research has involved an exploration of epistemological issues then an outline of some epistemological developments are relevant in this chapter, to facilitate the discussion in later chapters. The philosophy of Kant was in some respects an inflection point in the development of epistemology, and it has been noted that it is one of the antecedents of an interpretative methodology (Burrell & Morgan 1979; 227). It is a phenomenological philosophy and is influential on much of Heidegger's work, which adds to its relevance here. In summary, Kant saw his work as a method of discovering an adequate basis for knowledge in the natural sciences, which was becoming more urgent in the society of his time.

If the difficulty with the contemporary empirical epistemology was one of induction (Hume 1969; 267), then Kant's transcendental idealism was a sophisticated resolution of the problem of how experience is codified. The Cartesian and Lockean epistemology saw us codifying discrete experiences. Kant's resolution of the difficulty saw knowledge as dependant on the imagination, together with the a-priori categories, to synthesise what is presented to us empirically – phenomena (Kant 1998; A76). Knowledge thus depended on how our mind worked and so we should see that 'the understanding of the manifold of sensible perception is thus dependent on our pre-existent attributes' (Kant 1998; A145/B185). These attributes are the fundamental intuitions of space and time together with the categories, which are not dependent on experience and are thus conditions of the receptivity of our mind (Kant 1998; A77). From these intuitions, we can produce conceptual objects of cognition (Kant 1998; B37), if we remind ourselves that the properties of space-time reside in the intuition not the [physical] objects themselves (Kant 1998; B68). This ordered experience

[*Erfahrung*] is superior to the multitude of sensual experiences (Kant 1998; B164), and provides a basis for sound judgement about the world.

The salient factors in an epistemology inherited from Kant are:

Firstly we are dependent on sensible perception for our understanding, and this sensibility realises the understanding at the same time that it restricts it (Kant 1998; B187). We cannot understand anything that is not based on sensible experience. Understanding and sensibility can determine an object only in combination (Kant 1998; B314)

Secondly the world presents itself as a seamless unity. This is a result of the unity of apperception, and a unity of consciousness (Kant 1998; B138). So it is possible to see how this general objectivity creates a whole world in its unity and our knowledge is dependent on this available totality. The unity of consciousness is produced concomitantly from the way we see the world as a whole. These two together with the unity of objects of our thought are transcendental ideas (Kant 1998; A334/B391).

Thirdly knowledge becomes human; we produce the understanding. We do not 'gather' independent impressions from perception, which are cognised post-facto. This is Kant's 'Copernican revolution' which makes knowledge human (Kant 1998; Bxv). We cannot know things in themselves and in this sense; this epistemology is idealistic in contrast to a realistic empiricism (Kant 1998; A368). This is the Kantian achievement over Hume's difficulties with induction.

There has been widespread acceptance of this Kantian epistemology with the a-priori scaffolding that he identified in our production of knowledge of the world. It is this that Strawson calls our cognitive constitution (Strawson 1996; 41). With the benefit of the Kantian epistemology our judgements about the world around us become more secure, developing our epistemic conduct (Rosenburg 2005; 51). Adopting this philosophy allows us to develop a common human knowledge that is both summative and enduring. In a fundamental way the thought of Kant

engendered the modernist outlook. Before this development in epistemology the early Renaissance thinkers regarded nature as divine and self creative (Collingwood 1965; 94). It led to a projected external environment, external to us, a prefigured natural order (Kolb 1986; 126). Nature has now become more often seen as an aggregate (Collingwood 1965; 43). This summary of the Kantian philosophy has identified in particular those elements that have a particular relevance to the phenomenological inquiry that was taken up by Husserl.

In recent times, there has been a tendency to deny the validity of epistemology as a first philosophy. Naturalistic philosophers see epistemology as part of psychology because it studies the knowing human subject (Quine 1969; 92). Through this approach, we can escape the depredations of metaphysics and concentrate on real problems (Piaget 1972; 19). This statement reflects the general trend in the twentieth century to concentrate on praxis in a Marxist sense or on pragmatism as 'the American philosophy' (Adorno 1982; 135; James 1917). This opposed the idea of the holistic nature of epistemology (Berlin 1998; 11) and allowed epistemology and methodology to move closer to each other. The methodology adopted in this research follows a phenomenological method that is developed from Kant, by Husserl and Heidegger. The element of praxis is incorporated in Heidegger and later interpretations of his work. There are two other significant qualitative research streams current in entrepreneurial research; narrative approaches and network approaches. A brief review of these methodologies follows next.

Narrative Methodology

One of the developments of the modern era in the theory of knowledge is to see the use of narrative as a means to create an understanding by or for an individual. The use of narrative is often seen as providing a structure to our knowledge, and in this way it contributes to the structural tradition. Others see its role as dynamic and situated. The Kantian a-priori provided an innate and thus universal structure to understanding based on the given, the same logic can be applied to a supervening language structure. To concentrate on the posited provides an individual focus. In this view, the benefit of semantics is that it is a more robust

way of considering how our thoughts are structured rather than relying on the a-priori. It has the considerable benefit of being validated interpersonally. Language or description is seen as a restricted or localised universality, different languages are employed by different social groups. This descriptive narration also provides a structure to mutual understanding within a social group. This group interacts through shared language that enables expression, but might also restrict expression to what can be talked about. Within this approach narrative allows us to develop through self understanding of our personal story; the self defining process realised in describing who we are.

Narrative analysis can also illuminate the ability of others to create a life for us, in that we adopt the interpretations provided to us. The process of responding to how others treat us, and in that way conforming to expectations, is integral to the development of social identity. We absorb the messages others tell us. Some philosophies prioritise language as a separate arena of knowledge. Our understanding is not essentially empirical but is encoded in the structure of language. Statements about the world become the accepted truth, making original facts indirect truths (Lyotard 1984; 35). Other philosophies such as those of Bakhtin and Benjamin see language as intermediate between the purely individual and the universal (Beasley-Murray 2007; 89). This can occur not only between nature and man but also as a dialogue between syntax and utterances; the general and the particular. Davidson contrasts the syntactic and semantic elements of language. Syntactic explanations provide abstract linked relationships. Semantic explanations are about the relationship of our language to the real world (Davidson 1990; 94). He adopts the stance that any natural language is not able to provide a complete internal syntax from within itself. Language is not entirely grounded in empirical relationships – exhibited in observational sentences, it has elements of coherence (Quine 1969; 82). To share the same language means to adopt the same conceptual scheme, to separate them provides no useful distinction (Quine 1969; 5; Davidson 1974). Language is our knowledge. What prevents this linguistic scheme from error is that the language we have to describe the world is unlikely to be entirely false. Therefore we can accept it as true in general; it is for science to discover the particular misconceptions. Nevertheless, it is the process of discovery of which of our

beliefs is incorrect that is the important question. What causes some beliefs to be challenged, some are questioned by new facts, and some because their power to explain becomes less effective.

Searle provides a philosophy of language that is semantic. He considers that by the use of illocutionary acts we don't create a belief or response; we get the hearer to understand (Searle 1969; 47). The meaning of a sentence is determined by its rules (ibid 48), and the purpose of language is structured in this respect. To understand is something is to know the meaning of the sentence that describes it; meaning is a common inheritance. As noted above the philosophy of language is linked to the structure of thought. For Husserl the life-world has a structure (Husserl 1970; 139) and conceptual language is seen as the basis for that structure but the a-priori nature of that structure is now often challenged. For the naturalistic philosophers we are no further forwards than Hume in structured understanding (Quine 1969; 72). Rorty considers that the project of the definition of meaning by the use of language as a transcendental topic was challenged by Heidegger's early works and the later Wittgenstein; it had to be naturalised (Rorty 1990). He presses the point that language is not independent of its relation to other things; it is bound-up with social practices. Although this view denies language its ability to define the world, it accepts with Davidson the necessity of a vocabulary to sort out generalisations (Davidson 1990; 91). The conceptual and the natural do not directly map onto each other. The view that the natural world is created with its own language and hence our descriptions of it become a conversation is ascribed to Benjamin (Beasley-Murray 2007; 99).

Firstly, this can be achieved methodologically through the self-understanding of our own personal story. The ability to connect our experiences using narrative can be undertaken as a personal exploration – a self-constructed trajectory of our lives. Thus, the individual personal experiences are connected in a more abstract sequence in time. This thematic life story occupies a temporal plane between universal time and the stream of events. As a story it involves capture or seizure at this point of the narrative, it becomes static but thereby opens up different futures. This potential combination of introspection and openness, it is suggested,

is the nexus for the generation of further learning. To the extent that the unity of the narrative interpretation is often broken down so that the parts become conflicting and elusive (Hytti 2005) this contributes to the extent of polyphonic interpretations. The narrative edifice is cracked. Benjamin also provides the view that the instrumental use of language as a medium to communicate information debases language's true nature. This can only be through revealing that which is wordless (Beasley-Murray 2007; 115). This is a challenge both to the utility of language as a conceptual structure and as a medium to transmit information.

There is a developing appreciation of the value of a narrative analysis in entrepreneurial studies. One instance of this is that 'close to the market' is one of the positively valued small business narratives (Rae & Carswell 2000). Customer encounters are the common stories of small business reality. It may be the case that this closeness to the customer is a proxy for the market, but it is different from the market as an abstract totality. This closeness is often a self-ascriptive value adopted by small businesses and has been termed intimacy (Burlingham 2007; 218). Alternatively a narrative is often told, or revealed through actions of others towards us. The interpretation of narrative is a hermeneutic activity. Hermeneutics developed as the study of the meaning or intention contained in texts, interpreting what they told us. This is because either the author is no longer available such as in biblical studies or that the narrative can reveal more than the author intended to say. Ricoeur in discussing the hermeneutics of intentional actions considers that they can be viewed from three standpoints. What is being done; why is it being done; and who is doing it (Ricoeur 1970; 72)? One of the tenets of a hermeneutic approach is the movement between parts and wholes in a circle/spiral of knowledge (McPherson 2005). The subject is both concealed behind the signs and revealed through their interpretation (Silverman 1987; 342). In this way interpretations of the world become developed and refined. Modern developments in hermeneutics promote the ability to understand our situation as one of possibility in reality (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2000; 81).

For the purposes of this research, it is not essential to decide in advance, what the particular effect of language is on knowledge. The nature of language structures

our syntax and it seems intuitive to believe that it must to some extent structure knowledge, but the use of language is slippery, subtle and polysemous. In trying to explore the nature of market knowledge, and there is evidence that some elements of this knowledge can be described as pre-locutionary or tacit. The stance of this thesis will be that language will be treated as a means of flexible communication through speech and is not committed to the structural elements of narrative analysis.

The Network Approach

One of the suggested benefits of networks is that they are a response to the under socialised socio-psychological interpretations of entrepreneurship (Araujo & Easton 1966; 98). This approach aims to see the concept of entrepreneurship – in our case – in relational terms, not as a separate concept which we can refine with greater clarity before its application to particular cases. It is the configurations that are generative of valued outcomes. Studies of networks can be categorised as either metaphorical or mathematical, the former allowing an interpretative stance the latter an analytical approach (Araujo & Easton 1966; 106). Most economic exchange takes a dyadic approach, occurring between two economic actors for mutual gain within a social structure. The interpretation of economic activity as networks places them conceptually in the middle ground between rational economic actors –the market – and normative social participation in a hierarchy of relationships. So the interplay within a network of the structure-agency dynamic is considered by some commentators to be its strength (Biggiero 2001). The market and the hierarchy can be seen in terms of size, individual transactions versus social structures. Granovetter (1973) argues that the most productive bridge between micro and macro situations is the study of processes in interpersonal networks. The bridging across, or spanning, that dichotomy seems to be the important point, not that they could be a distinct third interpretation of economic behaviour, or are a varying element in all such behaviour. Others see the idea of networks in similar terms, they at least in the enterprise field, offer an opening to get beyond process and structure (Johannisson 1987a). The network approach provides a theory which foregrounds the characteristics of reciprocity,

and collaboration (Larson 1992). Being situated in a network shows how the activities of trade may be for the longer term.

It can be observed that research in narrative was often to get behind the edifice. In network analysis there is a similar process. If there is a network what is its underlying dynamic? The incisiveness of networks in small business studies is that they reveal either the process of personal resource acquisition or the foundation of business development (Johannisson & Monsted 1997). In the personal approach to networking in small business development it is considered to be dependent on the ability of the entrepreneur to use personal contact networks. Some have considered this ability to be inherent, and therefore always present, although perhaps by implication, not always realised (Carson et al 1995; 199). The entrepreneur gains information and knowledge for the business. This knowledge although it is enacted in a social context remains subjective and personal. Knowledge is gained through the agency of the entrepreneur and what they can achieve, their commitment to the network is instrumental (Johannisson 1987b).

The development of knowledge about the social value of networks is linked with the theory of economic clusters. This identifies the situation that exists of similar firms locating in close proximity to each other whom whilst apparently in competition can provide each other with money, information, or legitimacy (Wiewel & Hunter 1985). This can take several forms; the opportunity for joint ventures; the sharing of generalised trading information; the raising of awareness of that business by more players; and the ability to create a market position in a market that has existing traders through the identification of gaps. The resultant phenomenon, the mutual co-operation through joint approaches to business development, has been termed Symbiotic Marketing (Adler 1966). The advantages of this approach, in Adler's view are the augmentation of individual firm's efforts and the 'offer of complete services rather than products'. This is suggestive of the Japanese keiretsu system or Italian economic clusters (Best 1990). Alternatively the reliance on a network can be restrictive if it defines the limits of entrepreneurial marketing (Stokes 2000).

The relationship between our concepts was discussed above. The existence of connections is necessary in a network approach because it focuses on these connections. The business can be compared to a brain which has dynamic global properties in a network of simple components (von Krogh and Roos 1995; 22). In the cognitive and connectionist theories of organisation discussed earlier information was separate from the system. In autopoietic systems it is integrated and cannot be separated out (von Krogh and Roos 1995; 39). Networks on this interpretation are self-organising and emergent; they develop similar to the nature of biological or autopoietic entities (Hall 2005). Similar to other social phenomena networks can be interpreted on a structural or process level, but a process approach seems more appropriate to the dynamic nature of business (Araujo & Easton 1966; 105). Interactivity remains difficult to observe and the processes that Hall studies are formalised processes such as staff induction (Hall 2005). Seeing the business in terms of a network of multiple interactive relationships has the effect of broadening the perspective from a purely didactic producer- consumer approach. The merit of this for some is that it also promotes an investigative approach towards seeing what works or learning by doing (Ritter & Ford 2004; 110).

It can be observed that there is a level of difference endogenous to a network. The degree of heterogeneity within a network of small business can take place on several levels. There is at the minimum both the social heterogeneity of the contacts and the product heterogeneity of the other businesses in the network (O'Donnell et al 2001). The industry or market is somehow the network boundary that is the trace of the movement from variation to contrariety.

In conclusion, it is possible to agree with the view that the network approach is suitable but not sufficient for entrepreneurial understanding of markets (Boussouara & Deakins 1999). Whilst the network approach might be a useful conceptual frame to understand the economic and social situation of smaller businesses it seems that the personal understanding is more located in the business rather than a network. This research decided that it was more productive to concentrate on the development of located personal understanding rather than

the exploration of knowledge development through networks. The area of personal understanding seemed to be where there was the prospect of new insights within the general aims of the research.

Phenomenology as a Methodology

One of the approaches to entrepreneurship research can be the use of phenomenology to research lived experience (Berglund 2007; 77). Cope (2003a) presents the argument for the use of phenomenological research in the entrepreneurship field. The advantage of the phenomenal approach is that it is interpretative within a framework of discovery. The approach is to develop new insights (Shaw 2004). Any qualitative research starts from the perspective of the people studied (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2000; 4) and phenomenology as a methodology is often focused on revealing the lifeworld of the individual (Thompson et al 1989). In this manner, it is focused on the individual's essential or eidetic insight (Husserl 1931; 55). In a research context, it would need to be combined with a developing understanding by the researcher of this eidetic understanding. There is thus a necessary reflexive procedure in phenomenological research (Husserl 1931; 215). With no direct access to the personal truths apart from personal articulations, the researcher needs to adopt a stance to interpret the speech, or perhaps actions, generated in the research encounter. It therefore seems that phenomenological research takes the personal understanding of the situation as the central topic (Goulding 2005). This research takes a phenomenological epistemology but adopts a reflexive methodology. Reflexive phenomenological research into entrepreneurship is rare (Berglund 2007; 80), this thesis is in some part a contribution to that research stream.

Details of the Methodological Approach Adopted

After consideration of the above streams of research, the approach adopted was to use a general reflexive stance towards the empirical material. To this end the general methodological approach adopted in this thesis is based upon that developed in Alvesson and Sköldbberg's *Reflexive Methodology*. This offers a methodology that has been used for business research and is based on a multi-

layered flexible structure of interpretation and reflection (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2000; 9). References with A&S and page numbers in this section will refer to this volume. The methodology that Alvesson and Sköldbberg outline allows for interpretation of empirical data at several levels –it is multidimensional and interactive- and they tentatively use the description quadric-hermeneutics for their methodology (A&S; 248). The four elements that form the basis of the methodology are; contact with the empirical material; awareness of the interpretative act; clarification of the political – ideological contexts; and the question of representation and authority (A&S; 238).

The first element of this reflexive methodology is engagement with the empirical material. Philosophically one of the first positions to be taken is the status of the physical world. The dangers of a pure idealism have been well documented, and we are unable remain totally in the realm of ideas. A naturalistic perspective accepts this dependency on the physical world, to a greater or lesser extent depending on the amount of critical facility employed (Quine 1969; 75). To say that we are merely responsive to the physical world produces a pre-eminence of the experimental method that tries to find the loci of a stimulus and response (Gergen 1994; 132). In business research it is often the case that the empirical data is not merely physical measurement but the views of the participants in the physical and social milieu. The value of interviews in this research is to ground the research questions in this milieu. In this regard one of the initial issues in small business research is defining the population that the research covers. It seems axiomatic that size is the important factor in small business research, and the definition of size in relationship to business has been addressed already. A difficulty with the measurement of size is that it is almost too easy and can preclude more complex factors such as legal independence (Curran and Blackburn 2001; 16). The issue of size may be merely a contingent factor depending on the industry segment in which the business operates (Zeithaml et al 1988). It appears that certain industries have a greater preponderance of small businesses perhaps because of minimum efficient operations (Kay 1993; 174). This may mean that a study such as this is restricted to certain economic segments in the consideration of the small business and its market.

The importance of the personal element of this understanding led to the decision to use interviews as the method of empirical data collection. Interviews are a powerful method for generating empirical data that is applicable to an area of human understanding that is individual and exploratory. The use of interviews has a large amount of methodological support (Boussouara & Deakins 1999; Howorth et al 2005; Maguire et al 2007). As a result of the identification of a strong linkage between the person and the enterprise these interviews took place with the proprietor/principal of the micro business who was a relatively easily definable person. Some of the micro businesses had external investors, but the principal was chosen as someone who was active in the daily operations of the business and was able to have a considerable influence over the future direction of the business. Where the business was run by partners, the interview could be conducted with one or occasionally two partners. One of the advantages of this approach is that a single interview with the principal(s) is likely to reveal useful insights into a large part of a micro business. This is less likely to be possible when investigating a larger organisation with more complex arrangements (Swartz & Boaden 1997).

Although this method was chosen, it was not chosen without reflection on the impact of this choice on the research. In contemporary qualitative studies it is no longer possible to accept the neutrality of the empirical data obtained, it is never truly grounded and univocal and has the elements of construction and interpretation embedded in its collection (A&S; 254). In the first instance it is noted that the perspective revealed by the data is fundamentally dependant on its linguistic production (A&S; 244). Any description of a situation is mediated and constrained by language, and will by definition preclude the description of unarticulated pre-understanding. The context and the structure of the interview become important rather than the danger of analysing individual words because multiple meanings are frequent. The polysemous nature of words will however become more particular in specific contexts (Potter 1996; 178). This research also notes that there is a natural tendency for the respondents to formulate their answers in line with accepted norms of what is understandable and acceptable (A&S; 264). There exists, particularly perhaps in the case of a personal interview, a desire to 'manage impressions' which becomes almost an automatic stance

(A&S; 269). The research accrues at least one advantage, the previous participation in a business community by the author, and the assurance of common experience has seemed to reduce the need for the interviewees to adopt a stance of unmitigated efficacy. The initial interviews were conducted in an open-ended conversational style asking them to describe various broad aspects of the business, this coupled with the previous membership of this social group, was conducive to generating a rapport.

The second thread in the reflexive research is that of developing an awareness of the interpretative act. This is often achieved through a process of hermeneutics which often has an empathetic approach to the text in trying to develop an understanding (A&S; 54). The use of language in research has both epistemic and methodological aspects, as discussed in the earlier section on narrative. The epistemic aspects are to what extent language reveals our conceptual schema. In this interpretation how we organize our thoughts into related concepts can have a structural aspect, and as a narrative it produces a text as a fundamentally coherent narrative. In this research, the interview becomes the text that is the basis of interpretation. This understanding of the text and its significance for us can be developed in two ways. This can be either as the space between the text and the reader - the object and the subject; or as a space in uncovering the original meaning, an alethic hermeneutics (A&S; 56). It is important not to conflate the semantic and the semiotic view of the language used. The process here is perhaps to consider the nature of truth as uncovering as outlined by Heidegger and Gadamer. This process was not without its difficulties. A completely transcribed interview tends to present an exaggerated coherence and a theme that is difficult to disaggregate. This was the case with the initial interviews. Often it was more productive to listen for key phrases in the interviews and in this way take a more skeletal view of the hidden themes. One of the alternative ways to avoid this is to introduce an interpretative schema such as a timeline of business development, or a succession of critical incidents (Cope 2003b). This procedure is designed to facilitate recall and provides a meta-structure for the interview. One of the advantages of a multi-phase research project is that it enables both a set of initial findings and the opportunity to critically revisit those initial findings. Not to destroy them but to build on them with further analysis.

The third thread is to adopt a critical stance towards the empirical material to give a clarification of the political – ideological contexts residing in the data gathered. It is notable that business research has a presumption of implementation, research should lead to practical consequences (Easterby-Smith et al 2002; 8). The expectation is that it be efficacious for the business, or at least not overtly critical. The relation between events and theory is in this context not self-evident (Habermas 1971; 307); they rely on an ulterior justification from human interest. The acceptance of an ideological aspect to society leads the researcher to reflect on the production of the text. What is the reason for the issue under discussion being presented in this way – in whose interests does it serve? In this mode there is a need to achieve an epistemological break with everyday understanding (A&S; 277). The interviews are then revealed as part of what can be described as the information game, that operates through concealment, discovery, false revelation, and rediscovery (Goffman 1959, 20; Shaw 2004). As mentioned previously the production of a brand image, with its intent to draw towards itself perceptions of the company, can be seen as one of deliberate concealment of other aspects of the business. A critical approach would be to see around this icon. Included in this section is a need to question the meta-narratives about small businesses discussed previously. A deconstruction of the text can enable the revelation of a suppressed unity as a means of forming a more valid structure of interpretation (A&S; 154).

The last thread is the question of representation and authority. We have to decide who is able to talk about this question and what the particular relationships that govern the research process are in each particular case. The question can be seen as a discursive formation as a general enunciative system which governs a group of performances (Foucault 2000; 130). There is a tendency to overemphasise the ‘lone entrepreneur’ in this type of research (Curran & Blackburn 2001; 6) with the consequence that their personal contribution can be accorded greater weight than it deserves.

Owner managers in small firms need a greater grasp of product knowledge than managerial knowledge (Martin & Staines 1994). One of the methodological

advantages in studying the impact of knowledge in a small firm is that it is a context that would enable a move from the abstract to the practical³ (Tzokas & Saren 2004). Chaston (1998) considers that the context of small firm marketing is appropriate for the study of entrepreneurial activity. Some have even suggested that marketing is inherently entrepreneurship in small firms (Boussouara & Deakins 1999).

Previous small business research has used a mix of deductive and inductive approaches (Curran & Blackburn 2001; 110). One of the implications of adopting a reflexive methodology is that an iterative approach is required and the production of results that find acceptance in areas outside the direct population studied.

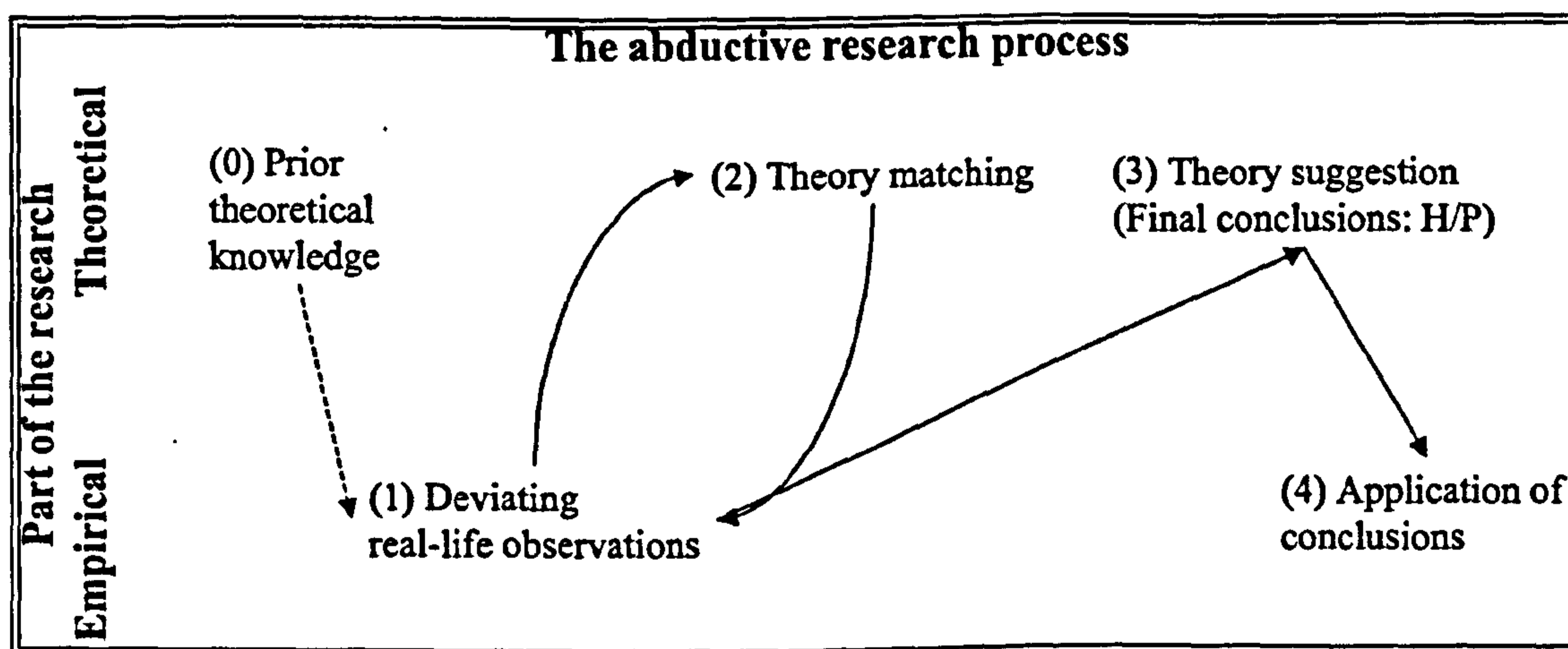


Figure 3 The Abductive Research Process (Kovács & Spens 2005)

Shown above is an abductive research process where the use of abduction allows the generation of conclusions from the research that are not logically deductible but are only probable. It is offered as a method suitable for research that is designed to generate new ways of understanding (Kovács & Spens 2005). This figure was used to think the pathway through the reflexive interventions employed in this research.

³ Tzokas and Saren use the term pragmatic. Given the discussion in this thesis on pragmatic philosophy the word practical has been used here to indicate non abstract uses.

The phenomenological approach is also interpretative in that it relies on the commitment of the interviewer to remain true to the primary understanding. In this way, it becomes similar to a hermeneutic approach, where the discoveries are made by close interpretation of the text. This is a consequent of the fact that the individual situation as expounded by Heidegger, between the existence and the possibilities can resemble the movement within a circle (Wolz 1981; 21). It would seem important, that if we are adopting a phenomenological approach, to distinguish between the use of phenomenology as a methodology and its ontological foundations. Husserl's phenomenological approach is that of eidetic interpretation, we have to perform a phenomenological reduction of the whole world and this foundational (noetic) meaning is the insight that we use to order the world (Husserl 1931; 258-261). This view is often considered to be a development of the idealism of Kant that our understanding of the world is based on the interpretative schemas – of space and time – that we place upon it (Burrell & Morgan 1979; 227). This approach however is productive of analytical knowledge. Heidegger's philosophy has been described as hermeneutic phenomenology (Palmer 1969; 125). The process of revealing and bringing into light is considered to be intrinsically hermeneutic (ibid; 141). Heidegger in his early work calls it the phenomenological hermeneutics of facticity (Heidegger 2007; 166).

If a true phenomenological approach was to be adopted then this research becomes placed in a double circle of reflection. The interviewee interprets his world through a process of intentional interpretation, and the researcher performs a similar process in making an intentional interpretation of the interview. It becomes a hermeneutic method. It has been suggested that a located interpretation becomes dependant on a semiological space (Silverman 1987; 342), and the development of a narrative is a central part of the interpretation of the interviewee's social identity. The reliance on a semiological nature of the conversation allows one to interpret the interview as revealing, through this system of signs, the nature of the objects that are being described, including the identity in question. The signs, qua signs are indicative of the objects, either physical or intentional but are united with the interpretation. In this process we unite the ontic and the ontological (Silverman 1987; 342). Another approach

would be to consider that the researcher is able to provide a second level of interpretation to the interview materials. This could either be an analysis of the speech of the interview that would avoid the deliberate creation of a coherent story, by re-reading the interview for emergent threads. This can reveal the sub-intentional grounding of beliefs, which might not have been expressed in a deductive manner. The use of an abductive method allows the revelation of something new; the ground of these new possibilities is a detailed reading and comparison of the interviews. Baumard (1999; 116) in his study uses the word adductive for a similar process where direct induction or deduction is not feasible, but the use of abductive relates more to the logical inference which is required here.

One view, reflecting the ethnomethodological perspective is that any transcript “is a practically useful rendering of a recording of an actual interactional event.” (Have 2004; 50). Furthermore the transcript can be denied as data following the interpretation necessary in its production, but the value of the tapes is that they can be re-referred to in both hermeneutic and confirmatory approaches (Have 2004; 52). This ethnomethodological approach concerns itself with providing supplements to formal analytical reasoning. The practicalities of instructions, the tacit skills and actual competencies of people in settings, and the objects they interact with. This can in some respect be described as their way of life. The current study does not seek to establish in such depth the way of life of the small business owners interviewed so cannot be counted as a true ethnographic study. It however will take into account the implications of such studies and avoid the simplistic assumption that the interview transcript as an artifact is unproblematic. Marketing as part of the tradition of management science has traditionally adopted a realist perspective, but work over the last few decades has introduced the social construction perspective (Hackley 1998).

The choice of interviewees was conducted through the exploitation of personal contacts with small businesses. This phenomenological research uses purposive sampling from those who have experienced the situation (Goulding 2005); a method which is able to produce suitable firms (Curran & Blackburn 2001; 67).

These small businesses were usually ones that I had personal contact with or were suggested by other interviewees in a snowball effect. The number of the interviews was kept small because the reflexive process generated a substantial number of insights from one interview.

The phenomenological interview elicits free-form text that is interviewee controlled (Stern et al 1998). It is controlled to the extent that the interviewee can not only conceal or reveal particular items of information, but it is also controlled to the extent that they impose an order on what they say. The interview therefore used open conversational techniques as a way of opening up the area for description. They construct a narrative in response to the question, and this is particularly relevant in relatively unstructured interviews where there is the freedom to decide how to answer the question. This narrative is constructed in response to 'tell me about the business', on the one level it would not seem appropriate to give a series of random thoughts therefore a sequence is offered. A greater degree of manipulation would be to conceal items or to describe the business as being different than it is.

The approach to the empirical material in this thesis has been placed somewhere between conversation analysis and discourse analysis as characterised by Easterby-Smith et al (2002; 121). The interviews were transcribed with the inclusion of pauses and hesitations following a general ethnomethodological approach (Potter 1996; Have 2004). This research has used these detailed transcripts of the interviews as the basis for a detailed interpretation. Discourse analysis is extremely labour-intensive (Elliot 1996) but can provide in-depth interpretations. The number of interviews was restricted to a small number so that the transcripts of the interviews created a rich amount of data for analysis. This hermeneutic endeavour to 'break up' and get behind the interview was not restricted to the text. This method has not restricted itself to the flow and/or structures of the conversations but has taken into account the presuppositions and wider social context of the speaker (Potter 1996; 43; Goulding 2005). The detailed transcripts have facilitated a deeper interpretation of each conversation to reveal these factors. The interpretation of factual accounts requires a recovery of

utterances; they are not transparent (Potter 1996; 44). This research has not tried to determine the structure of the individuals thought. There is an importance attached to speech as distinct from language. It has the ability to be an active method of communication, our 'taking as' rather than a structure of our expression. In this way language is a modality of presence (Olafson 1998), which is not to exclude the ability of other modalities, such as the visual, to reveal what is taken to be present.

Included in an appendix is a table of standard conventions for transcribing qualitative research interviews given by Have (2004). This has been used to standardise the format of the interview transcripts in line with current practice. This has been adopted as part of the inductive methodology to increase interpretative depth but is not intended to indicate an acceptance of a comprehensive ethnomethodological methodology.

Personal Reflections

As a small business owner the greatest difficulty was achieving sustained growth. I came out of the experience with the conviction that small business ownership can be valuable and enabling for the right person. There was an opportunity here to research this situation and explore the lived situation of micro business ownership.

I have described at the beginning of Chapter One, where I re-entered the world of small business, how I adopted the approach of an 'unstructured conversation'. One of the difficult things was that the initial reading of the interviews produced a feeling that what the scripts told was too mundane to provide any useful insights. What the interviewees were telling me was commonplace, unremarkable and appeared to have a superficial sameness; this feeling was similar to the observation by Mitchell (1997) that the interviews speak to what is common for those inside the entrepreneurial experience. In contrast to the 'non-insiders' who are looking for some special element in the process it is possible to see these as the repetition of the ordinary, familiar experience. In some respects, having owned my own business the stories became commonplace because this is the

territory that I had inhabited. The imposition of an analytical lens to the data was needed to get behind what had been told, with minor variations, many times before. This process was significant; the unfolding of that which Mitchell (1997) considers to be ordinary, real, practical, and 'do-able'. One of the challenges in a reflexive methodology is to make an 'epistemological break with everyday knowledge' (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2000; 277). I felt this aspect of the research quite keenly having already been immersed in small business life. Part of this research has been to get behind the 'everyday'. Monin's study of management literature employed an initial meta-analysis of her readings to draw out the main themes. This was a method I employed in the interview process but called it 'emergent threads' which emphasises the partiality of the outcomes of the interpretation. They can always be refined further.

Echoes of my personal research journey were evident in the abductive research process described by Kovács & Spens (2005). The prior theoretical knowledge was refreshed and developed in the early part of the research, and the interviews developed failed to provide any interesting observations. This prompted a return to the theory in search of an explanation/interpretation of the data. This period of intense and often emotional personal reflection led to the consideration of the theoretical approaches based on the Heideggerian philosophy. This relates to one of the main observed objectives in this philosophy, to be able to re-think one's preconceptions (Mehta 1971; 65n: Tallis 2002; xi). On reflection, the difficulties with this research were based on the decision not to prematurely adopt an interpretative schema. The issue of coherence and thoughtfulness and the contribution from a wide range of literature and viewpoints does make high demands on the researcher (Alvesson & Sköldbberg 2000; 277) and generates intense reflection (Goulding 2005). At times this has been keenly felt. It often seemed that the early adoption of a more enclosed research method would have made the production of research outcomes considerably easier, but it was felt that this would have contributed less to the personal learning involved. This is not to deny the robustness of a research approach that is predicated on an existing theoretical approach, but the personal learning in this research precluded it. Appreciating the benefits that have accrued from this approach is a justification for its adoption. The research then became not so much a random walk but more

of a zigzag path through the field of the research. The results of this path taken are presented below.

The process of immersion and reflection as part of the research often precludes an early identification of the benefits. A reflexive question in adopting a different theoretical approach is to consider the extent to which the research should be directly focused a managerial or policy contribution. To the extent that this occurs it rewards the ability to answer particular questions that are already posed, and the consequent data needed to answer these questions. Social and business research deals with inherently complex phenomena (Curran & Blackburn 2001; 102) so the formulation of research that seeks to isolate particular factors can have the effect of concealing this complexity. Thus a period of personal reflection led to the adoption of a phenomenological method that suited my personal reading and understanding. An interpretative research design enables the development of the topic as the research proceeds, something I was comfortable with. It is also claimed that it has the benefit of being more suitable to managerial action because it produces research that is contextualised, giving insights that are more likely to feed directly into managerial practice (Matthyssens & Vandembemt 2003). Interpretation was fundamental to the research process and is the source of the value of these insights.

This research has used a number of research strategies and methods in combination. This was not done to be inclusive for a particular reason but because the different strategies and methods were clustered around a core theme. In summary this research adopted a phenomenological interview, combined with a reflexive method and an abductive take in developing research outcomes. It was felt that these elements were complementary for exploratory research. The next chapter of field research is based on this combination of methods.

Chapter 5

Initial Engagement with the Field

Re-entering the world of micro business

So far this study has reviewed the literature on three areas. These are the characteristics of small businesses – with a particular focus on micro businesses; current understanding on marketing by this type of business; and a review of the current trends in formulating our ideas about entrepreneurship. This review was followed by, and overlapped with, a period of undertaking interviews with micro businesses that would adapt and further inform the understanding developed in the literature review. The researcher was personally familiar with the situation existing in small businesses, and part of this empirical research with other small business owners was also in some way to test this existing experiential understanding. This could best be described as personal, to a large part tacit and proto-linguistic, but my views about it were becoming more informed and articulated. My thoughts at the time were that this could be seen as an ethnographic process re-entering a social field with which I had become familiar. As background material, I had read Powdermaker's (1966) biography of her ethnographic career and how her studies were characterised by stepping in and out of the society. One of her later studies was one in which she applied her experience of research in other social systems to the culture of Hollywood, thus achieving a refolding of theory back onto her own society. My progress differed from this in that the participation occurred first, followed by the academic engagement. Thus, the research aim was to resample the small business community, and to develop a deeper perspective.

As described in the methodology chapter the empirical material was collected using phenomenological interviews (Stern et al 1998). This was undertaken as an unstructured conversation, often starting with an invitation to just ‘tell me about your business’. This is designed to deliver free-form interviewee driven text. It was noticeable that some of the businesses adopted a naturalistic ‘timeline’ to be able to describe the business; how they got started and how they got to where they felt they were. If it seemed appropriate, the interviewee was asked about how they gained, and where they employed, knowledge in their business situation. The interviews were transcribed as explained in the methodology. The interview analysis consists of passages of text reproduced from the interview transcript. Including these sections of text allowed me to place the comments made by the interviewee more in the context of the rest of the utterance. These passages are then alternated with sections of thoughts and responses to the comments made. This enabled the research to build up a richer picture of the situation of the micro business principal. The elucidation of the speech then developed as a series of insights and issues. To further enhance the analysis these observations were brought together into emergent threads that provide a more refined summary of the particular interview.

First Interview.

The interview was with a woman who had started in business doing sewing alterations and curtain making; this had expanded into a complete interior design service. The interview started with the request to “tell me about your business”

“I started off doing alterations and making curtains for friends ~ how long ago was that?~ fifteen years ago now, um ~ and what was the motivation for doing that, was it just a hobby was it ~ no I mean, always done it because my mother did it, so(.) er – always sewn, always knitted you know because mum had a shop and us girls were brought up – you know that’s what you did you made your own clothes, knitted jumpers you know that’s what we did, just assumed everyone did it.”

The business started from this personal situation as a self-employed business involving the production of soft furnishings mainly curtains. In this section of the interview the interviewee offers an account of her business being based on a

habitude, this was a matter of course, and hence there was no active search for, or creation of, business opportunities. It seems interesting that she was not prepared to agree that the business developed from a hobby, it was more central to who she was than this. A hobby could have been taken up in later life as a 'diversion'. It has been observed that for female home based businesses development of a hobby is a viable start-up route (Loscocco & Smith-Hunter 2004). The antecedents for being in business in this case can be described as learned behaviour from her mother and the approach to life and the skills that were absorbed in a process of growing up. Making your own clothes was 'what you did' – a natural part of one's life – and they were there to be traded through the shop her mother owned. There was also a development of a degree of personal competence, because she was able to make things that others – the shop customers – would value. The basic skills generated in this situation were also likely to be long standing and deeply embedded because of learning at an early age. The motivation for the skills development was likely to be the outcome of several factors, but many of them are not likely to be specifically apprehended; it was part of growing up.

This was not the initial career path chosen by the interviewee. Prior to starting the business, the interviewee was working for a large organisation until she became pregnant with her first child. At the end of the maternity leave she decided to stay at home.

"I didn't want to go back to work (.) um as an engineer, because basically I didn't want to leave the kids I just thought no, now I want to bring them up myself I don't trust anybody else to do it given (.) because I'm a bit like that"

This passage above concludes with a statement about her personal self-perceived qualities, that she was the kind of person who felt it was important to bring up her own children, not trusting anyone else to do it. The incident leading to the creation of the business was a change of situation. The creation of the business was founded in personal beliefs.

“(Someone) asked me to alter some stuff and she recommended me to another friend, who asked me to make some curtains and(.) and it sort of went on from there really (.)I could have gone a lot bigger because of () but I have been holding it back because I wasn’t ready, because I have had a lot of problems with my daughter and you know I just didn’t have the time to devote to do all the periphery(.) stuff that you need to grow your business.”

The growth of the business is characterised as starting from helping out friends that then developed from personal recommendation into a larger circle of contacts. The issue not explored in this passage was on what occasion the possibility of generating revenue initially occurred. It could be from her first jobs done on a friendship basis or a desire to start earning whilst staying at home? The ‘stuff’ needed to grow the business is considered to be peripheral. What was perceived to be important was the ability to be a mother and to be able to effectively respond, perhaps in terms of quality and delivery, to those who had requested her services. When asked about the peripheral areas these were said to include advertising and some form of product profitability analysis, and competitor product analysis. The interviewee had recently been on a Business Link business start-up course as a result of starting to develop the business.

“(Employing people to do the) monkey stuff like paperwork and filing and you know and just copying notes into each file and so on and so forth. There was just...all those sort of things – never had time to sort of just sit down and really think about how I could do that...”

The ‘monkey stuff’ of record keeping is not seen as a task that requires a significant amount of personal dedication; it can be completed by anyone who does not need to have a large involvement in the firm. Time pressures are considered significant, there is no time to sit down and think about this. The amount of thinking that occurs in the conduct of the business is considerable. It is interesting that whilst there is no time to sit down and review the record keeping procedures, it would seem appropriate to conclude that the thinking was about the curtains, the customers, and the family. This seems to be central to the ‘way of life’ of business in this case.

“I was going to go into partnership with this other girl, but then I realised that I had so much more knowledge of fabric and how things work and my upholsterer and running the accounts side of things and stuff that I had obviously accumulated but hadn’t realised that I knew about if you know what I mean...”

One of the possibilities that arose was the formation of a partnership with another person, although whether this was a precedent to current thoughts about expansion is not clear. A very clear statement follows about the kind of knowledge that she possess which are very clearly organised around the products, how to liase with the upholsterer to objectify the design idea. It is surmised that the accounts side of things was related to the products, pricing and purchasing the correct supplies. This view that the knowledge is product based is reinforced by the following quotation.

“...she hadn’t um – a bloody clue, you know about how things work, how things are fitted, how things hang, what type of fabric is suitable for this, what type of fabric is suitable for that, why you have to do this with it, why you can’t do that, you know that sort of thing...”

This knowledge is not only product centred, that it reveals a technical mastery of the production process, but it is also what is considered important. This knowledge defines what she is as a small businessperson; someone who is knows what to do to produce curtains. This is the important thing. While she confesses that her possible partner is good at selling this is not so fundamental part of being in business as this product knowledge, in her view.

When dealing with customers she tries to give them what they want, not just a process of making money – perhaps an effective re-articulation of the marketing concept. How this is achieved is described in the following passage.

“...the first thing I mean you just go in and you sit down and you chat and I just want to know about them (..) getting a feel for how they like things, and then, you sort of, you, you think right OK I think they probably like that sort of fabric, or that kind of fabric, so normally I find the fabric that they like first”

Whilst this can be interpreted as a process of understanding customer needs it seems a more revealing analysis to consider this discussion as matching customers to products. If I know more about my customers, I will be able to consider which of my products suits them. This interpretation is reinforced by an examination of the knowledge used in this customer encounter. The existing knowledge is of products and knowledge about particular customers is transient and is required to the extent that it reveals the product that will be applicable in the current situation. A large session in the interview expands on this customer encounter; what particular customers are like.

“(The business was) just too busy, and it was all word of mouth and so obviously I must have been doing a good job otherwise I wouldn’t get recommended () after talking round a few people you know a lot of people you know and “Oh no no no you mustn’t give up you’ve got a real talent there there’s nobody else like you” () because at the end of the day I like sewing! ~right that’s what you want to do?~ I like sewing I’m good at it I’ve got an outworker now I’ve found another girl who can sew as well and she’s good –she’s amazing because most of them aren’t – they think they are but they’re crap.”

The interview includes several comments that enable her to demonstrate that she felt that her knowledge of the business was at least as good as some of the people out there who think they can sew. Her belief that she is good at sewing is given credence by the level of business she attracts; people just wouldn’t keep coming back if she did not know how to deliver a good product. Of course, it may be the case that the elements of the product delivery that the customers valued were not those elements that related to the technical ability to sew, and were the results of the whole product package. It has long been noted that customer product perceptions may differ from supplier product perceptions, with the product performance being a significant factor (McClure & Ryans 1968). Product performance is often influenced by situational factors.

“I moved to Gloucester and I had a fellow – again! You know I happened to bump into this guy and I was talking to him and you know I can’t remember what we were – were talking about I think we actually met in Hobbycraft and I turns out that he is an upholsterer down the road and is very good -a master upholsterer... I have also found through – my financial advisor – I found a blacksmith who is also a perfectionist – you see I like this about people – that’s what I – I work well with people who are perfectionists because I am very very

fussy... but he makes wonderful metalwork you know he can make bay poles and upholstered around bays and... and... he makes bookcases for me and lamps and all sort of things you know my door furniture I just give him dimensions and he goes off and makes it... um... you know I have a sort of relationship going with a carpet showroom?? so I can supply carpets now, and from the trade shows that I have been to I have also opened up lighting accounts because people now ask me 'oh, what sort of lights do you think I'll get?' you know – so I've now got three lighting accounts as well and I can (????) like that... and it's just – its all come on now, its all coming together so now... I feel that... actually its almost starting again”

This description of the business, almost as a new business ‘its almost starting again’ focuses largely on the development of a range of helpful people. This establishment of contacts and mutual arrangements with other traders has been observed as the network approach to small business operation, which contains both affective and instrumental commitments (Johannisson 1987b). This section seems to demonstrate elements of this approach. These are people that she likes and the business commitment has developed from some personal rapport. One of the motivations is also that this will generate more trade for her through being able to supply a greater assortment of goods in a more complete package. To what extent this is mutually supportive in intention or as a matter of preference. Eddie Stobart in his biography observes that companies like to deal with those of the same type – plc’s tend to give business to other plc’s. This arrangement seems to support this opinion. It is worth observing that the outworker seems to be separate from this network. The element of mutual trade that is present in the other contacts is restricted in the case of the seamstress. This is probably there is a potential for direct competition, previous seamstresses having encouraged clients to deal direct with them. It seems that there is a different relationship between those contacts that provide a complementary service to hers, and the replacement service of the seamstress.

”she said actually “I don't want all the hassle” I mean all these books here I mean that's ten grand...represented in all those books and they only last three years ~what are these books, materials? ~fabrics yes, ~why because they replace them~ yea well they discontinue them, usually its about a three, three to five year life span, some books go on a lot longer because they are good old standbys but on the whole that's what they are ~there's no point in recommending fabrics that are now discontinued~ no so you have to keep up with ~ well I tend to- I mean

(????) run the two best selling companies in the country erm...so I sort of tend to stick with them”

In a section of the interview following the discussion of the seamstress there was this section on the cost – which a seamstress did not have to bear – of keeping up to date with the range of available products that would be the basic supplies for the business. The books of samples were introduced as a relatively expensive cost of being able to offer the products. Perhaps their central use was as a sales aid, particularly in the situation where there is a high tactile element in fabric sales. Other sources of product knowledge, such as trade shows, magazines, and the internet, were not mentioned but presumably have been used at some point in the business. If so they did not appear to be sufficiently relevant to be mentioned at this point. There was also a rationalisation of the amount of investment in these books. The variety offered did not seem to be a key selling point, having *sufficient* choice seemed to meet the requirements.

“What do you think about...do you have any view about the market?~ ughh my particular market tends to be... I do have a few little old dears that just like a lot (???) of new curtains – bless em! – but on the whole it tends to be sort of my age group I suppose – you know... mid thirties to... you know – late fifties they – usually the kids have flown the nest you know – um they have got a bit of money some– well sometimes they have sometimes they have gone through university the bastards! – so they can’t afford anything... but hey! –um – you know they have got a bit of money and now they want to have it how they want to have it rather than how they’ve had it for the children ~right~ you know, or they are re-designing the place or they have just moved to a new place because they don’t need such a big house or... you know...and its those... or its...its...um I’ve got a couple of property developers and um... dentists... you know quite – there again they are quite young but they have got a lot – quite a bit of money and they want their places to look nice... but they don’t know ...and they don’t know and they don’t particularly have the interest...to go out and do it themselves but they want somebody – they know what they want all they want is for me to come along and say ‘well right OK, which of these fabrics do you like?’ ‘right how shall we make it feel, and then (???) I do (???) so now I have almost come to co-ordinating the whole thing now...”

This passage is prompted by a request to describe her market. There follows from this a description of the groups of people who either have been customers or are the most likely group to be so. This is often seen in small business growth as the development of a marketing understanding by starting to describe the types of

customers that buy from the business. Whilst this is a relevant observation it can also be seen as a description of the sales management process. The ability to enter into some form of customer categorisation is often a precursor to tailoring the product offer to the needs of the customer. One of the perceived advantages of this view is that it can lead to the type of customers that one is not serving, but this can often be a considerable conceptual leap. There is the emphasis on the fact that these customers have the ability to pay for the work, and have the requirement or desire, but do not know how to proceed. There is an implied impression about the rapport that she can develop with the customers because they are just like her. The ability to establish the rapport is essential in a sales call and the fact that, effectively, she is the business. Some of the customers were buying for commercial reasons not just for home use.

This section finishes with a passage on the subject of knowledge. The view is expounded that the customers do not know how to achieve what they want. To say directly that the customers do not know what they want would not seem to be quite correct, they need to have their requirements made into real things, to be brought into existence. The expression of knowing is continued in the following section of the interview. She knows what she is doing is right – the solution offered is right for this situation but the customer does not know this. She has to build confidence in the mind of the customer that the solution will be ‘right’.

“I don’t normally lose my patience with people because you know... if they are spending a lot of money they want to know it’s right, you know and they can’t – you have to give them the confidence that what they are doing is right I mean I know that what they are doing is – yea that will look gorgeous – but they can’t always picture it in their mind because I go round and as far as I am concerned once I have done a house it is already decorated and I know the colours and I know the sizes and what pieces of furniture are going where, but they don’t see it like – they can’t do that... and that’s because I have done it all my life, well most of my life you know”

She found it upsetting if people didn’t see it her way and were disappointed or complained; she was convinced –she knew – that it was going to work. This section was followed by a long passage describing a particular job that went

wrong because the customer did not like it. She was asked if she visualised the room as part of her approach

“Some designers um especially if they have been like to interior design school um they just do room sets as such I tend to try and make them um ‘what are you going to use the room for?’ do you want to be comfortable in here this is going to be a slopping around room or is this going to be a posh room and you want to impress people or is it going to be where the kids are going to chuck around on the floor you know how do you want to feel about that?”

She contrasted her approach that was expressed in terms of use of the room, with those people who had been to design school that would produce room sets. There seemed to be in this section a justification for the interpretation of her knowledge as being rooted in practical experience of matching the curtains to the room. To allow for the use of the room as a factor, this could be interpreted as a necessary marketing focus on product usage rather than customer attributes. There could also be an interpretation of the use of the room as a way of describing a tacit understanding of the characteristics of the room. Perhaps she cannot describe the individual factors that are considered making a judgement about the appropriate solution for a room. The practice of being able to see the room with people in it, and the activities taking place, is a routine for drawing on that tacit knowledge about where things have worked.

The question was asked if she would employ someone to undertake the sales function and visit the customers to take orders.

“I would never be happy with that, because that is why I am going to always stay small because the biggest problem with self employment I think as well is that - is letting go yea you know this is me(.) I, I don't trust anybody else to do it as well as I can do it and unfortunately I happen to be bloody good at a lot of thing which is a real pain in the butt, you know”

She was very sure of her own abilities and this was important to her and her understanding of the business strengths. Letting go of this element would mean that she would have to employ someone who, she is sure, would not be able to apply the same body of knowledge to the process and therefore produce an

inferior set of curtains. There is also the implied element that in doing this she would weaken her own hold of the knowledge she has. It would become less subject to constant use, interpretation, and revision. It is possible to see this as an element in the difficulties with 'letting go'. Another exposition of the type of knowledge followed in the next passage

... "there is not many people who have the background knowledge that I have and just – I mean I've rebuilt houses for God's sake you know and ... I just know about a lot of things and I don't know why I know about them but you know when I am at a (???) we can put that there you have got to be careful because we have pipes that come down here we have got this here we have got electricals here and we have got to be careful about that you know whereas there are a lot of designers don't bother about that, well I know they don't because of the problems that Tim has when he is working for other people"

'I know a lot of things' and 'I don't know why' is a statement that could be subject to a number of interpretations. Firstly, she could be saying that she does not know the cause of these beliefs. She cannot remember how she came to know certain things it seems to have been accumulated without conscious effort. It is the realisation of this knowing that is sometimes surprising to her, and consequently how she is able to recall it in this situation. Perhaps the situation generates the recall. It seems that this knowledge could be almost be a liability – 'why do I still know this' – because some part of it is arcane. It is expressed as a positive attribute for her because Tim, has told her the situations that occur with other people who do not seem to be aware of these potential difficulties.

... "the other the harsh lesson don't ever undersell yourself it's a very hard lesson that one at the moment but I have put my prices up 100% in the last two years and people because they are paying more and working for ((Company Name)) because their product is crap it's crap fabric, crap furnishing, crap quality, but it is beautifully marketed... because they are perceived to be um you know ((?????)) for good quality so..."

Don't undersell yourself because the large competitors oversell themselves! This seems to be the message from this section of the interview. Being a larger firm enables you to manage your perceptions about the product, this is different in her case because she provides good products!

Emergent Threads

What themes can be drawn out from the initial analysis of this interview? Firstly to investigate the employment of knowledge in the business the following are the passages where there has been an expression of the knowledge employed in this business – apart from the frequent use of ‘you know’ as an expression of acceptance.

- I had so much more **knowledge** of fabric and how things work

She maintained a high level of confidence about the level of product knowledge that she had and could apply to customer requests.

- Lots of designers don’t bother about that, well I **know** they don’t because of the problems

The knowledge extended beyond the design to the implementation, and how she knew more about the practicalities of installation and problems with concealed services in the room.

- first of all you have got to **know** your customers ...I just want to **know** about them first

The demonstration of the value of understanding your customers, in their requirements and feelings about the enquiry, which governed the possibility of the solution offered.

- I was just about to ask you, what do you do with the people who just don’t know?~ they **will know**, they just don’t trust themselves

She maintained a confidence that the majority of customers would recognise the solution she was proposing was right. Customers had an understanding of the situation that contained some element of inarticulate understanding together with a need for reassurance.

Second Interview

The interview with WA took place at his business premises that was a small shop in a side street in the city centre. His business was the supply and repair of computers and related equipment. The interview commenced with the request to describe how the business started.

“I used to work for the generating board and at the time of privatisation and so on when they were offering large amounts of money for people to go away, essentially, that was the root of it and um I worked in audit... “Oh yes, I wanted to do something else, then it was just a matter of what you did with the money, er ... I first thought of starting from ...working from home which I did for about six months and to be quite honest I couldn’t stand it, you were just so much on your own, that you know, it was too easy when the weather was good to go and sit in the garden or something rather than actually do any work”.

The initial idea for starting in business was that in having accepted the redundancy he felt that his working life was not over. This was possibly because of his maturity, possibly because of a work ethic, or family commitments. He did not say if there was any financial need to go out to work. There seemed to be a need to do something else before his final retirement. The initial response was to work from home; this turned out to be an unsatisfactory way of working. Two reasons were given for the difficulty in working from home, the lack of human contact, and the difficulties of staying motivated. Both of these suggest at a first reading the importance of customer contact. The owner needed the set-up of customer interaction to be able to manage the business, and to this extent seemed to be merely responsive to customer inquiries; the succession of small encounters. This could have been the result of personal traits, or the culture of the working life he had just left. Organisations contain a large number of people who operate by responding to requests. In this way he could appear to be adopting a reactive approach identified in SME marketing (Gilmore et al 2001: Simpson & Taylor 2002).

There also seemed to be little of the entrepreneurial possessiveness about this business as something 'I really want to do'; the zeal, commitment, opportunity and focus of the entrepreneur (Collinson & Shaw 2001). It was almost as though something else needed to be done. He couldn't be idle but it seemed that computers were what he was interested in, but it was a choice that was made between this and the possibility of a job in a different area. Another point of interest in this area is the role of structure in providing the ground for entrepreneurial activity. The entrepreneur does not have to create a whole world from scratch, some things are given and the purchase of premises could provide, in a performance metaphor, the arena for the entrepreneurial activity (Howorth et al 2005).

The business started from a hobby, which seemed to be merely an interest, as there did not seem to be any evidence of pre-start-up trading. The redundancy and the lack of a current job would have reduced the time available for pre-start-up exploration. There are no details available about the period of trading from home

although it was not volunteered as a positive experience. It seems reasonable to surmise that the trading possibilities were explored post start-up.

The interviewee was then asked “Because some people say that their customers are what are important to them in this context, you know you meet people?”

“Yes you do, its partly social, um...any job is partly social I suspect, it just depends on how much you want and if you say you are working at home you actually have to go out to meet people and when you are starting you haven’t many people to go out and see um it might be once you are established you’ve got a fair number of customers you can go and see on a ...you know fairly frequently, then you can get out but if you are just sort of sitting there trying to organise something and ...or are waiting for a phone to ring its err... its too easy to get distracted.”

The continuation of the social aspect of the business was the obvious tenor of this section of the interview. He had previously worked in a department of a larger organisation, perhaps this was an aspect he missed, not having experienced the loneliness of small business life (Gumpert & Boyd 1984; Watson et al 1998). There is no expressed difference in the sociality of being a small business owner compared with ‘any job’. Personal contact was still important and to some extent this had to be created, you ‘have to go out and meet people’ whereas in larger organisations people will often come to you. This primacy of customer engagement has been noted as a significant entrepreneurial activity (Hills et al 2004). The retail environment produced a situation where an adequate number of customer encounters was generated.

The question was then “Somebody once said that most people know what sort of business they want to go into or have some idea of the business before they start. Did you have an idea of what the business was?”

“Yes, oh yes, I had been round to other places to see you know, similar sort or different sorts of setup um in Gloucester, Swindon, Worcester and so on um and so I know r... I have a fair idea of what I wanted” ...” Yes to see what other people were doing um ~and what do you think ‘I can do that I can do better than that’(...)”“its not how it actually what it turns out to be but you know at the start you have a reasonable idea of what you want and things obviously develop

particularly in this industry it changes so often.” ...” small computer shops were even then were coming and going, you know if you lasted for two years you were established, um there were obviously ones that had done very well um – Evesham Micros is the obvious one, because Evesham Micros used to have a little tiny shop you know, on the bridge at Evesham um... but on the other hand there has been plenty in Gloucester who you have probably seen, they are there and then they are not I think that since we have been here I mean, there must have been a dozen come and go in Gloucester err which err ... well yea yea you know well I can do that and...”.

Earlier in the interview, he had said that he went to at least one computer show before starting the business. This and the observation of other similar businesses in similar locations was the process of appreciating the market. The exercise of visiting other shops, it can be surmised, was perhaps not to see them as competitors from whom he might have to capture business. It was more to see the format of the operation, what was possible. He wanted to see how others had addressed the problem of setting up a small computer shop in areas such as layout, location, stock display etc. It seemed that he wanted to quietly appreciate the current business model. The possibility or existence of direct competition at the time of starting the business was not mentioned. It was also not possible to determine from this interview if he announced his intention to start in a similar business during these visits. This would of course determine the information possibly gained. No announcement would only allow visual appreciation, apart from casual conversation. An announcement of intent may not have gained much further information from the proprietor, if available, if they were concerned about possible competition. The statement that ‘small computer shops were even then coming and going’ indicates the potential for failure, but even so a potential for fluidity. Most shops in this area were small but there was no dominant player – the organisation to beat. His idea was already in existence, clarifying the details was achieved by seeing what other people had done. This would also have the effect of reducing both the risk and the novelty of such a venture.

The next section of this interview discussed a number of items. These were the financial arrangements of the firm; the need to secure the premises to counteract the continual burglaries at the start; the mixture of cash customers and account customers; and the development of the repeat business that enables the firm to

keep going. These developments led to discussions about the changing nature of the business and the changes in the products supplied as technology changed.

“...you will never make a fortune on an Amiga but to a certain extent they are a damn sight easier to sell than PC’s because an Amiga was an Amiga was an Amiga, there was no variation in them you know you just” ... “whereas if you buy a PC they might come back for a another drive or this that and the other there are a lot more accessories, and there is a lot more on them to go wrong as well, I mean if an Atari went wrong all you did was switch it off and switch it back on again err... with the PC you know there’s all sorts of ...settings that you can change and so on and so forth, and a lot more aftercare required on the PC than there ever was on the little ones” ...” and then PC’s...to be honest PC’s were more interesting and you could make more money on them err because you could also do the upgrades, you could do the repairs”.

He expresses the view that PC’s as a product are a lot more complicated than the Amiga, because there is both a lot more to go wrong, and therefore a lot more reasons to visit the shop for solutions. This of course necessitates a greater knowledge of PC’s and how to ‘fix’ them. What is noticeable is that you can move away from being a ‘box-shifter’ and people start to come to you because you can do something that others do not. This then becomes the ‘more interesting’ part of the business in that there was potential for more repeat custom and an implicit acknowledgement that this investigation of possible solutions was more engaging than ‘box shifting’.

“So with this development in the PC’s and the repairs etc how did you find your knowledge having to increase?”

...”You know all the time you know you are just constantly learning you can’t stop and say well that’s it... I will do up to the 486 and no more, if you want a (???) go elsewhere, you know you are constantly trying new things and doing new things, I mean even now... new things are coming up radio, wireless, networking wireless communication the thing in the next year or so” ...

In response to a specific question about the acquisition of knowledge, the emphasis on the continual nature of re-learning was vocalised; you can’t stop. In the current context the development of knowledge was caused by the developments in technology as realised in new products to sell. So the knowledge

was to a certain extent driven by having to effectively answer questions about, and make operational, the new products available. The expression of knowledge development was limited to products; customer knowledge was not volunteered as an element of the developing knowledge in the business although it undoubtedly occurred.

So how did you learn that?

“Self taught! Basically self taught here, been on a few courses but ... you experiment which is why we have all this kit up here, (Interview is taking place in upstairs workshop) it does allow you to muck things up and ...”

The theme of product understanding was pursued in the facilities available for investigation and experimentation.

“I mean you can load a system, ... and it doesn't work ~right~ so that's when either experience comes in that says well yes you don't actually do it that way, you do step nine before step eight and it works and you do it the other way and it doesn't, or you have to find the solution, which either means going to the books, try it and see, or you know the various knowledge bases, kicking around on the net. I think it's wonderful this, it's much, much better than it used to be when you had to 'phone people up”

The approach adopted here is that it was much preferable to be provided with information that enabled him to spend some time in understanding the difficulty, and improving his knowledge of the product, so that next time this product knowledge would be available as he engaged with the next encounter with particular arrangements of products. The interviewee was then asked about the skills and attributes that were needed in the business.

“Persistence (laughter) seriously, the best thing is persistence and a bit of luck... networks do require constant ...attention, otherwise they will cease to work or cease to work as well, and then there's constant upgrades and this that and the other and you get the service packs out and fixes this and extensions for that and so on, and so... erm it is a never ending battle if you want against... against the hardware and the software.”

The benefits of persistence seem to be ascribed to dealing with the product, it is the product that goes wrong in a double sense; it needs fixing, and it requires updating. This involvement would require the ability to get involved in the resolution of problems on an almost continual basis. This persistence would seem to be founded on the maintenance of an interest in the product as discussed earlier. Networks were described as needing this constant attention; they were much more complicated and liable to breakdown. Although this statement was a lot more product focused than that revealed by the previous interviewee, who described the customer interactions, it is possible to see these difficulties as arising from problems presented by customers. If customer reporting of difficulties did not happen, then it would be difficult to understand the difficulties with the currency or stability of the product. This would seem to be particularly applicable to the situation of networks, if these were local area and based on a customer's premises. Finally, on this point the whole passage about the description of the difficulties with the product is part of the personal self-projection of a man who is able to find appropriate solutions to complicated problems. This is therefore what he does. He is not a box shifter; he is a person who enjoys the ability to engage with the product and say to the customer, 'I've managed to solve your problem'. He would not like it if computers did not have their difficulties and worked first time and continually in any situation.

"[I] can't think of one time we ever totally failed, well I can think of one where we...were going to upgrade it, which is a network we deal with on a maintenance contract we wanted it upgraded from Small Business 1.5 to Small Business 2000 and Andy and I worked on that all of Sunday and at eight o'clock we decided we weren't going to do it, so we put it back and we finished at twelve and we ended up with a machine which was...exactly the same as it was when we started, fortunately I had ??? kept back ups – you know copies of everything, I mean you never do anything without taking a copy of... the original so we could actually just restore it to what it was. But there was one piece in there which was... Microsoft's problem really and it just can't be done as far as we know – because we even rang up Microsoft and spent two hundred quid on technical support from Microsoft and they said look if you're going to – don't do it – just you know... ~walk away from it?~ yes because it cannot really be done properly, it should be able to be done but... you know... you cannot really do it" ...

This quotation was in response to the question 'Has he ever let a customer down?' This particular episode follows on from the opinion he expressed about

the substantial difficulty in dealing with networks that was different from stand alone PC's. This situation occurred in dealing with a regular customer who wanted a network upgrade. Without commenting in detail on the technical aspects of the job, it was obvious that two people had spent some considerable time – most of the weekend – in performing this upgrade. This was a period of intense involvement with the network as a physical product under conditions that were dictated by the customer. The work had to be completed during the weekend and the existing data had to be saved during this process. The other context was that this was quite an important customer in terms of business. This could be construed by the willingness to undertake the project, rather than decline the business on the basis that networks were too complicated to deal with and the potential for failure was considerably greater than the expected rewards. In the end, the project could not be done within the original parameters of the problem, and the blame for this situation was attributed to Microsoft. The product solution attempted did not fail through any realised failure of the solution implemented by the owner and his co-worker. It may of course be observed that the attribution of the problem to Microsoft may be either a fiction, or a misunderstanding. Notwithstanding this observation it seems that it was important to be able to say that the product solution offered was not satisfactory as a result of the fault of someone else, not the current interviewee

Interleaved with this theme of technical proficiency was another conversation about dealing with customer requests.

"I mean (???) we still get people coming in with PC's that are eight or nine years old and saying can you upgrade it and the answer is yes but it's cheaper to buy a new one! (laughter) you know, the only bit you can use out of the other one is the monitor and the err... floppy drive because everything else changed erm...and you have to actually say look this is not worth... spending any money on, I do that quite often I mean its surprising, its two or three times a week I think that people come in with can I upgrade this or repair this?- and you have to say look – quite frankly don't spend any money on it either because it will cost you more to upgrade it to a reasonable level than it will be to buy a new one or I can fix that bit and you are guaranteed that the other bit is going to go – within a year, and do you really want to spend you know a hundred quid on a machine which frankly is worth fifty, because I mean the depreciation on these things is horrendous, if it is more than three years old it is probably worth no more than what? – a fifth of what you paid for it ~worse than cars~ oh yes much worse than

cars, much worse than cars, erm because...you know things... I mean a car – a ten year old car will still drive along the same road as a one year old car, a ten year old PC will not run the same software as a one year old PC” ...

The essential part of this section of the interview was the description of unreasonable customer requests. This is often a staple of front line sales staff but is also a part of illustrating the knowledge of product applicability of the speaker. The customers come in and ask ridiculous things that are not possible. They might not be possible in some objective technical sense, they might not be part of the approach to sales that the business wants to pursue, which is often illustrated by the value for money aspect. “I could do this for you, but it would be cheaper to do it this way”. This was the outcome of the different way the business owner has decided to price different products; for instance prices of new sales versus the prices of labour used for repair. Pricing is often the means of depersonalising the desire not to perform certain tasks.

As the owner of the business was previously an auditor it seemed reasonable to ask if he pursued a similar approach to the business in adopting an investigative method to finding solutions to customer’s problems. This could have led to an approach to the business that was driven by a desire to know and understand the products in depth, rather than being motivated by other desires such as a sales led approach. He was asked if he was reliant on what he knows what he could do

“Yes to a large extent it is, some of its psychology, I mean especially ((???) when you are dealing with small businesses a lot of it depends on whether they like you – erm you know and not just whether you are good at it but whether they... actually feel comfortable with you, whereas a big company doesn’t give a damn you know err... where the small company – if you deal with small businesses that... they like to know who they are dealing with and they like to like the person they are dealing with ~it’s a personal~ to a certain extent it’s a personal thing as well its not just a matter of has so-and-so got the technical skills because loads of people are better than me at it, err...there are people as good as me, err...some people you know some customers will say “Ah yes we’ll have Bill because he – we like him we know him” others will say well we will not have him because we don’t like him and that’s true of – I think of any – of every small business, a lot of it is down to – is down to... whether you actually get on with the guy who is doing the job. People like to feel they are dealing with an individual rather than... you know somebody from a corporation.”

Whilst superficially agreeing with the statement, on further reflection what seemed to be important for him was to emphasise the centrality of personal rapport within the sales process. In a micro-business things are founded on whether the two participants in the sales encounter have a compatible approach to each other. This was seen to be more fundamental than a judgement of the personal competency of the owner. It would seem that the level of technical knowledge was necessary but not sufficient for the completion of the sale. A level of personal rapport was necessary in this business at least. It might have been created by previous encounters, but might also be part of the expectations of how small businesses in general had performed in the past. Hence the phrase ‘the kind of thing you get from small businesses’.

“Depends which customers you are talking about, I mean there is the you know company customers, rather than when I say company – school – organisation customers err... or there’s the individuals. ~tell me about the individuals to start with~ Individuals tend to be... what ... they sort of have been to Dixon’s ~right~ err... they are more likely to be people who either are technically competent or want more assistance than they will get... in one of the big stores ... because you do get the technical guys who will want to come and talk technical spec ~ right~ which they will find difficult to do at... you know at chain stores there’s nobody there who really wants to spend the time or has got the knowledge to do that and there’s those who do feel they need a little bit – you know they actually want to know who they are dealing with...”

There seemed to be three types of customers, corporate customers, those customers that the computer chain stores had failed to support, and those who liked to make their purchases from a more identifiably personally operated business. With regard to the second of these two groups – those that failed to construct an effective engagement with the chain stores. This was either because they required more time to make a decision, or they wanted to have a greater level of technical discussion about the purchase, than the chain stores could provide. The view was expressed that the business was often not the first choice of the customers who arrived there. They often arrived because they had not been able to find what they had been looking for and were directed to and/or found the shop. The amount of repeat business was not quantified, but it was happening as a result of his competence. Once they had received a satisfactory solution to their requests, they tended to return. This situation seems to reinforce the personal

nature of the business. It seems easier to make initial inquiries at a more impersonal shop, but having engaged in an interpersonal experience that produced a satisfactory solution, they were more likely to return for further business. The expression of the view that the customers like to know who they are dealing with echoes the factor of rapport that is present in the dealing of small businesses with their customers. This seems to be both an understanding of the kind of things that they want, and at a level of personality.

The interview ended in a generally resigned mood on the subject of maintaining and developing business.

“Probably our weak spot is that we don’t do a lot of marketing, and to be honest in terms of personal customers I am not sure we want a lot more, because you can make more money with organisations at the end of the day. Small businesses essentially on the high street are not the future... I don’t know, I mean, once you have got established then you can get out and see people and obviously there will still come and see you and phoning you but err... at the end of the day you are getting (????) if you are just running on just straight retail stuff then you can’t do it. ... Eventually it will, eventually it will, because there is always smaller people that the big guys can’t be bothered with, if you are Dell you are not interested in someone who wants to buy 3 PC’s really... the health service a couple of years ago went totally centralised everything had to be bought from... you know, I don’t know where the (???) (.) now because this contracting is taking so long to produce the small stuff they now come here for individual repairs and small purchases.”

Individual customers were very vulnerable to being attracted back to the chains based on price competition. Given that this was the case, the economics of a shop were less obvious because price competition became very dependent on volume. The value of the shop was as a workspace but also an investment on market presence. Without the premises, say by working from home, the arrival of new customers would be reduced to a trickle. Smaller organisations were more lucrative, because they tended to spend more and would return. In these organisations they were often branches of larger organisations, and the degree of delegated purchasing tended to be cyclic. For a period the policy would be cost savings through central purchasing. This would often become slow, and then there would be the *flexibility* of local purchasing, but which often tended to cost slightly more. Providing all the organisations changed their policies at different

times then there were often sufficient local offices buying locally to keep the business. It was noticeable that there were no plans to deal with this situation. The impression gained from this section of the interview was that it was a topic, for which no solutions were apparent, and reflection tended to increase the awareness of the difficulty; the approach adopted was to hope for the best.

Emergent Threads

The analysis of the interview revealed the following themes:

- The need to do something – not retirement. This meant being personally engaged in a rewarding business. It could be categorised as ‘lifestyle’ rather than high growth (Burns 2001; 10)
- The creation of an arena for business with the shop – this was the mechanism for customer engagement
- An initial idea and investigating its implementation – the learning in the situation was grounded in the practicalities of business
- Learning in the established business focused on product developments – keeping up to date with technological changes
- Personal rapport in business encounters – he found it easy to deal with people with whom he felt complementary.

Third Interview

The third interview took place with an architect that was the principal in his own practice. This interview was framed by an introduction that indicated that this interview was to explore the issues of knowledge in a small business, and the sources that promoted such knowledge. The initial question was on the subject of visual learning.

Question: Well I am not going to define [knowledge] here and now because this is a process of sort of discovering what it is, but err; do you have a visual memory?

“Yea very strong, ~so you’ve sort of got pictures in your mind, and do you deliberately manage that memory, do you say that is a good image for me to keep, or~ yea , yea, or even more simply cor -I really like that or that would work

with that ~right~ and because I mean I've probably got twenty or thirty projects running at any one time of which there may be four or five at a conceptual level, ~right~ that's the design level rather than managing the building contract level which is a very different business. ~yes~ and um ... and I just enjoy, I always enjoyed learning at school, I didn't always enjoy school but I enjoyed learning and it is something that – that does just continue.”

The natural assumption is that there is a strong commitment to design – and the ability to realise that design – in the approach to the practice of architecture. The purpose of this question was to explore to what extent it was a valid approach to see if the different ‘types’ of knowledge could be become a reasonable basis for talking about knowledge in a micro business. He accepted the proposition that the visual element of knowledge was a thing that he valued. The idea that he could accumulate visual ideas that were appealing and could perhaps be used in later projects was readily accepted. The profession of architecture, it was explained, consisted of two parts the ‘conceptual level’ design phase and the contract management level. The incorporation of visual knowledge, it was felt only was valid in the design phase. He also felt it was worthwhile to affirm his support for the idea of learning and the fact that it continues. I happen to know that he qualified as an architect after a period of working as a technician in the industry, and the experience of returning to study might provide the context for that affirmation.

“Well I mean, I only observe what I observe, and if I don't observe it then I don't know that I don't observe it ~true... but do you make an effort to see not only see good designs say, but look at the way people move and act ~yes~ for architectural”

The discussion of the quantity and quality of visual knowledge could only be pushed so far in this context. A semi flippant response seemed to cover the fact that there were no obvious mental operations that he could recall that facilitated the absorption of visual knowledge in his practice.

“Yes I – I – the both in terms of the way my designs would impact upon people because architecture is there to enable our actions it is there to articulate and to make them easy, there is that one side so you need some sort of continuing and updating of your appreciation of the way that people work and interact with each

other, and but also it is much more on an individual level where I am in a difficult meeting say and not only understanding what people say but what they are not saying and what their body language is saying and ... and inevitably the work on the scale that I work on there is – is just me and two others in the office a lot of it is work which is solitary work and I need to um -I really do need to be aware of ...of what the people around me are doing and thinking”

This passage followed on directly from the comments about visual knowledge. There seems to be a process of self-enquiry here as he tries to make some comments about what it is he needs to know. The visual aspect is dropped and the knowledge that he feels that he needs to know is that of developing an understanding of the views of others, colleagues and customers. The skill in appreciating what others views on the project are although they might not be articulated. This is the first business in these interviews that needed to negotiate with others to realise a project. He seemed to be aware that the work entailed periods of self-focused thought and he had difficulty incorporating their views into the current project. He seems reasonably personable, so the difficulty was unlikely to be one of basic personal interaction, but more of actually incorporating the views of others as design modifications. The reasons for this were not explored at the time but an interesting observation would be to what extent his designs were complete in conception and therefore there was some tension in incorporating changes.

~Do you generally visualise how people move around the building? ~ “Yes its maybe not so much the buildings because the buildings that I design tend to be quite small but certainly in ... spaces around the buildings as well but um... its... if there’s a way in which I design it to introduce a little sort of ‘gosh’ moment where someone turns around a corner and sees something they are not expecting ~yes~ then that’s nice to be able to do that but I mean, that’s really ...that’s very much a sort of circus act approach to it”

There was a denial that the design of a business was all about the visualisation of it in operation. This may be that, as he says most of his buildings are small, but this did not seem to be a relevant issue. It seemed to dissolve into a discussion about the value of a tromp l’oeil. He was then asked if he had ever used video as a means of learning.

“No ~it doesn’t appeal ...doesn’t~ I’ve never used it, I mean the only ... used computer generated graphics and walkthroughs to get a better feeling of what the building, of what a particular design will look like, ~right~ that might relate to the people who visit it and use it and so a video in that sense yes, but actual video of er, sort of er... of stalking people around buildings, no”

The possible use of video rounded off the discussion of the visual aspects of learning, it was not considered to be an effective means of developing knowledge of the suitability and practicality of the final design. The use of computer ‘walkthroughs’ is now a standard feature of many design packages and was useful, but it seemed that this was as a presentational aspect, almost as a selling tool. Although he had not been in practice for a long time the ability to visualise the building from a plan had undoubtedly developed from his period of training. This might not be the case with younger professionals who might be more dependent on computer simulations. The next question was on the subject of memory ...’Do you use your memory a lot?’

“I have a very strong visual memory and I have a strong visual imagination as well em and I work at it, not always by choice so that er I have got something I am really excited about er then, I mean one for instance was I was doing a competition for converting an old brewery in Rome into a museum of modern art – a competition I didn’t win by the way ~right~ and we had gone over to Rome to have a look at it and to have a weekend off just to sort of generally use it as an excuse and I remember that – waking up at about four in the morning with this really interesting idea about a courtyard roof and sort of lying there and developing it in my head so it was all happening inside ((my head)) so that come seven o’clock in the morning when the you know the bladder was bursting ~right~ I could just sit down at the computer and I knew exactly what I was going to do”

This was an interesting passage on the development of a complete mental scheme of what a building might look like. Relaxation and imagination time seems to be important in developing this image. Whether the situation of being in Rome produced some empathy with the feel of the place, there was an expressed need to visit the place – whilst having a break. The computer was the first ‘port of call’ to capture these thoughts and produce an explicit version of the mental design. This imaginative ability was emphasised in the passage above but it needed to be located or founded on real experience of the site.

“if I do wake up at four o’clock in the morning with a brilliant idea, what I think is a brilliant idea um the choice is either to lie awake and worry at it like a dog at a bone to a conclusion, if it’s a choice between that or going to make yourself a cup of cocoa and going back to sleep again I would probably do the former. ~right~ ~and you do you are more visual than rational, in that you don’t work things out... are you logical, this must mean that?~ In architecture I think you actually have to have both because, you know, a building is constructed logically um and its designed in such a way that it doesn’t fall down () and designing it to comply with things. So there are a number of different logics that are running in parallel”

In this passage, there is a description of the need to capture ideas when they are current. The multi-functional nature of the building design is also emphasised; the combination of the visual utility and the functional utility. Both of these are concerns of the customer and will be part of the external specifications of the brief. The area of discretion here will be the combination and the arrangement of the factors. The stimulation is to be able – presumably – to design a building that suits the need of the customer and an outcome that is rewarding to the architect. The ability to see oneself as an architect is determined by the functional aspects of building design, the physical constraints and the cost benefit analysis of each design solution. The logics move both on several planes but also move from the general to the specific. He feels that jobs start from a general specification of corporate image or cost per square foot. The process of knowing about a particular customer will also increase in proportion to the discussion about the project. Whilst this is on the subject of the construction project knowledge about their general requirements and opinions will develop. This will partially and intermittently inform general information about the market for such products.

“The time for reflective thought is not in great supply... about four in the morning is not a bad time in fact...the complexity of the design, the internal design process() um you do need the time and space and quiet and peace around you if I have got a particular nitty problem and that’s not only in design issues that’s also the –the ...running the business issues as well you know if there was some sort of particularly difficult administrative or background issue I had to resolve well then that’s err you know, just as important”

Time for reflective thought often takes place in the small hours emphasising what was said earlier. It was important to remember that the details of implementation

were also a vital part of the project. The interviewee was then asked how often he did things because they 'felt right' rather than having a convincing argument that the choice was right. When asked if actions were taken because they feel right this complex passage transpired. The ability to use the phrase 'my professional opinion' is the formula used when the supporting beliefs are not readily available.

"...there are times when ... when you just have to say 'my professional judgement is' which means this feels right to me, I can't give you all the reasons because it's the summary of what for me is now 25 years in practice, it would take me rather longer than saying 'my professional judgement is' um but ultimately though, you know, anytime you say that then someone can challenge it then, you do then have to erm justify it, but there are – there are times when I know it feels right but why it feels right is a totally different matter, it may be that it is this 25 years of, of experience that says that's the right thing to do and there are good logical reasons why it's the right thing to do, good practical, good architectural reasons for it, its just that they are not in the, sort of front part of my head yet ... I've made some really seriously bad decisions my life, in my business, which have cost me tens of thousands of pounds, ~right~ and that's er you know someone on my scale who is lucky to turnover maybe twenty to thirty thousand a month that is an awfully big mistake to make, it takes a long time to get back to square one again, so yea, you know I've – I've made one or two decisions which er, which I've based not on logic but which I've bitterly regretted. And I've made one or two which were based on logic and which worked out really well"

The process of decision making in a professional environment seemed to be a complex mix of what would be a logically indicated solution and a more intuitive understanding. There seemed to be a presumption in favour of the logical or justified decision as against the instinctual 'it just feels right' approach that has occasionally let him down. The rational approach would appear to be safer! It would be more interesting to have some insight into what were the factors underlying these decisions. He said that he had read a statement from someone who...

-“reckoned his batting average for, er good business decisions, was about one in three, so er (..) ~how do you rate on that?~ I must say I'm absolutely f brilliant compared to that ~laughter~ there are times when you don't know there are times when you have done the right thing and its obvious there are times when you have done the wrong thing there are an awful number of times in between where you have made a decision and something's happened, ...you know, I have used the phrase before 'things have turned out worse than I had hoped but better than I'd expected'”*

He was then asked – How often do you learn from others; who do you trust to give you reliable information?

” you know there’s a spectrum, you have to rely on other people you have to be able to trust them, that they are going to do what they say they are going to do, and that they are telling the truth, ... erm because you just don’t have the opportunity to, check and double check everything, ...but I err yea rely on people that I deal with same with building contractors, same with planning officers if I’ve dealt with them and what they’ve said has come to pass then I tend to believe their opinions. Its not something that you can just ...pick up, I never ever trust ...banks especially when they spend lots of money advertising and trying to convince people... same with any large organisation if they are spending money trying to brainwash people into believing them then there’s obviously something not working quite right for them”

A commitment to reliable and dependable people is evident here, as opposed to the mass communications from larger organisations. This feeling is not unique there tends to be an immediate cynicism about corporate communications amongst a considerable number of people. Apart from the necessity to use larger organisations for certain services, there is a presumption in favour of reliable people. The question was then asked; how do you listen to your customers, and do you take an active role in trying to learn from them?

“Generally I tend to think that my clients know their own business pretty well, er they don’t understand the business of building – as well as I do -and they don’t always express their (...)er requirements and needs accurately (...) they’ll say to me well, we need this wall green whereas in fact what they are saying is (.) I think (...) this rooms too light or something and so you sometimes you have to take a step back and say why do you want it green then?: and actually find out what’s troubling them (...) the building is there to satisfy their requirements and their needs and I don’t know the least thing about running a primary school or selling Vauxhalls and or repairing so that process is at its most intense at the beginning of the design process, at the briefing stage erm”

An interactive process occurs in the design dyad of professional and client; both parties have something to learn from each other so there is a need to find the agreed way forward. This resembles the ‘expert career’ pattern occurring as praxis of genuine knowledge (Politis 2005). Any such learning process is variable over time occurring more often at the opening of a contract; in fact as knowledge

is shared in a mutual understanding the project comes to a satisfactory conclusion.

“(I) don’t advertise, (.) these days it is purely(..) purely through word of mouth from other clients and from other contacts within the building process so people like structural engineers that I have worked with, that I have worked well with, will come back to me if they have a client that needs some architecture doing (...)but er you’re after quite big fish really effectively you can’t have too many clients too many small clients because you actually loose ...contact with them (.) it’s a very one to one (...) er a one to one thing so you say I’ve got twenty or thirty live jobs on at any one time that’s probably too many but er...you know a dozen or fifteen would be better but of course to do that then you have got to have (...) a dozen or fifteen substantial jobs to earn the fees”

Market participation is seen here as gradually building up a pool of contacts. This process has the effect of locating his knowledge in understanding the needs of this client pool, what was required by them; when would he be next likely to be needed. ... He was asked if he had ever tried to generate business through the perception of an opportunity.

“we mailshotted motor dealers because we did do a big thing for MG Rover and we err redid their visitor centre at Longbridge and err () showroom and err conference suite in there so that was quite flash and (). We thought there’s an opportunity to impress err other dealerships that we were a practice to be reckoned and they ought to give us a chance to give them a quote, and so we sent out about 200 mailshots which, because of the pressure of time we didn’t follow up properly and we got absolutely bloody nothing out of it and now (?) I’ve got loads of work and I don’t need to do it erm I’ve got enough work for another work for eighteen months in fact so in fact I need to actually market myself as not available ~laughter~ until 2004, 2005 but er... I do tend to keep an eye on how the work value is going if things get cancelled or fall by the wayside then you need to start marketing well before you run out of work, because its such a lumpy thing”

In a professional marketing sense an ineffective campaign in that space had not allowed for follow up. There is a constant need to manage the flow of work in the office; not too much or too little. Did he ever consult with other people, consciously use them to exchange ideas and learn from them.

“Yes with my wife (.) or with Daniel [his son] (.) or with Benjamin and once again you know its got to be with someone – frankly that I can trust ~do you~ it doesn’t happen that often ~no?~ because generally I feel that my judgement, while not perfect is (.) is good enough, but there are times where em you come across a knotty little moral or ethical problem and er you really need somebody to... er clip you round the ear and tell you to be sensible about it (...)there are times in business when you, there are pressures on you, like cashflow, when you actually really want to do the sweeping under the carpet, and there are times when it’s totally the wrong thing to do as well (...) but er most of the time, you know ninety eight percent of the time I’m quite content to make my own decisions and er... suffer the consequences”

Do you like people to challenge your ideas?

“they are right at times to challenge them and there’re- there are many instances where I’ve had an unwelcome challenge to my ideas that has actually produced a better result, ~0~ there are other times where I’ve strongly resented challenges to my ideas that particularly comes from planning officers ~right~ but that’s sort of erm that’s a power thing really is (...)I mean I used to find that more difficult than I do these days, because these days I have got the background ...er to be able to say to them you know “in my professional judgement” (...) the important thing for me is that I am actually trying to look after my clients best interests and they don’t always know the implications of the decision they are likely to take (...)if there was another architect who was also an enthusiast about and knew what he was doing which is how I see myself, if I was cloned and this person had a slightly different view from me, then you know a constructive dialectic or dialogue what ever it is I would very much welcome that (...)I have thought of going into partnership with... a couple of people but they’ve never quite been good enough for me”

This passage describes the difficulties with dealing with officials, customers and other people in the office. The attractions of going into partnership with a slight variation of himself seems to illustrate the centrality of his personal view to the kind of architecture that he produces slight variations would be good, wholesale differences would not be. He felt that the other sources he used for his understanding were technical literature, CPD programmes, and company representatives who gave you the stuff round behind the technical details such as usability. He was then asked what he thought about competitor analysis.

“Architects are sort of rather like er...Moose or whatever they tend to be very touchy about their own territories and er... I have very few contacts with other architects certainly in the locality I don’t er sort of er... see any of them I don’t

think whether (?)that's my position when I am out of my geographical area that's a different matter [laughter] I do have contacts with ...three other architects actually at the moment one in Canterbury, one in Worcester, and another one in Ross-on-Wye who I used to work with quite a lot (...)I feel very wary indeed of about erm ... getting into any er...anything other than just a sort of purely ...sort of single job contractual relationship with another local architect I wouldn't mind doing some subcontract drawings for them to their designs but I wouldn't want them having any insight into the way I practice at all (.) the boring technical subcontract jobs can pay very well (..) they are not as exciting as the more creative jobs but they do have their own compensations”

Emergent Threads

- The exploration of the use of mental faculties in a professional context did, in this case, seem to be brought to bear on the production of the building as a conceptual design. This occurred in terms of the coherence of the plan as constructed in memory, or available as drawings, mediated through the personal interaction with the customer (client).
- The design ideas were holistic but contained within individual projects.
- The use of visualisation and rationalisation appeared to be used before and during the development of design ideas before they were made explicit in the forms of drawings and specifications.
- Ideas about the generation of new business seemed not to be integrated with an understanding of the time constraints of existing work.
- The development of a personal 'area of operation' within which he felt he developed a competitive stance.
- Time for imagination as a removal from business activity.

Fourth Interview.

The fourth interview took place with an owner of a small innovative business developing internet provision in the Gloucestershire area. The business was at the developmental stage and he had space in an innovation centre in a local town. The interview once again discussed the ways in which he gathered information and the first category asked about was observation.

“Run the basic question past me again”

How do you gather knowledge from what you have seen?

"I think I do it all the time, that is the thing I am heading towards. I suspect it is an integral part of trying to run a business, () for me anyway. ... I am just trying to think of some examples for you ... Yes , When ..an example going back about eighteen months ago or so now, and you remember the first business concept of these line sight lasers from building to building connecting it to the internet, ~yes I remember that~...So I had to find someone or some company that I could connect, I could link up that who could then get me onto the internet. I had been talking to a company called X who were based in Barnwood, er, and they were describing their standard way of connecting them to me and I was saying yes that's very nice but I won't pay that much and I knew that they had their own network that went all the way through Gloucester, it was on its route from North to South, I knew it went through Gloucester. So one day I went to where their building was at Barnwood with the question I wonder how close their network actually gets to [my business location] So I literally started at Barnwood and followed the tarmac trail back to Gloucester, (.) literally (...) Another example would be when I was thinking about this liaison with () I found myself walking around towns not just here but just generally walking around cities looking up at buildings to try and spot these things and thinking would I be able to get from there to here and that sort of thing"

The request for examples of visual knowledge gained provided two examples that seemed to derive their strength from discovery in the real world. The first was the project of tracing the newly laid telecommunications cables and basing the business on the proximity to the main high-capacity transmission lines. The second was observation about the feasibility of connecting between buildings in any particular town. Both of these examples enabled him to develop knowledge about the operational details that would make his business viable. In some way they were about product development, how the product could be provided in an efficient and effective way. What was also noticeable about this passage was the way he adopted a practical 'in the field' approach to investigating these questions; a deliberate practical investigative approach. He was then asked about his use of the internet for finding out information. This generated considerable explanation of the use of search engines – it was the early days of Google – and how internet searching was a lot better than having to ring up and ask for information. A useful summary of this discussion is the passage below.

"I use the internet one hell of a lot, because it's such a benign way of learning, I mean from my history of consulting... if you want to find out about something you just go to the company web site they'll have all the brochures there all the background information all the financial information half the time. ... and it's all

there and you can learn if you're reasonably disciplined I suppose, in terms of not finding interesting offshoots ~yes~ you can learn at a much much faster rate"

Notwithstanding the above he also used desk based research, being experienced with this procedure. The interviewee describes how he is familiar with the internet through his previous employment as a consultant. He gives a description of the use of the internet as an extremely rich way to obtain information that will be used to provide answers to what might be previously formulated questions. Whilst there is no doubt that the urge to browse will produce interesting byways there is no expression of the use of the internet as a way of formulating the question, more a provider (of some of) the answers. His previous training would have provided him with this 'research question' based approach. Whilst interactivity of the internet has increased enormously, the use of it to be able to formulate the agenda of knowledge development – what should I do next –is not mentioned. There was the opportunity to do so.

"one of the sort of learning curves I've gone through was having employed my first grunts of shop staff is watching them serving customers ... trying to see which staff are -you think are -actually better at talking to the customers and being nice to them compared to other staff."

This was an internal operational learning point where the ability to observe behaviour was available to him. He did not provide an example of observation of customer behaviour. Having expressed this articulated ability to undertake desk research the supplementary question emerged as how often did he deliberately conduct other more structured enquiries. Do you learn from observation, have you deliberately carried out an observation experiment?

"Not in terms of experiment, ~or~ I would say the closest I have got is to say well um I'm going down to the café I would maybe try and deliberately hang back a bit or sometimes when I was there the staff would let me serve the customers because I was the boss sort of thing where after a while I would deliberately look at them and bring them over and that just ... because I wanted to see them and it was quite deliberate I wanted to see them do it. Now I do it on the basis that I'm paying you, you do it ~laughter~ so the reasons changed ~right~ but certainly yes in the early days I would fade away a little bit just to see them in action"

Whilst he could not identify particular 'experiments' he could easily recall an occasion where he took the opportunity to observe a situation. In a situation where he was not familiar with what might be called the dynamics of the retail situation he was able to adopt an observational mode to compensate for lack of experience. The employment of memory is implicated with what we consider that we know. The next question was whether he has particular memories, details about things that have happened in the past, which you employ in your approach to business?

"a good example of that from my perspective which () is that ... if I want to do something one way and someone says no you must do it another way then ... almost by instinct I will start arguing with them ~right~ and its my way of finding out why and how so that I can live and feel the answer ~right~ so it's, it's not just a simple memory in that sense, it's a real experience ... experiencing the problem and experiencing through to the solution it gets that memory if you like much much deeper in the brain, and so it helps in the future, it ... the memory of it is there and then it can sort of almost become subconscious and you can lock in the experience much better"

The types of things mentioned here could have been the employment of theories in use, precepts, or 'rules of thumb' encapsulating experience of what to do or what to avoid in particular circumstances. This was not volunteered, more a process of testing and refining his beliefs. Given this process he was then asked; how often do you take the time to think things out?

"I would say this is one thing that I will consciously have to use different versions of, sometimes I will want to go by instinct ~right~ in ... almost knowing that if I took the time to reason it out properly and methodically etc. etc. I'd be here until next Christmas and not have done it ~right~ on the one hand. On the other hand there's this turning a memory into an experience where I almost deliberately going through the reasoning trying to reinforce the way to a solution so I've got both extremes ~laughter~. What do you mean by reinforce? ~To understand why something should be the way that it turns out it is reinforcing the learning process by feeling the problem and then feeling the solution ... ~um - so is that~ rather than someone saying the answer is 32 and you say "OK the answer is 32", I won't worry about why, but a large - because I am a scien - sort of scientist engineer and all that, I want to actually understand why ... ~right~ in a lot of cases, in other cases in other cases I'm a believer in following your instinct as well ~right~ um and its that area that encourages me to have my own business because that gives me the ... in my mind that gives me the authority to follow my instinct without having to justify it ~right~ when I am an employee I don't feel

that I have that authority ~OK~ other people do I notice ~right~ but I get – that’s one of the reasons it makes me more comfortable wanting to have my own business”

The limitations of his approach based on rational enquiry began to appear. He often thought things through but in some circumstances, he liked to follow his instinct. One of the reasons for starting his own business was that he could follow these hunches and not to have to provide a justification of them to others. It would be interesting to know more about this so he was asked; how do you find the process of providing reasons to other people for your actions?

“yes here I would say that it depends which of those () to have done to come up with what I am doing ~yes~ if it’s that way I have sort of gone through my aversion for pain by now and I am – I will very happily – if they are receptive to listening I am very happy to go through it with them, time after time again if they’re receptive - if they are not then I get pissed off with them. If it’s on this side where I’m following my instincts then I can’t justify it -there is no justification it’s just the way I think things should be and over time I will create my own mini justifications off the internet and drop those in so at the end of the day its me following the belief really (...) it’s doing something because I believe it’s right but also because others seem to believe it’s not. You know there’s an element of ‘up yours’ in there they are trying to prove something can be done when the world says no, there’s no need for it, it’s too expensive (...) until very very recently and its still fairly prevalent is that the industry -says “you know, there is no need for it, it’ll never happen, it’s too expensive, it’ll never be justified” and I’m sitting there thinking, but from where I’m looking at it, it seems fundamental economics that it is justified, and so some of this is me just being ... awkward if you like trying to prove them wrong and trying to make a lot of money in the process if you like”

This is a passage where he justifies his belief in the way that he sees the situation from a different stance to the views of others. He is prepared to explain to those who will listen, but those who dismiss the ideas as not feasible are not worth the discussion. Perhaps the former group is more compliant; they are prepared listen to his arguments rather than challenge the fundamentals. They are annoying almost because they suffer from a lack of clear thinking and are just reprising unexamined and accepted industry views. It may often be the case that unique experience is the ground for a countervailing view. In this case, it appears to be some sort of clearer rationality but it is not fully convincing. It remains at the level of ‘just the way I think things should be’. This way of seeing things

differently is often postulated as an entrepreneurial characteristic, in that they are able to create disclosive spaces (Spinosa et al 1997; 68). An interpretation of this is that his understanding seems to be based on rationality rather than disclosure. On the subject of this rationality he was asked if he had a particular time and place where he liked to reason things out.

“Um (...) a couple of answers to this one. One I like to be in a sort of quiet contained environment and the more often I have to work things methodically and really search () the less I like distractions ~right~ so that person walking past now it is not a bother to me, in certain situations it can be driving me up the wall ~right, I see~ first one then another one and I’m – and I can see no reason for that then ~I know, it just gets you down~ next to the office is like a training area for one of the tenants a lot of the time it is empty so it (makes?) no noise at all, sometimes they have got a session on in there, for today they were playing a little video, sounded like a John Cleese type () I registered the fact that at the moment it was not bothering me but if I’d been het-up about something I’d be crawling up the wall in there. So when (...) I like to shut myself away ... I suppose ... and I like to have ... I was going to say, tools of exploration ... that’s my consulting days ... potentially I like to have large spaces, a big table like this, even better a large floor which is bigger than the table for putting things on, for laying things out ~yes~ whiteboards and flipcharts for drawing on and potentially now a digital camera so I don’t lose what I have scribbled ~right~ as well so that’s sort of one area (...) The other is when, maybe I’m in that environment or whatever, or I’ve got a real problem that’s really bugging me (...) and its six o’clock or its seven o’clock at night and I don’t seem to be getting anywhere in those sorts of environments, I wouldn’t say I often do this but occasionally do this, where I’ll say OK look, we are not going to solve it tonight, in fact we are going round in circles, I will get myself to a stage where I feel that I have now explained to my brain what the problem is ~right~ then I go home. OK I think I have got the scope of the problem in front of me () and then next morning I have got the answer ~right~ so that is using your subconscious it is present-getting the in front of your conscious mind is getting all the relevant aspects of the problem there ~right~ so that you can say OK I’ve sort of visualised the scope taken it into the subconscious now lets remove the conscious mind from it to let the subconscious mind pick up and carry on ~and you find that the answer often pops out”

The application of working at a complicated problem seems to have been inherited from his consultancy days. This is presented as an articulate exposition of the rational exploration and the unconscious processing as a way of solving problems. To what extent and how frequently this process actually occurred in the business was not given but presumably it had been used at some stage. The subsequent question was whose opinions do you value enough to learn from?

“erm over the years there will people that I will trust to ask, and sort of accept the answers that they give in a certain area um ... and there are people that I trust to give me an answer that I can then have a discussion about ~right~ to challenge, challenge and learn ~right~ and then there are people that teach me things by winding me up ... ~yes~ in that if my instinct sort of says this and I have had a discussion with someone and they have been party to it and fighting me over it then after that occasion has passed, hours days or even weeks I can have this recurring argument continuing in my head, ~right~ sort of me and this other person ~right~ and, and in something like my learning ... I sort of ...learning by ... coming up with another argument and then sort of visualising the person countering it and then ... so I’m playing this little game in my head. So even then the people that I may not have that much respect for, if you like, in terms of their ability to, or my ability to trust what they are saying ... I still learn from them in that sort of way”

Some people he can rely on to provide answers he can accept, but he seems to need the process of thought to be able to accept the answers, especially where he has disagreed. The dependence on rationality can be identified here. He was asked how much or how often, he learns from his customers.

“as a consultant I am always learning from my customers ... as a consultant you are sort of trained, almost trained to be () ... to allow, or facilitate the customer solving the problem themselves (...)because if I like to learn things anyway if I’m consulting in that area for a customer I’m well aware that their experience was that and I’ll be thinking about future projects in the market so over the course of an assignment I’d be picking their brains to the extent that I could no deliberately nailing them or whatever but just general conversation trying to weasel out of them information that I can then use in another assignment”

The process of customer interaction seemed also to take place as a method of refining the solution he was offering to ensure it fitted the requirements. There were obvious comparisons with the architect discussed above where he tailored his design solution to adhere more closely to the brief. This question was answered, theoretically from his life as a consultant in a way, and how he used this skill to learn from his employers. It was difficult to get an answer that provided an elaboration of the current broadband business. This was probably because it was at the development stage and very little customer activity was being generated at the current state of development of the business. The way he refined the idea comes across as a very incremental process he was then asked; do you ever experience someone saying something to you that has just changed the

whole way that you might do business. He was able to recall one situation where he was describing the business issues so far and...

“he said “what about wireless LAN” and I e-mailed him back saying “but it’s not legal for commercial use, only for personal use” ~right~ he e-mailed back saying “they’ve changed the rules” ... ~right~ ... and that e-mail just changed the whole course of the business (.) [a customer might] tell me something that would make me think ah(.) and it could swap my way of doing something, probably more application driven, ~It would make you see something different~ it would be that little chink ~right~ and then my brain would do all these things ^{taps on desk} together , with that ^{tap on desk}, now go there ~right~ and I could see that happening, I mean it happened once there, I knew the background because I had looked a wireless LAN stuff before -and in thinking it through and I was aware of what it, potentially could do, so I just locked it away and forgot it ~so it wasn’t available~ yes ... and really it was silly of me because I should have known”

He would be almost pleased for this kind of thing to happen, that someone might come along and just provide the last little link in the chain of his reasoning.

Emergent Threads

- Deliberate use of investigation to answer questions
- A very rationalistic approach – feeling his way to new problems – finding it painful if he could not solve them
- Deliberate observation of new operations
- Some part of his important ideas could not be verbally justified to customers
- Motivated by vision and economics
- Used customer/client consultations to refine his ideas

Fifth Interview

The fifth interview was with husband and wife who were proprietors of a small office equipment business. They had recently started in business by picking up the trade from a recently closed business for which the wife had previously worked. As this was a joint interview there were responses from both husband and wife, the change of interviewee is indicated by ^.

Ok so, tell me something about how you got started ~ um ... ^ *does everybody start like that? ... ^ I was unemployed, I was a mechanical engineer by trade um,*

and thought I'd go on my own in the engineering business which didn't go too well so I just basically ... ^ I was already working in office furniture and the company I worked for was on its way to closing down and we sort of just carried on going because we sort of learned the ropes already from me being in it, you know. ^ Because I had the van which I bought for engineering purposes there was such a time when I was doing deliveries for three other office furniture companies...and when you put in the new you take out the old... we ended up with a lounge-full everywhere in the house was full of furniture so we decided - off to business link...

The business was started as a result of circumstantial factors. These factors seemed to be more push than the pull of entrepreneurship (Hogarth Scott et al 1996; Hytti 2005). The engineering employment had not gone too well, the company for which the wife worked was looking for someone to deliver. This was probably an ad-hoc decision the company was looking to end their current contract and a flexible short term arrangement would both suit them and gave him the opportunity. The acquisition of the second-hand office equipment was presumably because of a propensity to hoard something that could be sold at some point.

"they couldn't advise me what to do because I knew what I wanted to do, you know...and when I walked past here I saw it had a To Let sign on I went home and phoned it and a month later I was in here... been here for about eighteen months now"

This observation in the middle of the description of the start-up process is significant in revealing that wanting to do something was in the idea not the implementation. The advice that business link did not seem to enable the realisation of this idea. The idea seemed to stem from the existing situation. This was a situation of financial hardship as described below.

"^The company did not have an outlet at the time and it was trading from a warehouse...^ I became a shopfront for them...^as the company was crumbling they thought that the business could have some exposure be generated through [the husband] but publicly from here... so that's basically it in a nutshell. ... the company had just finished a ministry contract and they wanted to get their money out ... we didn't want both of us to become unemployed (...) it was survival really more than anything else... we did not have a penny to our name it was a make or break (...) been in the country for two years (...) get back on track"

The current business trading situation had improved; it was described as ‘treading water not yet swimming’. The company has risen above the VAT threshold and has now registered for VAT. The business was started with a loan from a family member of £600. This was not a large loan but was presumably sufficient cash to fund the first month’s trading.

“You’d be surprised there are still companies who like the personal touch – if you know what I mean – don’t like to speak to an answering machine – or get passed from one department to another, the bigger companies - at least when you latch onto them at least when they ‘phone you they know that they are speaking to someone who is running the business as opposed to someone who is in the marketing department or sales department who have not got a clue as to what is going on with their orders”

The attitude is expressed that smaller companies are more personal and this enables them to be more direct, rather like the view of the first interviewee. This is because the people in them will know more about what is going on throughout the business, rather than a mere departmental responsibility. This is particularly true of the ‘owners’ who have the approach and the authority to act. This was one of their firmly held views. They agreed with the statement that big companies tend to prefer to deal with other big companies but they were happy with their current situation.

“I don’t think [the small companies] give a professional enough ... image really, you know what I mean, [the larger companies] don’t think you can handle what they are asking you to do... but there again every company starts off very small and grows doesn’t it so...you know...and we have no intention of making this into a big company whatsoever – we are quite happy to keep this as a small business because we tend to find that the ... the business we generate – we’re not hoping to become millionaires out of it but we are quite happy to earn a living from it ^there is enough business out there to turn out between two hundred and fifty thousand and half a million pounds”

Large companies tended to require a more structured and process orientated approach, which was less dependent on individuals. The statement that ‘if a business was not growing it was effectively shrinking’ was put to the interviewees.

“Pretty much(...) weelll they could possibly be right...but it does not feel like that to us simply because we know how big we want to make it – yes it would be nice to have a couple of members of staff to take a bit of the back-and the legwork out of it for you- you know ^the thing is if you grow too big you ^you loose touch don't you with... ^I employed a chap to run the warehouse for me... two second-hand chairs which... he takes the whole day taking the cover off one and putting it on the other I said Colin how long does – how much do I actually sell that chair for? He says less than a fiver (.) What do I pay you a day? He says fifty pounds –so I said that chair has actually cost me fifty five quid would you pay it for fifty five pounds? No way! Well it's my money and I am not a good person to work for ... I want it done my way and that's it...especially when you've been at the bottom and I know what it is like in that hole and I am just about getting to a point where ^your just levelling out a bit more ^I'm not letting anyone drag me down we tend to do it ourselves we work anything between twelve and eighteen hours a day... with regard to growth you're dammed if you do and dammed if you don't”

The attitudes of personal self-reliance are expressed cogently in this passage, a view that can be expressed as ‘if you want it done right, do it yourself’. It is not possible to rely on other people because they are not prepared to work as hard or do not have the same motivations. You could not trust them to have the initiative required. Later in the interview she felt it was not always the employees fault, they could also be criticised for doing something off their own bat if it turned out to be wrong. She was more amenable to this view, perhaps as a result of her recent experience in working for someone else. Cash management was an obvious concern, being short of cash is a salutary lesson in business and the proprietors had been in that situation. The focus on cash was more important than rigorously costing their own labour. The extra hours worked by them did not involve direct expenditure, whereas the interests of staff were in receiving their wages. They also seemed to see an implied criticism from those who profess this view on business expansion. What ever they did, they would not be able to get it right in terms of compliance with expansion routes proffered by those offering advice. This may have been the case with Business Link but also may be a refuge in activity away from the clarion calls of well meaning advisors.

We are flexible enough that ...er... its like at the moment we've just put in a tender for at big job and to get in staff to do that job ... at a click is - dead easy – do you know what I mean you can give that professional ... you roll up there a big truck and twenty people to assemble that's not a problem because there is three of us in Gloucester that do this game and we are all best mates, we're

opposition but we're all best mates and um – so if I'm stuck for labour they'll give me a hand – if they're stuck for labour I give them a hand [How does that work out?] It's a no money passing on situation its all favour- for favour- for favour that's how we do it no money changes hands [How does that affect the competitive situation?] ^yea well you never trust anybody in business really you know somebody comes and sees your customer next week they might possibly be nicking your customer but its one of those chances you take [laughter] ^out of the three of us I'm the only one with a warehouse – I've got storage but I buy in ninety percent of all the jobs which ... ^come through ^and then they feed off me ...you know.

Their view of the business is that it is flexible to respond to larger jobs through temporary help. This may have been available through friends or other family members 'press ganged' for the short term, but in this case, the help was provided by competitors. One possible explanation for the use of other people in the same trade may have been because the owners had recently arrived from South Africa and hence there had been little time to accrue a social network. However this is an example of co-operation to fulfil larger orders which has elements of small business networks or the keiretsu system of working together.

^I do find the English very loyal... ^Put it this way – everybody who has walked in here and bought here has come back we have never lost a customer its all... its all word of mouth we don't advertise ^there is enough business to go round if your in it for the killing and you want to be retired (...) ^we are quite happy to earn our living ^anything that comes our way that's a bonus – that's lovely ^you know we don't only do office furniture we do domestic as well (...) ^we are small but we are big ^N's got the charm [laughter] we have never gone out looking for work – never. ~No promotions or anything?~ No (..) ^We would love to increase sales by doing a bit of marketing but we find that- it's the same with everybody you receive a flyer- you look at it and you either chuck it or you file it and it never reappears you know...I think the best form of marketing is really kind of thing having somebody to represent you and go out and say 'Hi I'm from such and such a company can I leave a catalogue with you but the nature of our business with it being second hand you can't produce a catalogue of what we do anyway

From being solidly in the 'no-marketing here' school of small business one of the owners did develop some thoughts about what kind of marketing she would prefer, which was in the area of direct sales. It remained unexplored if this was following her previous experience of what others did, say in her previous employment, or if there was a perceived efficacy which resided in personal

selling. This may have been based on her personal characteristics, together with knowing how this could be done and would work. The current interview revealed that she herself was good at this – having the charm – and she did remain voluble and engaging during the conversation. Whilst the approach he took emphasised the utility of maintaining the personal network that he had established. This was an apparent divergence of approach here, but it seemed on reflection to have common elements. He seemed to be recruiting apostles for the business (see Hesketh et al 1997; 87), who would provide unpaid positive recommendations to potential customers. There would be mutual obligations created here; he would reciprocate with their businesses. There could also be an element of sociability involved. Running your own business can be a lonely occupation and the involvement in a community becomes an effective resource; an acquisition of social capital.

"the thing is I've got about twenty customers which– or they started off as customers but – and they call in here on a daily or every second day ^we are going to turn it into a coffee shop ^ its like a gathering of us and it's like a networking meeting and they carry all my business cards – they promote me – I promote them and... ^it works alright... ^you know...the worst of the job is that we do go through two pots of Nescafe a week! ^we'll turn it into a coffee shop (...)"

There is nominally less control over this form of communication both in what is said and in the frequency with which it is said. With such close interaction it would be difficult for an individual to adopt a deceitful role, and not be supportive of the social group. This effect was noted by Best in his study of small firms in Italy where a complex of interdependent firms produces the situation where they can both co-operate and compete (Best 1990; 238). This was described as a collective entrepreneur (Best 1990; 207). In the interview the owners expressed a desire to do something for their town; they thereby reinforced their view of working together as a community. It would of course remain difficult to establish the frequency of recommendation that is a less easily measurable output of this form of joint promotion.

"we are ambitious enough to succeed but not ambitious enough to be greedy – does that make sense? I don't need three cars on my driveway and four houses (...) perhaps that is a lack of ambition I don't know -you know [Is that because of

the age you are?] ^ We've been wheeling and dealing um... ^for want of a better word -we've always tried to -^since day one- since I was about well -I started work when I was thirteen and I have always worked a normal job and had sidelines ^we've always bought and sold that's always been what we've done ^we've done importing and exporting... um well we've always done ^anything to earn a buck really as long as it is above board you know -and we're quite happy to buy something at ten pounds and sell it for thirty pounds if you know what I mean -if there's money in it"

The owners identified their own history as one of wheeling and dealing, a way of life that they were comfortable with, although past indulgence in this practice they said had not made them rich. This may have followed the circumstances surrounding the emigration from South Africa. The question then asked was how do the elements of wheeling and dealing, the customer service, and the network go together?

"I'm not really sure I think they just fall into place like -you know pieces of the jigsaw... ^yea right we're in [this street] for a start- people think they are going to get a bargain down this street... ^we're going to call it Bartering street(...) ^you know with it being our own place I know what I paid for it...and I know what ^ what you want to get back for it to make a profit on it (...) ^If you have people working for you they don't know the ins and outs of the business they don't know the heart and soul of the business really they are not allowed to think for themselves in effect really (.) ~Could you use the network to sell anything?~ they all have actually got their own small businesses (..) broadband networks (..) cash registers (.) We will source and find to clinch a deal if we need to...~If you converted it to a coffee shop as you suggested earlier could you use the same network?~ ^I think we could if the coffee was good! (laughter) (.) we have a lot of fun with it as well I think that is very important in business I don't think everybody enjoys what they do -I mean we don't necessarily enjoy office furniture but we enjoy what we do -we enjoy the freedom that it gives you -you... you are in control of your own destiny in a sense -you're only going to get out of it what you put into it"

The variation inherent in the network was only explored at an inchoate level and this was followed by a lengthy discussion on the characteristics of particular customers. There were those who were bargain hunters; those who remained loyal; those who were part of local authority initiatives; and those who were too proud to buy off them. They could 'read customers' the difference between the genuine and the time wasters. They did differentiate between customers. They

had empathy with customers who were like them. It was then asked how important the product was to them.

"you have got such a wide variety of customers -um I might get one customer come in here from a company and say 'you have got a load of rubbish' but then I've got somebody that ...only wants to spend a hundred pounds he wants a desk a filing cabinet and a chair, ^all for that price and he knows he can get it ^and he thinks he is getting a bargain which is nice -and you know -but that's why I like our warehouse its all laid out ^I think image is very important people will automatically walk in here and think junk shop (.) ^I've got a friend in this business (...) nice lighting (...) looks good -do you know what I mean people (...) but he has gone into liquidation three times (...) ^unfortunately people judge a book by its cover (...) ^what I always do is if they come in all posh and haw-haw ...the first thing I do is either look at their keyring [puts his on the table] or see what car they drive then you can...you make your own mind up on that ^remember what I said -its everything isn't it -it comes back to that doesn't it?"

They had already expressed the view that they did not come into this business because they had an interest in office furniture. It was an opportunistic move. It was noticeable that they did not respond to the opportunity to talk about the product by talking about the attributes of the product offering. They soon moved onto the sorts of customer they had and the way the stock appealed to them. This may be because the variation in supply of second hand stock does not allow a process of identification with particular items. They had very little involvement with the creation of the product. The description of customer focused with price segmentation is perhaps less revealing than the situation and their personal experience having a profound impact. The conversation then moved onto image, and the importance of it, perhaps as a frustrated desire to have a different image. This was an area where a difference of approach was more noticeable than anywhere else, he preferring the solid reality of trade, she almost wishing, although not quite saying so, for an emphasis on display. He told the tale of a cabinet manufacturer who initially would not deal with him until he found out how important he was in the local distribution network, but by then, it was too late.

"another concept- conception that people have about small businesses is that you lock up your shop at night and you go home ...you're at large - you go down the pub - you have fifty beers and you know you don't get home until three o'clock in

the morning because the following morning all your stuff is back in the shop and you can just carry on as per normal... we spend long hours doing this and it is hard when there is -^there you go – well...I do the books for both of us I do the VAT the quarterly VAT and if I don't do ^and we still run a household you know ^if I don't do it basically on a daily basis it just gets too...^but we still run a household you know you've still got your children you've still got the general things that people do when they come home whether they work for somebody or not (...) ^but we average on a -I would say on a normal day anything between -on a good day we do twelve hours ...minimum... that's before we even go home”

The received narrative is that running a small business is not an easy, almost self indulgent lifestyle where you can do what you like and you are answerable to nobody. The business needs a considerable amount of personal input. It becomes a commitment, a responsibility you have taken on, and a burden one has to carry. Like Pilgrim in his progress, the small business owner has to labour in adversity with minimal cash and long hours. The future might bring a lightening of this load but in this case, this is not expressed; they are positively connected with their existing locale. The next question posed to the interviewees was whether the fact that they had lived abroad gave them a different perspective on this county and the nature of doing business here.

”not because I have lived abroad – I tend to find ... you know what they say about the British - I know I am generalising alright – I am really generalising I have been in the country –six years? ^yea six years ^I love every minute of it don't get me wrong - I just love it but it is so diverse...I mean we come from deep dark Africa he's English but I am not and you know the countries that I live in all your cities I mean we found their () you live in are pretty much on the ball you know our banking systems is just movement it just goes goes goes and really we are living on Engli-British time at the moment in this country I think with a smaller business you tend to more so than anything else ... do you ever find that coastal towns are sleepier? Well we tend to find that... ^we find England is sleepy ^we find England very sleepy ^ totally ^you know I mean ^they and that's why ^and they are very un-service orientated there is no such word but do you know what I mean there is no service in this country and I think that -that is deeply lacking in this country people will not go the extra mile for you -I know we are not the Americans with 'have a good day' and all that you know and everybody is putting up two fingers behind your back but you know a smile on his face ^I find the English not willing to bend with the wind ^perhaps rightly so(...) ^where we come from if you don't make money you don't eat ^I still think we are in the mindset if you don't work you don't eat”

This is a complex session of the interview with a number of revealing insights. The passage seemed to open with an expression of the diversity existing in this country. One was led to expect more but the conversation moved on towards the question of the slowness of the British. This was articulated in a tentative manner and had the effect of inviting support from her partner to elaborate this view. This was a view that had been discussed before because he knew what she was going to say. The passage then moved onto the question of a cultural lack of service. More than a lack of a service culture, although the wording 'service orientation' was used, this seemed to be phrased as a cultural norm in the culture as a whole rather than a business tenet. The passage concluded with their appreciation that there was a lack of motivation by employed staff. It was suggested that the provision of unemployment benefit was the cause. This was presumably part of this theme of lethargy. The interview then returned to the types of customers attracted to the business to see if this issue could be amplified any more. There was a prompt early on in this passage to see if they ever try to group customers.

"well ^very diverse some retail right the way across to...we have some -you meet very interesting people here if that is what you want to know! I don't know how you want me to sum it up [Question] no we think any customer is good as long as they want to spend money with us -we are not bothered in the slightest if he wants to spend five pounds with us or five thousand ^you know you have got to treat each customer ^as an equal ^you know he might by a five pound chair today but next year he might...^that sort of customer who only comes in once -as I said -for a chair or whatever is your bread and butter money your bigger clients who might come on to you once in six months for an order of five thousand is not your bread and butter money um he doesn't pay your running costs he doesn't pay your overheads really ^it's your h(hh)oliday money(hh) ~ do you need both?~ ^yea you need a good kick now and again just to ^the (.) the odd good hit really does give you (..) you know makes your bank balance look reasonable um ^it gives you a bit more buying power to deal with the people in the street it's a horrible ...game you know -we must be sitting on one hundred thousand easy -stock and you have got to keep that amount in stock for all different customers ^the () of it is its worth nothing ^to go out on the street you know you have got to have some trashy stuff and you have got to have brand new stock (.) standing with dead money you know but (..) ^if you don't have it that's another thing we find with the important side of service we like to try and keep up people come in and say 'I want it tomorrow' as people do (..) at least if you have got stock (.) so a certain amount (.) but we hate carrying stock because there is no money in keeping stock it costs you money to -and until that product is sold it is worth nothing to you you're in debt to your supplier and things come and go out of fashion as well (.) we didn't really give this business that much thought because

we just kind of fell into it ^non whatsoever ^and a lot of the time it is thumb sucking and winging it –and you have to”

There seemed to be some difficulty in appreciating the difference between treating every person as a customer and the ability to differentiate the more rewarding prospects. This would imply a level of service applicable to the occasion that was standardised through the prospect that every customer was potentially a bigger spender with the business. This may be the first trial order that was being placed. Judgements were made about customers with ‘rules of thumb’ such as the kind of car they drive. The walk-in customer seemed to be what was important here and the metaphor of the street was employed to describe the presentation of the business. They felt that to appear ‘on the street’ it was necessary to supply what people wanted, when they wanted it. In the majority of cases tomorrow was too late. This reinforced the earlier themes of responsiveness and flexibility. In the responses given, they seemed to be residing in the present; there was little empathy with the principle of planning. The next question was what have they learned, surely they were not still winging it?

” I think you do -you tend to wing it [laughter] no -you do tend to wing it all the time I think that’s business -that’s the nature of –of business anyway if something is not working change it’ alter it’ or omit it completely’ ~Surely experience is useful~ you wizen up –you wizen up you don’t make the same mistakes twice let’s put it that way (.) you don’t simply because- ~Do you start to reflect about what will sell and what customers will buy~ ^I don’t have time to reflect before you know it its eight o’clock in the morning and you should have been at the office at half past seven! [laughter] ^this set-up has been like this in the front window for a month and I’ve only had one customer come in with any enquiries for anything in that window –we’ll come in on a Sunday and change it all around -I guarantee that week I will have at least a dozen people coming in -where’s that boardroom table you had in the window ^thinking we had new product but it’s not new product at all its just changing product around ^and that’s what we do we actually change and chop around you can sit here and watch the cars and [they] always look in the window (..) do you know something?(..) guaranteed within a few days they will be in here ‘I was interested in that notice board where has it gone’ -they expect things to be there until it suits them... do you know what we do now to attract business we put cheap five pound chairs outside on the pavement (.) that is our advertising ~How important is the shop to the business?~ ^Extremely(.) ^people want to see what they are buying otherwise they might just as well go straight to –to Argos ‘we have just launched a website and when ever you go to it –it is work in progress it goes back to trying it (.) you can’t really

rule it out (.) we don't really want to go countrywide (.) we are trying to keep business as local as we can its(.)”

In rounding this interview off the view was expressed that ‘business is not for ever’ but there is a ‘commitment –like having children’

Emergent Threads

- Opportunistic start – driven by a need and the opening created by the closure of an existing firm.
- Strong commitment to the personal nature of the service provided. There was a competence in personal selling
- Commitment to self-reliance rather than growth and a commitment to ‘see it through’
- Felt themselves to be part of a network of local businesses
- The question of image seemed to be problematic
- The shop as the locus of the business – presenting to all who drive past.

What was initially noticeable about this business was the prominence of a level of commitment towards what they did. This produced a business where there was a more complex relationship between enterprise and community because they both attracted high levels of commitment. They were inveterate traders, buying and selling, but very interested in the community in which they lived. They were very acutely cognisant of the way in which their shop was monitored by passing traffic.

Sixth & Seventh Interviews

I have conducted two interviews, jointly with my supervisor, with the proprietor of a software business. He had some experience in the industry before but decided to work for himself. He had developed links with a South African company and currently was their partner in this country. These interviews were recorded on video and as such are more difficult to transcribe. Passages have been extracted from watching the videos a number of times as a background resource and are included below. These extracts have been included to add background context to the research.

“I didn’t start thinking about a market, I thought I want to set up in business, what do I do. I have experience in the IT world ... you work from exactly what you know” ... “you look at what you can do” ... “developing the idea it’s definitely an organic process ... It’s a gut feel – you almost develop a mental image of the thing ... bringing bits into focus”

“My experience is that people start in two ways, one they come across an idea, or I’ve worked long enough for other people, I want to work in my own business”

“It’s a stage of lifetime type thing ... we all want to give it a go – life’s too short not to give it a go. At the end of the day I’ll get another job if it doesn’t work out”

“If you are over 44 you’ve been thinking about it for too long.”

“I did get asked to set up a company four years ago – to do a similar project but within the company – it didn’t work out ultimately.”

“I’m soon to be 41”

“It was also experience in being outside my comfort zone”

“Doing all the good stuff about the market and what’s actually going on” ... “The best stuff that I am learning is as I go along talking to people”

“You have a mental map and you focus on – these are the opportunities in the market”

“At the end of the day it’s quite a broad cold idea”

“You go through a complete roller coaster ... you can get up in the morning and there’s no prospects really – what do I do today. Then you get a phone call, immediately you’re completely up. The other side is, you’ve got about five or six prospects, they’re all very gung-ho about it – love it – and then one by one they ... pull out”

“Creating a business is about getting in front of people... ultimately running a business and selling your services. It’s back to the old thing who do I need to phone?”

“Question: are you able to learn from your South African partners? It’s the other way round funnily enough. In SA it’s an immature market there are so many opportunities. In the UK you need to have the starting point of a product not a service. People are much happier talking about a real product than a service – technology is boring – it’s tedious”

“Its about finding niches...you come across it because you are in it...you cannot research a niche ... I’d love to know how ... I don’t think you can do it you either know it or you experience it by being out there sitting in front of people. The key thing is where there is a relationship breaking down.”

“Constantly, my wife, partners in South Africa – it would be very difficult to loose focus you can dissipate your energies. And what do you focus on – that’s so much more exciting so much more potential.”

“I’ve just employed a marketing guy...practical stuff...identifying growing businesses...when you are the main source of income...it’s a difficult balance...you’re constantly balancing...10 good leads per week...I’d give you 10% of any business I got through those leads and I mean that!”

Emergent Threads

These comments bring forward the following emergent threads.

- A greater use of business expressions to express his developing business than others.
- Remained focused on people but retained the idea of the plan as a cold, broad, map. This was developed by bringing bits into focus.
- The issues about time available to continue this project. His age and the time frame, and the implications of time being stop-go.

Summary Analysis

In summary, the analysis of this series of interviews has revealed a number of emerging themes. The first of these themes is one of how in general the owners of micro businesses value the knowledge of the product they are supplying, and to a significant extent locate this knowledge in the solutions provided for their product. They take some time to familiarise themselves with the product and to keep up to date with developments. This was most noticeable in the case of the interior designer who kept a large amount of details about fabrics that cost some considerable amount to keep up, and the computer shop who subscribed to a number of training courses. The notable exceptions to this form of engagement were the owners of the office equipment business.

It was also possible to identify amongst the interviewees a feeling for their own uniqueness and their value to specific customers. They were able to solve problems for them with their product application knowledge. The customers 'will know, they just don't trust themselves', and the architect saw his job as relating requirements to the building solution proposed. With the knowledge of the product, they can reveal the true requirements of their customers. This seems to fit well with the culture of small businesses as being customer exposed, trusting, and personally observed (Gibb 2002). The contrasting interview in this case was the internet service company.

It is possible to draw out from a close reading of the interviews the observation that the principals have created an 'arena for business' which locates their activities and their understanding. This often occurs within their physical space – the use of a shop or office – but seems to have elements that transcend or deepen this physical space and almost becomes their business presence.

It was also noticed that there was exhibited a greater use of rational enquiry amongst those of the interviewees who were professionally trained. This linked to a greater degree of articulation of the solution that they were proposing. This effect may have been the result of their training, or from personal qualities that enabled them to access that training.

The businesses interviewed were a small purposive sample and therefore the results are not claimed to be representative of the population of such businesses. Micro businesses are not necessarily typical of the population of all small businesses. They do however demonstrate the possibilities of a new interpretation. These interviews have revealed the possibility of the micro business situation being some combination of practical competence and outward exploration of new possibilities. The outward exploration is non-analytical and often fails to enable the proprietor to develop the business in the way that they want. This first phase of the research was the inception of a further phase in the research that considered the philosophical grounding of this situation. This philosophical grounding is offered in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Thinking the nature of the gap

A placement between the existent and the possible.

The earlier field research allowed this study to further explicate the world of those micro business owners interviewed. This research enriched the initial positing of the situation existing in small businesses. The production of these themes was conducted in tandem with a review of the existing literature on market understanding and small business. Following the methodology discussed above, this chapter presents the result of a reconnection with possible theoretical insights, in the light of the themes emerging from the first interviews. These might further reveal the process of understanding of the market in micro business. This chapter contains a sizeable study of the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. This was undertaken to aid the reflexive nature of the research. If the philosophy of Heidegger had anything to offer the methodology of this research, it engendered a study that was of sufficient rigour to be grounded in the actual writings of Heidegger. If the study of Heidegger was to be productive, it was only in this way that it could acquire a theoretical depth.

The initial phase of the research had been able to provide a reassurance that the general understanding of the small business situation remained relevant. It was able to capture some of these thoughts through personal interaction with others and it revealed themes that had not been part of any previous conscious reflections. The themes that emerged from the interviews indicated the level of personal involvement with the practical aspects of running a business. This personal involvement manifested itself in product awareness, direct engagement, and often having aspects of location. The latter factor emerged as a new theme

from the interviews. It was on these grounds that I decided to consider other approaches towards the nature of thinking in small businesses and its consequences where ‘cognition forming entrepreneurial intention has received limited attention’ (Shook et al 2003). In line with a reflexive methodology there should be a systematic study of theoretical approaches rather than cherry picking (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2000; 252). This search for new insights led, by way of a review of some current theoretical approaches, to an in-depth study of Heidegger’s philosophy.

In the development of our ideas about the knowledge that we have, it is often the case that the method employed is an analysis using a pair of opposing ideas. So much so that every question can become one that has two sides to it, two approaches – ‘on one hand this, but on the other hand that’. Examples of these dualistic approaches, have been variously categorised as the nomothetic – ideographic (Alport 1937); the articulate– tacit (Polanyi 1962; 94), hermeneutic and scientific (Lyotard 1984); desire – intellect (Aristotle 1986; p433a; Apollonian and Dionysian – or dream and intoxication (Nietzsche 1993; 14). All these approaches can be seen as founded on the opposition of systematisation and diversity (Toulmin 1972; 52). Some find the origin of these dualisms in the Kantian opposition of subject and object (Beasley-Murray; 95). Aristotle observes in *De Anima* that there is a falsity in a conjunction. Even if something is demonstrated not to be the case there is a connection between A and not-A (Aristotle 1986; p430b). The opposition of entrepreneurship and management has already been noted. They are joined in what may be termed a dance of opposites in that they imply each other. In this succession of dichotomies, there are at least two processes at work. Firstly, the process of discussion that searches for the neglected view, or the hidden suppositions, in a proposal and provides a counterblast to the interpretation offered (Potter 1996; 84). Others see the human situation as a Janus head, as suspension in the space between choices, the opening situated at or between contrasting poles, implying an inherent flexion. This approach is similar to the dichotomy corollary in personal construct theory (Jankowicz 2001). This dichotomous situation can be the ground of the ‘stages of growth models’ of small businesses as discussed earlier, where emergent themes become dominant. In a Hegelian interpretation history is progressive through the

sublation of previous social arrangements by more advanced arrangements; see Greiner (1972). This could occur through a dialectical progression or through the creative interlocking of two unrelated streams of thought (Koestler, 1975; 120). It was earlier noted that there have been several attempts to provide an accepted interpretation of human knowledge in what has become a post-rationalist age. An age where the search for a detached universal truth has largely been abandoned and the best we can achieve is to choose the best path – what is viable. In the study of small business, this dyad enforces its centrality in the choice between normative business solutions applicable to all businesses, or the path that emphasises the uniqueness of the individual business situation. The idea of an opening situated between these contrasting poles will be developed further in this chapter.

A Deflationary Approach.

An approach to the contrasting interpretations is to deny that the contrast exists – strong version – or deny that it is useful –weak version. Nagel (1979; 206) sees the division as a continuum between the particular and the 'centerless', indicating that the truly objective world has no particular focus. Nagel (1979; 209-213) proposes that the development of objectivity is a transcendence of the self. This movement from the personal cannot be characterised by intersubjective understanding of the social knowledge available to us all, because this still leaves the knowledge as a subjective entitlement. The Kantian determination of representations by the self not only leaves the thing in itself undetermined, but also the nature of the self (Deleuze 2004; 108, 216). It becomes the undetermined location for the apperception of objects from a determinable world. The post-Kantian framework of perceptual understanding uses conceptual schema as the sole basis for the self. Bohm sees the view of the world as interacting parts as outdated, it should be seen as *an undivided and unbroken whole* (Bohm 2002; 158 his italics)

What is frequently attempted, according to Nagel, is the 'view from nowhere', where there is the ability to see something in itself, detachable from the mode of representation, and the personal circumstances. This chimes with Dewey's

criticism of the 'armchair view', but emphasises the situational nature of knowledge rather than its production through action. The objectification of knowledge has a powerful explanatory usefulness but it cannot completely remove an irreducible personal – phenomenological or romantic– point of view. We just have to live with the partiality of our view. The partiality of knowledge means each individual has to repeat its production for himself. This process is not necessarily similar to the labour of Sisyphus; we are not obliged to repeat the task on each occasion. There is, he believes, some refinement of the question with each circle of the wheel. Overcoming this inherently difficult choice between adopting an objective market based analysis or an 'actional' approach based on personal characteristics of the owner is required. One possible resolution of this inability is to propose that it is a false dichotomy; a modernist oppositional meta-narrative Lyotard (1994; 15). The meta-narrative incorporates this choice in the story of individual lives or the society in which this choice becomes legitimate. This approach is deflationary in that it punctures the inflated difficulty. The other method accepts it as a genuine question and pursues an integrative approach to its resolution. This can either be through the production of a synthesis or consider the opening that such a choice reveals. There have been a number of contemporary attempts to find an integrated solution to the predicaments of such a located choice. These integrated solutions can possess attributes of being systematic, interactive, and dynamic. Two of the approaches that can be examined in this light are process and network theories that are considered below.

Situated Knowing.

This view about the located nature of knowledge, has in part developed from ideas discussed previously which include; appreciating that consumption patterns are responsive to situations and activities; Polanyi's identification of the personal nature of knowing; and the end of epistemology as a first philosophy (Polanyi 1962; 380). There continues to be a vibrant heritage in social research that has considered and appreciated the interaction between objects and the people who make use of them (Turkle 2007). This has become an important part of ethnographic research. The theory of symbolic interaction has emphasised the development of the meaning of objects in social and economic life (Wenger

1999; 13). It has been widely observed that some of the activities of commercial economics are social activities based on personal exchange (Granovetter 1985). These include shopping (Forman & Siriam 1991) in particular, and in services marketing generally (Crosby et al 1990).

These above activities can be considered as a form of situated knowing that depends on the place where it is enacted. Situated learning lacks the intentionality that is present in, for instance, pragmatist thought (Elkjaer 1999). Birley & Norburn (1985) consider that small business owners are motivated to make either money or things. Characterising this as a low or high level of product belief would emphasise the way in which they are involved with the product. It could be perfectly possible to create a small business that is essentially run on financial lines, becoming thus an investment business. This situation does not normally occur although there are many such businesses where ownership is separated from control. The size of a micro business reduces the payback of any investment and hence the business owner is usually involved with what they are selling. Ali and Birley (1998) consider the role of enthusiasm in overcoming risk in customer interactions. It is the case that the usual choice offered in the strategic marketing analysis of companies is market-focused or product-led. This tends to emphasise the wider rationality of a market focus against what could be the close involvement with the product. It seems unlikely that the financial-operational can be adequately described by means of a personality trait, it is much more likely to be situational, and about the particular product of current interest.

There are a number of philosophical approaches that could be used to explore the situation in micro businesses. The first of these is that of free will.

Free Will.

Reminding ourselves of the observation made earlier that a central tenet of business life is that outcomes for the business are produced by individual purposive actions introduces a discussion of human willing as an extant phenomenon. As discussed earlier the romantic philosophy of Fichte creates the external world as that which constrains us (Berlin 1999; 89). The Kantian

philosophy of general human experience is accretive; we build on what has been learned before. This can sometimes feel like the triumph of traditionalism. The reactions to this can be a quietist life or a will to carve out what one needs (Berlin 1998; 569). This philosophy underlies the approach adopted by some business theorists, so for instance Drucker's view is that purposeful activity can only be motivated by what could be achieved (Drucker 1964). Part of willing is the feeling that we can make things happen; it becomes the essence of a project. Gartner et al (1992) believe that acting 'as if' hoped for plans were becoming real is a key entrepreneurial activity. This seems to exhibit a pragmatic epistemology. One existing entrepreneur emphasises the generation of successful results through the ability to act; 'screw it, let's just do it' (Branson 2006). This indicates that in equivocal situations we are able to produce the outcome we want. Actions have a teleological aspect; encapsulated in the view that entrepreneurship is a process of becoming (Bygrave 1989).

This interplay of purpose and adaptation become twin themes in the explanation of business life. Knowing and willing in fact are merely aspects of the same cycle (Russell 1927; 21). The difficulty is that we don't know which comes first the reflection or the drive. Reminding ourselves that entrepreneurship has so far resisted the attempt to define it (Burns 2001; 4) through the ability to perform certain tasks, in the same way free will cannot be described by a set of capacities (Kenny 1975; 4). The exploration of purposeful activity appears to be more germane in this study.

The ideas of will and intentionality are complementary, in their emphasis on purposive activity, and the link with understanding. The phenomenology of intentionality was discussed earlier, but in a post-Cartesian world we accept that intentions as mental events are certainly known to ourselves (Russell 1927; 233). We also have the ability to decide whether to articulate them (Williams 1993; 46), and tell others what we want to occur. Business results are often viewed as being caused by intentional activity, the use of will. The intention to start a business can be derived from several observable acts, such as collecting information, speaking to others, producing documents. A recent study of

entrepreneurial intentions considers that they have the elements of desirability propensity, and feasibility (Kreuger et al 2000); these are involved in the making present of entrepreneurial decisions. Pyburn (1983) considers Drucker's view of planning as the making present of entrepreneurial decisions. Pyburn sees planning in this light as actions concerning the future effect of current decisions not forecasting future events. The activity of planning only governs what we do now.

The aim of Kantian epistemology was to find a secure basis for our knowledge of the world, and to make judgements about it. This innate receptivity to the sensible manifold tended to restrict the subject and de-emphasise the role of purposeful inquiry because it was not central to his critiques. As discussed above this issue of active inquiry was taken up by Dewey (Dewey 1930; 24). Kant's emphasis on the rationality of the knowing subject in his 'Copernican revolution' ties in with the anthropocentric development of the modern world. The Machiavellian emphasis on risk calculation that overcomes the previous emphasis on Fortuna as destiny is an essential element in modernism (Giddens 1991; 11); personal action produces an output that is valued. The role of personal interventions to achieve results became part of the new social mores.

Personal Knowledge

The philosophy of personal knowledge considers that the Kantian rational approach has neglected the individual and personal element of knowing, thus ending the dichotomy between the knower and the known (Gelwick 1977; 142). The potential implications of this project are profound in that they seem to negate the idea of self-awareness – knowing that we know – or any separation between the world and our knowledge of it.

The formulation of personal knowledge in Gelwick's study is based on that proposed by Polanyi. An aspect of Polanyi's thought is the emphasis on the tacit and explicit dimensions of knowledge. That part of our knowledge, which has been exchanged with others, is explicit and is normally expressed in words – but could be symbolic. It is expressed in words, as this is the means of exchange and

storage of such knowledge, not because language is required to structure it. Through our common interactions, we exchange this knowledge through both speech and documents. It is available to all depending on their ability to access it. Tacit knowledge is that knowledge which is personally available but is difficult to transmit to others. Whether these two sets contain the whole of knowledge is not the issue here, it is that a significant part of knowledge is personal, it resides in us and we have personal access to it. An acceptance of the significance of tacit knowledge produces the need to characterise it (Gourlay 2004). If we incorporate the acquisition of tacit knowledge into a knowledge management strategy, we need to be clear what it is. It could be that part of knowledge that we, don't say, won't say, or cannot say. We don't say things that are obvious or taken for granted; we won't say because we are not prepared to share or fear the consequences; we can't say because we lack the power to articulate it. It is residual not because it is inherently personal but because it is 'left over' from our representations (Styhre 2004). Often psychomotor skills are found in the latter category. In this case, the set of tacit knowledge is a repository for all non-explicit knowledge. Spender (1996) considers tacit knowledge to be non-conscious knowing – what we are not aware that we know – or implicit knowledge – what does not need to be said.

Some of this tacit knowledge will be personally articulated – at least that part that we won't say. Reflection on what we would like to say or ought to say is a common conscious activity. Knowing brings an awareness of knowing and many of our experiences such as avoiding a puddle are done without reflection on what we are doing (Russell 1962; 46). This is different from seeing some truths as ineffable as part of a linguistic structure of our knowledge; exemplified in Wittgenstein's phrase 'what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence.

The issue of the nature of tacit knowledge has become important in business circles following its identification by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) as the source of new knowledge that enables innovation. The conversion from tacit knowledge resident within the person, to explicit knowledge resident in new products or processes, is the nub of innovation. The specific form of tacit knowledge that

Nonaka and Takeuchi consider to be productive is the un-articulate such as that required motions to successfully knead dough. One of the aims of knowledge management in organisations is to capture these procedural and experiential subconscious details. Movement between the two poles of explicit and tacit in the SECI learning spiral governs the learning process. Nonaka and colleagues develop their ideas on the SECI learning spiral discussed earlier to incorporate the concept of Ba which incorporates the view that knowledge needs a physical context to be created (Nonaka et al 2001; 22). It resembles the idea of communities of practice but it is more fluid than that (Nonaka et al 2001; 24). The work of Nonaka and his colleagues is focused on the process of innovation and this is its value if combined with entrepreneurship. Real entrepreneurs are people who create and innovate to deliver (Bolton & Thompson 2000; 5).

For Polanyi the issue of personal knowledge is greater than the identification of tacit knowledge, it is in some way concerned with taking the issue of knowledge personally. In his book on personal knowledge (1958) Polanyi considers that we must believe before we can know (Polanyi 1962; 208) and his aim in discussing personal knowledge is to consider how we can believe what is doubtful (ibid; 109). We are not detached rationalists but are involved in a pervasive participation (ibid; 70). This raises questions about the nature of belief. If it is unarticulated belief then in Russell's conception this is no different from knowing unless knowing implies truth. There is an implicit realism in Polanyi's exposition of knowledge; our aim is to achieve a closer contact with reality (ibid; 106). Nietzsche's study on tragedy expresses the view that the project of self-knowledge is one of moderation and composure, nothing to excess (Nietzsche 1993; 26).

In defence of the heuristic passion of intellectual inquiry (Polanyi 1962; 143), Polanyi defends the nature of scientific discovery that remains altruistic (ibid; 175), unlike the purposeful knowledge embodied in technical innovations. The technical innovations are designed to reward through their outcomes, whereas truth is revealed in the rightness of an action (ibid; 320), the meaning of truth being the 'fruits of independent thought' (ibid; 244). This seems to be the defence

of scientific enquiry on the basis that it should be pursued for its own sake. This is also placed in the context of the east-European liberation from Stalinist thought control where science was more overtly state controlled.

Polanyi's theory of human knowledge relies on the idea of subsidiary awareness of things (ibid; 92). This subsidiary awareness is extensive and is not articulated but is in the background of our thoughts. Dreyfus (1993) in discussing intentionality considers that at least in the normal case the actor does not distinguish their experience of acting from the ongoing activity. This challenge to the reflective understanding precludes the self-referential experience and emphasises the direct immersion in knowing activity. The removal of the reflective element in activity removes the necessity to decide on the determinants of reflection. As Polanyi reminds us it also limits the ability to describe this understanding. Truth then becomes an act of affirmation (Polanyi 1962; 255) grounded in un-recalled memory. Truth is not facilitated by doubt but by the connection of belief and activity. So by searching for something we believe to be there...discovery... will come to us with the conviction of it being true (Polanyi 1962; 130). This is very close to a performative basis of truth (Davidson 1996; 34).

This has echoes of the pragmatic theory of truth in the accord of mental processes and events in the act of affirmation (James 1917; 239). The pursuit of truth becomes what we really believe in. Any discussion on the nature of truth that produces a focus on the structure of knowledge is too abstract (Dewey 1930; 48). Polanyi's aim in his post critical philosophy was to transcend the Kantian promotion of critical rationality and the necessity of doubt (Polanyi 1962; 271). Williams (1973; 143) considers that the causality and rationality of beliefs are non-separable components of the same relationship; in this view our beliefs are caused by the rationality of the connection to the reasons for the belief. In this vein, Rorty argues that pragmatism is the theory of truth where there is coherence of beliefs and desires in that truth (Rorty 1990; 211). So for Sharmer (2001) to suggest that both tacit and explicit knowledge are underpinned by self transcending knowledge, seems to produce another category of non-specifiable

knowledge, the contribution of which to this process of discovery remains undemonstrated.

Thus the investigation of tacit knowledge in a business setting has often been approached from the question of how it can be distributed throughout the enterprise to produce better informed decision making, thus implicitly reducing the dependence on individual knowledge. For Ricoeur (1989; 229) the idea of personal knowledge often includes an uncritical acceptance of the cogito, the examining person, and therefore sees the world as representation and picture. The question of whether the study of personal knowledge is dependant on an examining cogito, in the Cartesian style, and to what extent this has been challenged by the development of phenomenology will be one of the meta-thematic questions that are developed as a result of this study.

It has been recognised that the issue of personal knowledge in small business is relevant because of the reduced formal separation between personal and business life in a self owned business. Business knowledge is not time or situation specific, although it may be prompted by the work environment. Business knowledge becomes integral with other aspects of living, although there is often a desire to separate the two (Culkin & Smith 2000). This aspect seemed to be revealed in the discussion above of the small business clan culture – organically organised and internally focused – with its need for communal and technical information.

The realm of personal knowledge as identified by Polanyi makes an important contribution to this inquiry. In identifying the emotional upheaval necessary to cross the logical divide between the problem and its resolution (Polanyi 1962; 367), Polanyi usefully identifies the issue as bringing forward a solution from our existing situation. Whilst the issue of tacit knowledge has become more widely known it has been noted that methods for making the tacit explicit are problematic (Styhre 2004: Thorpe et al 2005: Maguire et al 2007). A tacit knowledge approach may not be an effective route to micro business development. No pointers are provided by Polanyi to show how the emotional

foundations of this challenge, nor the logical nature of this gap, are necessary for the discovery. It could very well be that other factors are involved in 'crossing this divide'. It may be that there is an existential gap involved in the process and this possibility seems to be a productive insight that will be further explored in this work.

Phenomenology

Husserl is associated with the development of phenomenology into a coherent philosophy that seeks to challenge the approach adopted by the 'realist' attitude in natural science. The idea of the lifeworld discussed earlier becomes what we know best through experience and induction and becomes the basis for everyday praxis. The horizon of this lifeworld, the unknown, is only that which is incompletely known because it is based on a typology that we already possess (Husserl 1970; 36). As an intuited world, Husserl's programme of transcendental phenomenology differs from psychology which incorporates naturalistic assumptions (Smith & McIntyre 1982; 94). These assumptions and generalities form the basis of scientific knowledge that consists in an analysis of the world that will never be finished (Husserl 1970; 9). There will always remain a horizon of the incomplete theory. The development of phenomenology is Husserl's acknowledgement of his debt to Brentano who showed intentionality to be a characteristic of our psychic constitution (Husserl 1970; 233). Every mental phenomenon has reference to a content which is direction towards an object or immanent objectivity (Brentano 1995; 88). Russell notes that sensations for Brentano consisted of act, content and object (Russell 1969; 134). This view is developed and expounded in the *Logical Investigations* published at the start of the twentieth century. Husserl contends that in sensuous perception an object is directly perceived with definitive objective content, but in addition foundational acts set up new objects which appear as actual and self given (Husserl 2001; 282). Our ordinary perception consists of acts of perception, imagination and even signification (Husserl 2001; 221). In this way, we have both sensuous and categorical intuition. Acts of thought and acts of intuition belong to a single class of objectifying act, and knowledge is the relationship between them (Husserl 2001; 323). Following Kant, this subjectivity is the foundation of knowledge, but

we now have the grounds for knowing non-sensuous things. The being of an object has no objective correlate because being cannot be intuited by sensuous perception (Husserl 2001; 278). So there are both meaning-intentions and acts of meaning-fulfilment. The issue of meaning is further complicated by the possibility of expressive meaning; what our acts and utterances communicate to other people.

Knowledge was thus more firmly assured because it considered the ground of knowledge to be internal experience of things given to us – what was described later as the subjective mode of givenness (Gadamer 1975; 244). This was not just the apperception of sensible experience but the internal knowledge of these experiences – pain, hearing, etc. But the experiences that were productive of knowledge could also be internal reflective experiences such as willing, wanting, and desiring. The difficulty with this is there is no basis for positing a pure ego that was separate from a factual ego of lived experiences (Adorno 1982; 228). This abstraction has implications for the work of Heidegger, which has been interpreted as challenging the subject/object dichotomy in positivism, hermeneutics, and phenomenology (Sköldberg 1988).

The role of intentionality in phenomenology distinguishes the philosophy from that of Kant, who whilst he had revealed the nature of knowledge as dependent on human apperception for its construction, omitted the inclusion of human interest in the world apart from the development of schema. For Kant the world had validity-as-ground, the given universe. In his last unfinished work on the crisis in European science, Husserl provides a summation of his post-Kantian phenomenology. For Husserl there was a need to move from the straightforwardly living in the world, to the pre-givenness of our world (Husserl 1970; 146). I have before me a flowing manifold intentionality (Husserl 1970; 245). Our experiencing, contemplating and valuing the world provides its ontic meaning (Husserl 1970; 105). Husserl compares this to adding a new dimension to our understanding; a depth to the plane of experience. This undertaking is not realised without a study of how the world became the pre-given for our coherent theoretical interest. Objects are revealed in their eidetic essence not through

inductive experience (Husserl 1970; 233). We therefore do not construct an epistemology of the world but a thematic interest of how this is given to us. In this approach Husserl distinguishes his philosophy from that of Kant.

The consequence of this phenomenological approach for our business activity is that it creates conditions for our personal interests, our dealing with both things and other people; in business the products we deal with and our customers and suppliers. We value customers and objects for their utility. When we are looking for some profitable customers, we already have them in mind as an intentional object for our interests. Through the phenomenological attitude we gain the realisation that the meaning and mode of being of objects arises from our subjective accomplishments (Husserl 1970; 160). Others assume the ontic meaning of *implicata* in our intentional life (Husserl 1970; 258). The impact of this view will be developed later in the study in light of the research undertaken. Whilst phenomenological reduction 'brackets out' any knowing of real world objects it produces instead an objectification through sensuous and categorical intuition. Knowledge is the identity of these two intuitions. This some distance from the approach that interprets intentions from behaviour.

One of the critical issues in this philosophy is the fact that interpretation has an actant character – it is intentional. Is interpretation more fundamental than imagination – therefore does the phenomenological project more rational than experiential?

A Phenomenological Re-examination

At this point, it is worth revisiting the ideas contained in the philosophy of phenomenological objects. The post-Kantian developments in phenomenology as developed by Husserl had the aim of producing a 'theory of experiences in general whether real or intentional' (Husserl 2001; 343). Phenomenological acts contain both a real content and an intentional content the latter provides the meaning of the experience. The intentional content of an act is the 'ideal' content of the act. The experiences have an intentional content in that they are produced by objectifying acts (Husserl 2001; 167), or in complex cases are founded on an

objectifying act. An objectifying act produces a mental object that is directly given to us and is actual rather than putative in an eidetic reduction. The object could be simple or complex and either based on real events or projected similar to imagining a future state of affairs. Unlike Kant phenomenology is not dependent on sensible intuition for our knowledge. In Husserl's view, the real [*Reell*] content of an act consists of the sum total of the partial experiences that constitute it (Husserl 1931; 284). Whilst intentional experiences are focused on an object that is the basis of the intention, the object itself is not part of the content of the act (Smith & McIntyre 1982; 142-143). This is the subjective ground of understanding through the categorical reduction. The content of the act does not include existent objects, as this is a philosophy of pure phenomenology. In the view of Husserl inner perception differs from external perception in that the object of perception corresponds to and is immanent in what we think about (Husserl 2001; 336). The difference between perception and reality in sensible apperception has thus been overcome. This issue of the nature of the objects involved in the act is a fundamental issue in the development of phenomenology. Some have considered whether we could have a phenomenal experience of an impossible object such as a square circle. The solution to this difficulty is to adopt the internal object as the same as the experienced actual object (Husserl 2001; 127). The distinction between the intentional relationship and ordinary relationships are that the former is independent of the actual existence of objects. The phenomenology of Husserl considers the object of intentional experience to be the content of that experience and not inherent in the nature of possible intentional objects. This excuses us from the discussion on the nature of existent objects but just leaves the questions unanswered. Habermas criticised Husserl's attempt to develop a pure phenomenology but which in fact concealed its dependence on the importance of an abstract coherent theory as the basis for knowledge development (Habermas 1971; 306). We now come to the transformation of phenomenology undertaken by Heidegger. There have been a number of emergent themes from the empirical research that have indicated that this philosophy might be productive for the research topic. Heidegger has been subject to a number of interpretations. This section will be a discussion of Heidegger's philosophy from first principles to discover the possible application of his thought to this research.

A Heideggerian Perspective.

*“To understand ourselves from the things with which we are occupied means to project our own ability to be upon such features of the business of our everyday occupation as the feasible, urgent, indispensable, and expedient. The Dasein understands itself from the ability to be that is determined by the success and failure the feasibility and the unfeasibility, of its commerce with things”
Heidegger (1982: 289)*

Currently there is a developing interest in the philosophy of Heidegger in a number of disciplines that are outside the traditional philosophical mainstream; such as architecture, education, nursing, and engineering (Dias 2006). These are all disciplines that have an element of practical application of a technical skill in some form rather than purely abstract disciplines. There has also been a modicum of studies in the management literature (Sköldbberg 1998; Costea 2000; Berglund 2007). This interest is generated not least because Heidegger’s philosophy went some way towards introducing an original interpretation of knowledge and truth. The relevance for this study is that this truth was particularly that which is engendered by everyday commerce with things; what has been called ‘a hermeneutic of [the] factive experience of life’ (Pöggler 1995; 208). This interest in Heidegger is often generated by the fact that he has had something to say about, and to some extent, instigated discussion on, the issues that seem to be increasingly part of our common concerns to this day. These issues include the response to modernism and technology, and the role of art as an objectification of personal creation, together with an appreciation of its cultural consumption. The post-war publications released during his lifetime were often seen as part of the existential challenge to the anomie created by technological progress. In these interpretations, he was seen as the progenitor of Sartre’s existentialism (Warnock 1970; Sheehan 2001). It is these factors, in combination with his studies on the role of thinking and being, which signal his *prima facie* relevance to a study on the development of market based knowledge, in a product focused activity such as small business marketing. This seems especially relevant following the discovery of the situated nature of micro-business operations revealed in the first phase of this research. To this end, a study of Heidegger’s philosophy will be undertaken in this section which explores such themes as being in the world and

our comportment towards our situation. In the first place, we will consider the circumstances of the development of the man and the thinker.

Heidegger's studies started in theology and hermeneutic interpretation but his philosophical development took place in the context of the idea of a pure phenomenology as undertaken by Husserl (Kisiel & Sheehan 2007; 7). It was a philosophical inheritance from the Kantian phenomenological tradition in which Husserl developed his pure phenomenology, which has been described as a 'philosophy of consciousness' (Olafson 1967; 61). This was a minority speciality; at the time Neo-Kantianism was the dominant philosophy in the German universities (Richardson 2003; 27). Heidegger was a student of Husserl, and Husserl recommended Heidegger for his first academic appointment. Heidegger retained his debt to his mentor, although he developed his views of phenomenology in different directions that caused an intellectual rift (Marion 1998; 47). Heidegger removed the dedication to Husserl in *Being and Time* but he was later to claim that he did this in response to political pressures (Heidegger 1971; 199). Whether this was a complete explanation of events, he did realise the need to reassert his debt to Husserl in this later publication. It is not possible to go far in the study of Heidegger without recognising that Heidegger's life has attracted controversy, mostly focused around his conduct during the war (Waterhouse 1991; Olafson 2000; Tallis 2002). It would be easy to interpret Heidegger's post war criticism of modernism either as psychological bitterness after the experiences of the Nazi regime or the lack of a forum for academic philosophy since his removal from office. Perhaps the more productive of numerous interpretations is to see these works on their own merits. Whilst every thinker is, in a number of aspects a product of his time, this is not a biographical study; the intellectual inheritance of Heidegger is what is important here. Connected with this is the significant philosophical issue that these works do not include any appreciation of the interpersonal aspects of life. This could be because his philosophy started with studies of Aristotle and being (Heidegger 2003; 72). This omission means that his philosophy has nothing to say about our conduct towards others. It lacks any approach to moral authority (Olafson 2000). He appears to be unable to consider this aspect of understanding. This may be connected with his inability to consider the incipient trajectory of the Nazi regime

that took it far beyond what was claimed to be the aim of national renewal. There is an additional point to be noted here. In order to facilitate the following explications of Heidegger's thought, the reader is reminded that the dates of publication of the current editions in English translation, that are quoted in the text, are not sequential with their first publication. A timeline showing the genesis of the relevant works is provided in an appendix, and it is provided in the hope that it will be productive as a guide to the development of his views. One further proviso is that this information will need to be interpreted with care as these works were often subject to later amendment. The extent of Heidegger's published works is projected to run to over eighty volumes. It is noted that this thesis does not include a comprehensive critique of the whole corpus of Heidegger's work, but a thematic selection in accordance with the aims of this study. This current section is a review of the elements of his philosophy that are informed by the study of an extensive selection of the existing texts available in English translation. The aim of the selection is to provide a basis for the current aim of producing deeper insights into the topic of a contextual market based understanding.

When starting to read Heidegger's philosophical corpus and commentaries on it, one of the first issues to arise is whether the consistency of his work is sufficient to provide an integrated interpretation. This is not a unique question. Other philosophers have modified their views in their lifetime notably Russell and Wittgenstein. The most notable of Heidegger's publications was *Being and Time* in 1927, an early philosophical milestone produced for his professorial appointment. This interpreted the condition for the possibility of understanding as *Dasein*, a central idea often translated as Being-there (Heidegger 1962; 34). But how significant was this milestone? The conventional view, based on the work of Richardson (2003) is that his philosophy took a turn [*Kehre*] – a significant change of focus from this facticity of *Dasein* to Being. This first became apparent in the publication of *On the Essence of Truth* in 1943 (Richardson 2003; xxviii). The identification of this juncture, which essentially originates from Richardson's work, has been reinterpreted in various ways. It can be seen as a rejection of phenomenology in favour of a return to romanticism (Elliot 2005; 152); or a deconstruction of the first part of *Being and Time* by the second (Dreyfus 1991;

126). Heidegger responded to this view in the *Letter on 'Humanism'* (1998c). There he considered that his thinking, that went beyond all hitherto enquiries, failed to achieve the adequacy of expression he sought in *Being and Time*; see also *'My pathway Hitherto'* (Heidegger 2006; 366). In his preface to Richardson's work he saw his task since that publication to further examine and develop the aims of that major work, which acts as a gateway to the later interpretation (Heidegger 1963). Richardson in a new preface to the fourth edition reflects that to view the earlier and later Heidegger as a change of mind, was a misinterpretation. The stages were alternative facets of an inquiry which was based on a foundational concern with Being (Richardson 2003; 633). Interpretations of the later work acknowledge the validity of this transition to the effect that Being and *Dasein* became historical and not eternal categories; together with the introduction of the importance of the event of appropriation (Tallis 2002; 10). The characteristics of this transition have been variously interpreted. Mehta considers that the work following *Being and Time* further explores and develops the ideas set out there. It moves from considering the nature of transcendence in *Kant and The Problem of Metaphysics* written in 1929, to considering the nature of being and truth in *The Essence of Truth* written in 1932 (Mehta 1971; 97). Malpas (2007; 155) sees three periods in the development of Heidegger's philosophy. The first change is from the topic of the meaning of 'being there', inherited from the phenomenological tradition, to the gathered unity of situatedness (ibid; 148). This takes place in the period immediately following the publication of *Being and Time* in 1926. In the period after 1936 there is a further development that is interpreted as a move away from situatedness (ibid; 158) to the importance of the Event. This is Malpas' preferred translation of Ereignis; a term which has a significant role in Heidegger's later philosophy (ibid; 151). Sheehan (2001) thinks the turn [*Kehre*] expresses Heidegger's own description of what was new about his philosophy, rather than a change of mind. Certainly all these elements are present in the writings of Heidegger and this study will take account of this view but not be reliant on it. It is also noticeable from reading Kolb's (1986) book how these interpretations have become more prominent in a modernist era. From the reading undertaken for this section the stance is taken such that the central proposals of his philosophy do change but develop in a sufficiently consistent manner, and work

on the same themes. This justifies the adoption of a broad thematic approach for this study. It has not included a study of *Being and Time* itself but has concentrated on the later works, which provide more recently available developments of his philosophy. With those comments in mind, Heidegger believed that he needed to refine the exposition of his thinking and respond to contemporary philosophy. Given this one of the useful places to start this study will be with Heidegger's rethinking of the Kantian inheritance that was discussed in the methodology.

In the period leading up to and following *Being and Time*, Heidegger considered that the effect of this Kantian project of transcendental idealism left us with a human world with three identifiable characteristics. These are that the human world becomes the sum total of all appearances; is subject to a succession of syntheses; and is produced as an idea (Heidegger 1998b; 118). The latter provides the idealism in the Kantian philosophy. The second of these points has the basis in the following argument. Intuition of concepts from sensible phenomena, facilitated by the a-priori, provided all that we have as the foundation of understanding. The Kantian philosophy left us with inaccessible real objects that we cannot know directly but were always present as part of the manifold totality. Knowledge is the successive presentation of individual objects and becomes the objectivity of self-consciousness and reason (Heidegger 1999; 301). Kant's metaphysical system left us firmly placed in the world of representations which were such that 'being is not a real predicate' Kant (1998; A598/B626). In this way the 'Copernican' revolution undertaken by Kant, in producing the finite subject, allowed the introduction of a general objectivity (Heidegger 1997; 116). In the Kantian intuition of objects, the role of synthetic a-posteriori reasoning is given greater prominence in the second edition. In Heidegger's interpretation, this had the motive of attempting to conceal the centrality of imagination with the purpose of emphasising more prominently the primacy of reason in developing our understanding (Heidegger 1997; 95, 119, 171). Restoring the role of imagination lets it come to be seen as the foundation of the pure power of intuition and thinking as they are both modes of representation (Heidegger 1997; 103). The difficulty with establishing the primacy of intuition is that it places understanding within the sphere of a cognitive analytic, not as the leap

undertaken in imaginative insight. In this respect, he is influenced by Husserl's breakthrough to the categorical intuition. This made being itself present in the category (Heidegger 2003; 67). It was noted earlier that the basic approach of research into entrepreneurial intuition has a tendency to see business development as based on planning and observation. This alternative view makes the case that imagination should be the true basis of realising possibilities. Being a true entrepreneur is not therefore conformity to the conceptual foundations of entrepreneurship but opening up the situation to a greater understanding.

Further to this identified neglect of imagination, Heidegger in the first of the identifiable characteristics of the human world detailed above, considers the deployment of the world as an idea. The world as an idea is unified so that the world in total is placed against us; it can never be intuited because it cannot be pictured (Heidegger 1998b; 117). A fundamental difficulty with the apperception inherent in a Kantian epistemology was that it thereby omitted to consider the nature of being which, in Heidegger's phrase, is in advance of every question (Heidegger 1997; 156). The direct intuition of objects enlarged the scope of human understanding but led us to neglect the nature of existence. The neglect had commenced with the Greeks, but theirs was not a wilful neglect. Their philosophy did not find the need to examine their original foundation of being (Heidegger 1994; 115), and their original understanding was therefore became unavailable in the period up to the present era, notably by the Kantian a-priori. The determination of a manifold objectivity is obtained at the expense of our possible foundational knowledge of objects; we cannot know things in themselves. The unity of the objective world that is taken for granted was originally founded on the theistic idea of the world that is *created for us* (Heidegger 1982; 118 italics added). We are temporary beings and the world for us is one of finitude (Heidegger 1998b; 119). In summary, to see Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* as an exercise in epistemology is an error. Its true value lies in a general ontology of objects and their possibility (Heidegger 1997; 11) but it is this ontology that needs to be transcended.

In this period, a phenomenological interpretation was crucial in Heidegger's analysis of Kantian metaphysics, particularly in the phenomena of time. Hofstadter in his introduction to *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* considers that together with the publication of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* and *Being and Time* these three works can be considered as one project. The first two works together develop the absent divisions of Part Two of *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1982, xvii). Hofstadter draws the conclusion that in these volumes temporality is the means of understanding being and the comportment towards beings (Heidegger 1982; 327; 1997; 141, 169). The exploration of temporality is a significant factor in this period, his 'phenomenological decade' (Moran 2007; 135). The nature of time is that it allows an openness to occur in the nature of being in the world. This occurs in the following manner. As we have observed in the Kantian heritage when we talk about the now it is available as the current intuitive en-presenting of objects. This engagement with objects occurs as a successive series of moments, thus time being sequential implies counting (Heidegger 1982; 254), and time is thus taken into account (Heidegger 1982; 258). Personal time is countable, in this way it is multiple, whereas world time in its unity is a totality, and it is not subject to temporal succession. This is the method that we use to reckon with time. This therefore makes time an extant sequence in the same manner as world-time (Heidegger 1982; 272), and consequently intentionality is governed by temporality (Heidegger 1982; 268). In Heidegger's interpretation, Dasein commonly understands itself by way of things, they are initially already available. The understanding of now as a 'now when this or that' allows us to determine and uncover beings (Heidegger 1982; 269). By thinking about our understanding of the moment, we can see that also contained in this 'now' is the appreciation that it is different from the 'not-yet' and the 'no-longer'. This time dimension is therefore extended beyond what is currently present. No matter how short the time instant is made it is connected with the before and after; it is stretched. This means retaining, presenting, and expecting are unified (Heidegger 1982; 271). Thus we can see that temporality is founded on an intrinsic openness because the past, present and future allow us to think outwards, we carry ourselves away towards something, time is the original outside itself (Heidegger 1982; 267). This ability is created by placing ourselves towards something that is

absent, undetermined and intrinsically open. What is unique about Dasein is the fact that its being is governed by this temporality of understanding unlike other objects. This distinction of a pure unity as opposed to a collection of instances, in some way echoes the distinction that started with Kant between Erfahrung as cognitive understanding and Erlebnisse as lived experience. This distinction is associated with the work of Bergson (Beasley-Murray 2007; 54).

One of the important facets of Heidegger's philosophy was that of the factive nature of the world which was always already there. The aspect of being-in-the-world that was bound up with encountered entities (Heidegger 1962; 82). Later this is seen as machination, the preponderance of the making and the self making (Heidegger 1999; 88). We fall into this machination of production and consumption (Heidegger 2003; 74). The roots of this view are again found in the early studies that Heidegger undertook of the philosophy of Aristotle; his interest in Greek thought continued throughout his life (McNeill 1999). Two studies written in 1922 and 1939 indicate the duration of his thought on this subject that bridges the period of *Being and Time*. These are both based on a reinterpretation of Aristotle's *Physics* with the aim of saying something about factive life through the investigation of nature and being (Heidegger 2007; Heidegger 1998d). Any discussion of understanding implies that this involves an appreciation of the physical or natural world. Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle's *Physics* written in 1939, sees nature as possibility and actuality (Heidegger 1998d; 183) existent but undetermined.

It is thus possible to see the derivation of both intrinsic openness and the factive life. If this is the case then the realisation of Being, neglected as such, in favour of factive letting, must become opened or un-sprung in us. How do we take the leap into questioning interpretation? One of the techniques Heidegger uses to explore this question of concealed Being is that the origins of the words we use can reveal an interpretation that has been lost. The ability of words to reveal their original usage by means of a hermeneutic reading, to loosen up our current interpretations, is one of the philosophical techniques adopted by Heidegger (Heidegger 2007; 168). We normally use contemporaneous adopted meanings,

but these meanings can tend to conceal the formation and original understanding that produced the word (Sköldberg 1998). Thus in the case of existence we can see that it is derived from Ex-istence; to stand out (Wolz 1981; 20). In the same vein, Heidegger's hermeneutic return to Ancient Greek terms and texts allowed him to open-up radical possibilities for re-interpretation of truth. This is an approach to understanding of existence which was central to Heidegger's thought in the early years from 1920 to 1923 (Heidegger 2006; 366). The interest in this is maintained and the reinterpretation of Greek thought continued right through to four seminars given late in life (Heidegger 2003).

On a re-reading of Heidegger's earlier and later works it is possible to consider the nature of movement as, being towards something (Heidegger 2007; 159). Being moved is the nature of being (Heidegger 1998d; 186). This is what we call change but in this case it is necessary to remain with the different insight into this idea of change. Change in this case means that something is hidden or absent and comes into appearance, but not through a change in position, as we normally understand it but through identification. Being is not only mutable but it moves us. It breaks through (Heidegger 1998d; 191) to us. This radical interpretation of movement as showing allows a greater ability to understand our daily life. The extent of this emergence is considered to be qualitative; it does not take place against the background as motion would. The extent to which this is a cumulative breakthrough is not explored, but it is assumed that a being can come further into appearance. These articles also consider the implications of Aristotle's distinction between natural beings which grow and artefacts which are made (Heidegger 1998d; 191). The natural beings are things that make themselves, they have movement within them. The origin of artefacts is generated from outside and is based on knowledgeable production.

It is now possible to connect this movement of being towards something, with our openness revealed by temporality. The task is to develop this idea of being-out-towards something as involving the caring that transcends factive life. It seems that the particular attunement of care or concern reveals and makes available ways of actualising our factive life. Without this movement of addressing we can

merely inspect or dwell among things. As discussed above this basic factive tendency is falling away (Heidegger 2007; 161), and this is how intentionality goes astray. Concern is the valid response to this lapsing. The agenda for philosophical research is one of rendering concrete interpretations of our factive life. This earlier work is certainly placed within the phenomenological school making the phenomenological reduction dependent on factive life. Heidegger's work has been criticised for becoming a method of concrete imagination (Warnock 1970; 136), but that aspect seems important in this context. In a further development the later work introduces the idea that 'to show that being is we have to start from the idea that being is not' (Heidegger 1998d; 201). This allows us to consider that the being is the origin of presence and absence it is what gives rise to them both. This idea of originality is discussed later in terms of movement where the nature of 'movedness' incorporates the idea both of movement and rest (Heidegger 1998d; 216). Beingness is thus more original than the appearance of beings, the nature of appearance is in this beingness, being more important than the merely orderable (Heidegger 1998d; 215). This reduction seems to stop here in a self-reflexivity; movedness has itself within its end it is not the case that actuality is prior to potentiality (Heidegger 1998d; 218).

Importantly here Heidegger introduces the distinction between Sophia and Phronesis, as two different forms of understanding. Sophia is introspective understanding of beings that exist in accordance with their nature and Phronesis is circumspective solitude 'those beings that can in themselves be otherwise'. They both contain the knowledge that is independent of rationality [*logos*] (McNeill 1999; 43)

As a result of this re-engagement with Ancient Greek thought one assertion maintained by Heidegger is that the nature of truth cannot be revealed through holding to the idea of truth as the correctness of an assertion. The original being-there overcomes the synthetic objectification of understanding but we need to go beyond the particular being with objects, to discover that from which being is projected (Heidegger 1982; 282). Our ability to reveal the nature of this projection will enable a truthful understanding. This notion of truth as un-

concealment becomes a central theme of Heidegger's work in the 1930's, the period following *Being and Time* (Heidegger 2002b; 174). To this end, Heidegger returns to the Platonic texts. The result is contained in the lectures on the *Essence of Truth* (Heidegger 2002a) and the related papers *Plato's Doctrine of Truth* (1998a) and in *On The Essence of Truth* published later (Heidegger 1998e). In these works Heidegger concentrates his analysis on the allegory of the cave given in Plato's *Republic* which describes a projected-derivative viewing of shadows on the wall of the cave. The beings we observe through this projection are, in the language of Plato's cave mere shadows, dependent upon that which is not directly visible, that which is concealed. In Heidegger's hermeneutic reading of Plato's parable of the cave the nature of truth as un-concealment is opened up in its original Greek aspect. The original word used by Plato for truth in this context is *ἀλήθεια* (Aletheia) which is derived from A-lethia un-forgetting, or un-hiddenness (Heidegger 2002a; 117), the standard translation of which is unconcealment. Through interpretation of this allegory, Heidegger draws the distinction between beings as existent objects and the Being that is concealed in them (Heidegger 1997; 165). This Being is that which enables them to appear as such. There are things that stand before us in our daily lives with which we develop a comportment, and yet elements of their being remain concealed. This develops the Aristotelian insight by demonstrating how the Greeks thought of being as present but unavailable. In this interpretation the origin of the nature of truth is that which is revealed (Heidegger 2002a; 7). The Platonic purpose in the allegory of the cave was to demonstrate that the idea of something is more robust than perception in producing the truth. We can be deceived by our perceptions; the light is used to let through the idea (Heidegger 2002a; 41). The desired effect produced by the Platonic texts is that truth becomes correctness of our perceptions to the idea of a thing, and this gains predominance over unconcealment (Heidegger 1998a; 176-7). To demonstrate this point in the allegory of the cave Plato has to challenge the current ideas about truth but in doing so this has the effect of revealing those ideas to us. We have lost this understanding by the later predominance of the Platonic view but a correct re-interpretation gives us the chance to regain it. This allegory also promotes and depends on the close connection between the truth and the ability to 'see'. So the nature of truth is not based on a propositional unity of subject and predicate – as

proposed by Frege – but in the more original making manifest of beings to Dasein through un-concealment. *‘The unveiledness of being first makes possible the manifestness of being’* (Heidegger 1998b; 103, emphasis in original).

The result of this phenomenological and hermeneutic interpretation is the realisation that the nature of presence is to stand opposed and thus opening up an arena of relatedness (Heidegger 1998e, 141). The identification of original Being (be-ing) allows the putting before oneself (Heidegger 1999; 299) to be seen as a presencing-emerging (Heidegger 1999; 300). The phenomenological interpretation allows Heidegger to place this hermeneutic interpretation of being into the human activity of openness. Truth then becomes an activity undertaken by Dasein who acts to *wrest* the essence of truth of beings from concealment (Heidegger 2002a; 91), to reveal the truth requires this effort. This is the way that we can overcome the presentation of the world as a whole, as a world given to us, that is incalculable (Heidegger 2002a; 147). It is incalculable because we cannot reckon with it; the Kantian ontology fails us; but the world can be captured through an attunement to Being. Therefore through attunement we can now reckon with it. We should see that knowing is ‘opening up and keeping open’ (Heidegger 2000; 170), not falling or lapsing. The origin of daily activity and practical reason are located in the questioning daily engagement of the self with the things that are there but maintain a separation from ourselves. We are engaged in a daily contact with things in a letting-absorption and energised by a revealing engagement. A hermeneutics of the self should be seen as a reaching out not as internal examination (Heidegger 1999; 183).

There are two ideas here in the thought that Heidegger is attempting to convey. Firstly, he pursues the idea of the nothing as the opposite of the totality of beings, inherited from his studies of Aristotle (Heidegger 1998f; 86). When confronted with the face of the totality, what is to be later described as the ‘world as picture’, the idea of the nothing enables one to be conscious of what is not; the unavailable. This is challenging conceiving of an absence is difficult, and in this way it is anxiety, the temporality of Dasein, that makes manifest the nothing in that it brings it to our attention. So being aware of the lacunae or absences in

what is present for us provides the opening for considering the not-yet-known. The analysis of the nothing given in the *Introduction to Metaphysics* can be seen as a development of the argument in the *Essence of Truth* written a few years previously. The idea that truth is revealed by this existence is captured in the following sketch which is derived from a diagram in Heidegger 2002a; 221). This diagram shows how the revealing occurs, through the withstanding and the traverse of the opening.

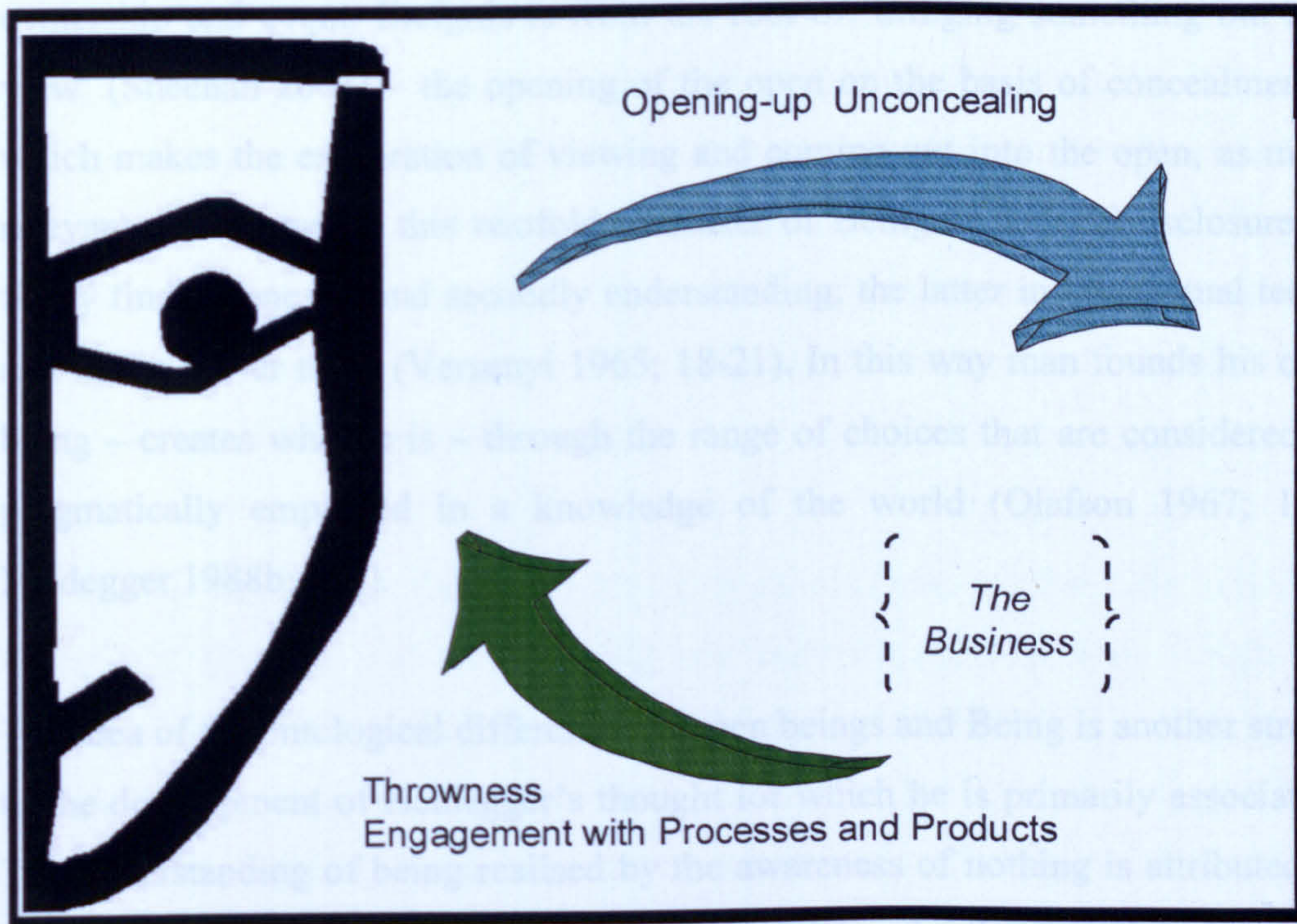


Figure 4 The Understanding of the Small Business Person

This diagram is a pictorial representation that is illustrative of the personal situation in Heideggerian terms developed in the previous pages. The determination of this dyad is further supported by the following analysis. In a later work of Heidegger's he explains that there is a twofold process of comparison in the coming to understand the presence of beings. This is revealed in the source of appearance that holds the twofold of presence and present beings (Heidegger 1971; 33). Phusis is the Greek word for appearing, showing itself in the unconcealed (Heidegger 2000; 107). This sway of present beings and presence as such is the opening for the understanding of Being which is created by the realisation of the ontological difference as discussed earlier. The Dasein,

one of Heidegger's key terms for selfhood, becomes in this interpretation one in which a 'prospection' and an elicitation are the nature of Dasein. In the *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* this continuity is placed within an ecstatic-horizontal unity of temporality (Heidegger 1982; 302) but the later works do not emphasise the transcendental temporality. These later works of Heidegger emphasise the event [*Ereignis*] of unconcealment or unfolding. It has been suggested that the crucial word *Ereignis* should not be translated by enowning as it is in *Contributions to Philosophy* with the consequent implications of ownership and event. *Ereignis* is from the root of 'bringing something out into view' (Sheehan 2001) – the opening of the open on the basis of concealment – which makes the exploration of viewing and coming out into the open, as more relevant. For Versenyi this twofold character of Being-in, as self-disclosure, is firstly finding oneself and secondly understanding; the latter in intellectual terms and in the power to be (Versenyi 1965; 18-21). In this way man founds his own being – creates who he is – through the range of choices that are considered or pragmatically employed in a knowledge of the world (Olafson 1967; 172; Heidegger 1988b; 119).

The idea of the ontological difference between beings and Being is another strand to the development of Heidegger's thought for which he is primarily associated. The understanding of being realised by the awareness of nothing is attributed to Hegel (Collingwood 1965; 121). The question as to why there is something and not nothing awakens our awareness of beings and hence Being. The realisation of the ontological difference is the foundation of the existential analytic that is grounded in temporality (Heidegger 1982; 227). The idea of original Being as a consequent recapture of the nature of truth is vital to a correct understanding of Heidegger's work. The original being is conventionally written with an initial capital as Being, and this practice is followed in this text, although Beying, following an earlier spelling, has been used to emphasise the foundational nature of the term – see the translator's introduction to Heidegger (1999). It was this ontological difference between the awareness of beings and Being as such which had been overlooked in previous thinkers and their doing so has led to the further neglect of the actual reality of existence.

To return to the analysis given in the reading of the myth of the cave Heidegger shows that knowing one's way around, and *aletheia* both mean possession of truth in the sense of unhiddenness of beings. Knowledge enables one to have disposal over the unhiddenness of beings (Heidegger 2002a; 117). Thinking is not opposed to being but instead being is interpreted as being based on thinking (Heidegger 2000; 123). One of the entailments of this primordial understanding is that the human pathway now becomes a hermeneutic project. It is only because of our concerned coping that a truly disclosive understanding can take place (Heidegger 2007; 160). One further question here is the nature of conceptual engagement. If Husserl was able to posit the knowledge of non-real objects through the categorical reduction, what is the nature of our being with conceptual objects? Is the fact that the world is always already there important for a factive understanding? Is it possible for us to lapse in our dealing with theories in use? This question becomes important when we consider the nature of work and its more abstract nature in modern society.

The use by Heidegger of the term *letting* is an idea that traverses the period of *Being and Time*. In the earlier work, our daily engagement with things, our factive life is seen as falling or lapsing (Heidegger 2007; 162). In this way the relation we adopt towards existent beings is *letting*. The idea of *letting* as both attuning and openness has a seminal importance here (Heidegger 1998e; 147). The later works make this *Letting-presence* twofold moving from the situation where the first is primary to the situation where the secondary term becomes dominant (Heidegger 2002c; 37). Our stance towards the world is to move beyond that of daily coping and the indulgence of *letting*, to confront the existent (Mehta 1971; 96) to develop a deeper understanding. It is the mode of resolute existence in which *Dasein*, as being in the world, holds and keeps its world in view (Heidegger 1982; 287). We can contrast the Heideggerian view of resoluteness with the previous discussion of intentionality as a phenomenological concept. They are both personal stances towards being in the world, not as personal attributes such as steadfastness or (motivation to succeed), but as a way of engagement. The notion of resoluteness implies and includes a location in the current situation and practices and maintaining our purposes, our involvement with what might be, in contradistinction to the practical situation of what is.

Heidegger in this approach reveals his debt to Fichte as discussed earlier; the environment being opposed or standing against us. As we have seen, in addition and crucially, this becomes a hermeneutic interpretation. Let us note that the grounding of thinking is no longer to be placed in reason –through assertion (Heidegger 1999; 324) – but original being as possibility is governed by a fore-grasping will that is beyond itself (Heidegger 1999; 335) as such is a comportment towards beings. In *The Essence of Truth* this is a striving for a thing rather than possession (Heidegger 2002a; 155). In *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (Heidegger 1982) there is a passage which seems to prefigure this approach in that ‘from something – to something being a unity contained within the idea of stretch (Heidegger 1982; 242). In the use of stretch there firstly the idea of opening up but also the idea of tension. Tension, a holding open of something, is accomplished by resoluteness. In the *Contributions* the ability of the grounding attunement as intimating that takes stock of the whole of temporality; the here-there (Heidegger 1999; 16). This attunement cannot be determined by one word. It could be dismay, reservedness, or deep foreboding that could, in another interpretation, be manifest as nervousness or anxiety. Anxiety is needed to maintain our concern for the business. So there is a tension between opening ourselves up to beings and the stance that produces this disclosure through a letting-absorption and a revealing-engagement discussed earlier. This dyadic approach is also used in other works. For instance in the lectures on reason the situation is that we both peruse and retrieve the grounds for our thinking (Heidegger 1996; 41). Dreyfus (1991; 191) describes this as non-cognitive intentionality so that our actions are not always driven by a premeditative motivation, but can be described as everyday coping. Coping remains a difficult word in this context because of the implications of a lack of control that is an anathema to a businesslike approach. Intention can then be seen as based on ways of being in the world and not in the head (Crowell 2001). This coping could be described as being busy or engagement and does have positive aspects of purposiveness that is not dependant on motivations. To describe the situation thus seems to be less critical than a state of anxiety the translation that is given for Heidegger’s term. In this interpretation there can only be knowledge where there is a relation to beings (Heidegger 2002a; 172) and it is created by this tension towards the nothing. It is the issue of placement and possibility that

breaks with the intellectual phenomenology of Husserl (Olafson 1967; 70). In this way, Heidegger's approach changes the phenomenology of action and its link to the intentional object that was found in Husserl.

Given this analysis of Heidegger's ideas on dwelling and holding forth, these ideas can now be developed. Rejecting the external-internal divide and other such divisions, the commencement of world interpretation has to start anew. In an appendix to his seminal article on the *Origin of the work of Art* Heidegger voices the view that the relationship of being to human being has been inadequately thought in the period since *Being and Time* (Heidegger 2002b; 55). One suggested way of considering this unity is to start to consider how things become to be unconcealed by means of the way that we are involved with them (Rush 2001). Rush observes that generally the objects that we are involved with as equipment, we deal with in an unreflective manner; items occur when the equipmental relationship breaks down, they are forced to our attention because of their non-utility. The context of Rush's argument is in the nature of art, but there can be quite productive re-configurations of this argument in the closeness of the micro business owner with the products that are a fundamental part of the business. Going further than this Heidegger says that at the time of writing all modern philosophy has demanded systematisation, but the rigour of questioning needs to break with this constant prejudice (Heidegger 1994; 125). This desire to systematise leads Heidegger to identify machination as the current situation of the human condition (Heidegger 2006; 20). This view has reverberations throughout our approach to business thus giving an opportunity to reconsider the current activities of market data collection, as a prerequisite for understanding customers. This analytic-constructive 'thinking' (Heidegger 2006; 30) as the basis for machination means that the acting character (Heidegger 2006; 39) of thoughtful thinking becomes neglected. Mandel (1978; 260) agrees that it is activities that make knowledge possible in Heideggerian terms, and they are founded in them. This view finds itself in Mehta's (1971; 91) view that surrounded by essents [objects] man projects his own self. This however is not about self-realisation but an essential falling; an absorption in the world (Dreyfus 1991; 244). The posture of scientific detachment is founded on a more primitive and direct engagement with things (Waterhouse 1981; 155). This can be characterised as knowledge

located in activity not intentional action. The concept of authenticity can stand for this radical individual uncovering (Schatzki 1992; 90). In developing this theme we have further explored the ideas of coping and falling. This has had the outcome of expanding and unfolding Heidegger's earlier view of understanding incorporating levels of current coping, and of a space of possibilities (Dreyfus 1991; 187-189). We can perhaps say that the idea of space can imply a visibility field across which there is a form of appreciation. From the discussion above it is not that the foundation of knowledge is in activities but in the un-concealment; a located projection and understanding of what might be possible. With time, space is the other a priori condition of appearance, but limited to outer intuitions (Kant 1998; A34/B50). If the phenomenological perception of time is different from the measured construction of time, can this be applied analogously to space? The philosophy of spatiality is a developing interpretation of Heidegger (Malpas 2006; 126). This perhaps reveals the reduction in the perceived potency of original time to provide further insights to individual understanding. Additionally the ideas of openness and a clearing suggest the importance of location.

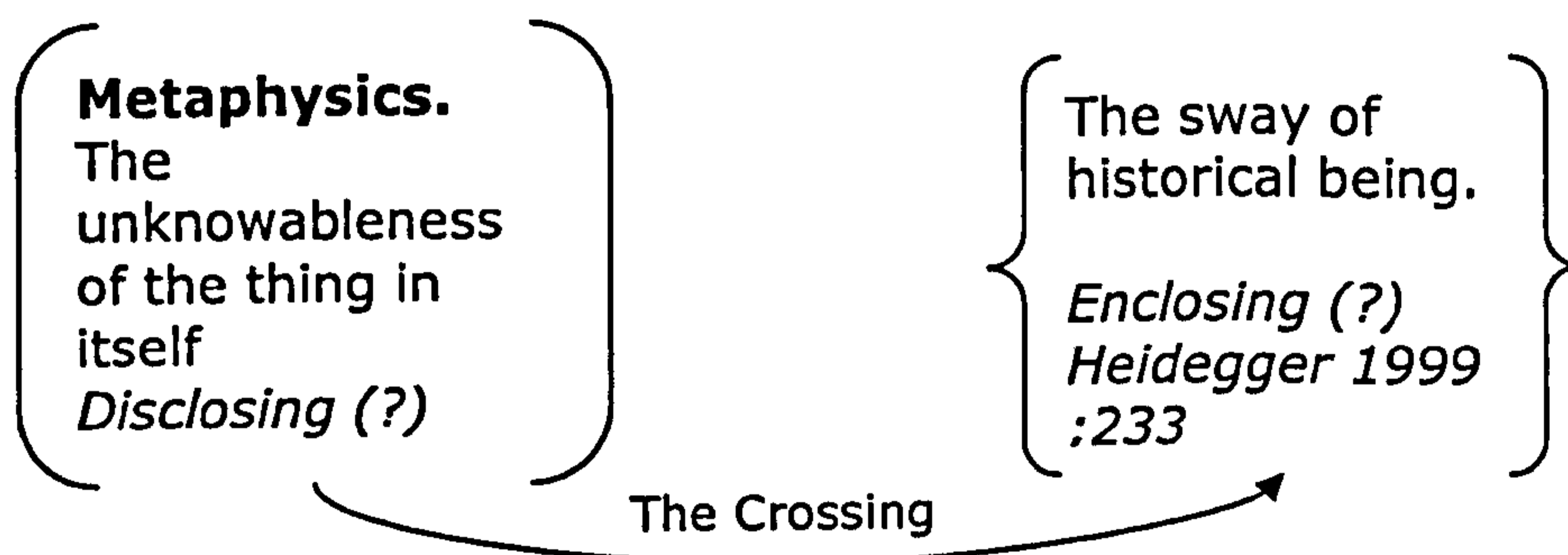
The 'unmasking' of the primacy of the existent as the nexus for our understanding is one outcome of Heidegger's work. If we consider 'beingness' as merely an object of representation – as the Kantian framework identifies it – then the nature of existence of the object as originally being there is concealed. When we speak of nature as the metaphysical ground for the existence of objects then it becomes a technique to be mastered (Heidegger 1998d; 220). This allows interpretations of the *a priori* to become based on logical and biological interpretations (Heidegger 1999; 300). One of the difficulties to be resolved is the relative primacy of the subjective - objective distinction as an interpretive schema. Schatzki (1992; 88) argues that Heidegger's notion of being-in-the-world and the clearing must be constructed by individual people. The commonality of understanding then becomes a problem. Schatzki proposes that the being-there-with produces the commonality, not through access to a shared clearing. In challenging the above dichotomy are we not left with a dependence on a cognitively unapproachable and vague mystical unity? Perhaps a workable solution is to adopt the stance that the use of self should not imply the subjective view but to 'bracket out' that difficulty and consider the importance of the

projecting-open as the creation of possibilities (Olafson 1967; 96-7; Sheehan 1995).

It is possible to see both of the above in terms of presence, being present, which can incorporate the characteristics of accessibility and making manifest. Olafson (1967; 96) identifies this as either the creation of possibility or the revelation of an actuality. It is important here to consider the ideas of letting and falling as used by Heidegger. If we find ourselves already in a world of presence, we let things exist for us. Our intentionality is derived from the phenomenological grounding in temporality so in the early interpretations of Aristotle, the not yet and the already, are to be understood in their unity from a primordial givenness (Heidegger 2007; 179). In our daily life we have the ability to deal with entities in various ways (Dreyfus 1991; 260), and this provides the facility for our interpretations. We can see the having present as the situational existence of those objects already there with which we have to deal. What remains in this joint view is the constant presence of Being (Heidegger 2000; 132). Magda King in her review of Heidegger's philosophy provides the example of a theatre the purpose of which can only be understood from a world of human existence (King 1964; 7). It was part of the world that we were born into, the material world of things-at-hand. It was not created by us but it is something with which we have to deal. Presence in this case becomes more clearly apparent as a feature of interactivity. Flamholtz's work quoted earlier can be interpreted in this way, as a move from a close interaction with the product to a more objective detached engagement with the products of the firm.

There is no direct connection between a current state of affairs and the action to be undertaken; it is uncertain (McMullan & Shepherd 2006). This division between the discovery of the existent and the movement outward to what might be but what remains to be asked, is openness as such (Heidegger 1999; 233). This is a challenge to the development of knowledge as truth of representation and assertion in western thought (Heidegger 1998a; 178). Traditionally truth is the connection of subject and predicate, they as such are implicated together (Heidegger 1988b; 102). To be unsure is not the opposite of knowledge but is

integral with knowing in the form of inquiry about the meaning of Being (Heidegger 2000; 87). Earlier there was the discussion about the use of dichotomies in order to explore understanding to the effect that the placing of ourselves between these twin factors forces us to adopt a solution. This endeavour has been characterised as one of transcending the realism/anti-realism approach from either/or to both/and (Glazebrook 2001). This traditional definition of truth as correct assertion is challenged by the discussion of the observation from Aristotle that a synthesis creates a dieresis; what is considered to be joined are also revealed in their separation. In *Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger's notably uses the phrase 'why is there something rather than nothing'; thus why are there beings at all (Heidegger 2000; 1). This is another argument that Heidegger uses to produce an idea of being. This work — there is a preliminary discussion of the idea that the derivation of something from something is a unity contained within itself.



The idea of truth as openness and un-concealment allows the interpretation of the process of the discovery of truth as a moment of suspension between the states of having-present; a facticity (Heidegger 1962; 82), and making present, having significance, not only being occurrent (Dreyfus 1991; 117). This suspension is not generative of stasis –being stuck –but an active state of disclosure. So Heidegger's development of the Platonic knowledge as seeing things in their true light, is to realise that light needs a 'traversable opening' (Wolz; 301). This is a significant unwinding in the exploration of personal knowledge development, similar to the insight of Husserl's identification of the difference between the thinker and what is thought a distinction that eluded Descartes. It is also a

challenge to the conception of scientific knowledge as producing a distance from the object of study (Heidegger 1994; 78). In the recent translations of Heidegger the 'sway of truth' is used for this state. The use of sway – although it is a translation from the German *Wesen*– implies both power and activity, and active controlling. It is 'overcoming the rigid that stands still so that within this continuity a constancy sways' (Heidegger 2006; 93). It is within this context that projecting-opening can be appropriated as an active interpretation.

Critiques of the Heideggerian approach

The greatest force of criticism of Heidegger comes from those who find the conception of truth offered to be philosophically inadequate in that it lacks rigour. The idea of truth as openness 'aletheia' is not measurable against any criteria (Dahlstrom 2007; 64). As such, it becomes a merely inspirational rather than an analytic construct. This argument is one that depends on philosophical concepts being logically robust. A proposal about truth must be coherent and testable. Wolenski (2004) provides a discussion of the argument framed in the context of a connection between etymological interpretations and philosophical concepts. In his view the foundation for Heidegger's interpretation is that the pre-Socratic philosopher's conception of truth was only ontological –concerning the question of being– and not epistemological. Wolenski concludes that there are ontological, epistemological, and moral aspects to truth expressions and that it is possible to see truth as 'present in memory or tradition' and false as forgotten. A fundamental difficulty with abandoning the primacy of reason in the search for truth is that reason has been central to both the analysis and synthesis of our knowledge. We try to eliminate misconceptions and analyse the coherence of our conceptualisations through the application of reason. This prominence of reason has been called the realisation of identity through reduction to a subjective immanence (Adorno 1982; 26). Rorty argues that we have a built in ability to seek the truth (Rorty 1990; 212). To get rid of reason as the ground of truth seems to be unreasonable! One of the main criticisms of Heidegger's nature of truth is given by Tugendhat. To accept the idea of truth as disclosedness, whilst being productive within the ontological-transcendental tradition (Tugendhat 1995; 227), does not enable us to determine how disclosedness is truth. If it is the truth of

phenomenological perception then Heidegger's account does not provide a greater understanding of certainty than that of Husserl does (Smith 2007). The force of this argument is that truth is a central philosophical issue and the justification for truth cannot be given as mere assertion. The solution proposed by Smith (2007) is to suggest that resoluteness is the key to this. As the commitment to the situation and the possibility of taking that commitment back gives us an existentialist foundation of truth. There are indications that Heidegger is aware of this criticism and like Marx, he seems to emphasise the element of praxis in his philosophy. This is such that every philosophical word is not a type concept but an attacking *intervention* (Heidegger 2002a; 114 italics in original). Whether these interventions were solely ones of style could be an argument here. Heidegger also says in *Mindfulness* (Heidegger 2006; 368) that he had to overcome, but not destroy, the Christian provenance of his homeland and upbringing. The lack of robustness in his philosophy might be justified if, to use his metaphor, he is cutting a new path through the trees.

The concept of un-concealment bears some similarity to reflective thought; it incorporates the implication of light such as in Plato's cave. Dewey (1933: 79) considers it is the movement back and forth – a double movement – between the initial partial data and a 'suggested comprehensive (or inclusive) entire situation; analysis is emphasis; synthesis is placing in context (Dewey 1933; 114). An exemplification of this learning therefore becomes for Dewey a triadic process of believing an explanation, asking for evidence which reinforces that explanation, and having the critical awareness to question that explanation. We have the triad of project, belief and action (Williams 1973; 146); observation, orientation, decision, and action (Hall 1995), and awareness, preference, and conviction (Lavidge & Steiner 1961). This approach allows the opportunity to consider an alternative to this view.

This view on reflection, which in its 'turning back, for a second view is similar to reflexivity, as a method of developing the entire picture is a common component of developing thought. The danger is that in adopting a perspective we slip and slide along the same line which is determined in advance (Heidegger 2000; 124).

Un-concealment differs in the implied aim of developing a more fundamental view, a disclosure, rather than a refinement and clarification. Truth does not reside in agreement between knowing and object but in becoming clearer, revealing and disclosing. It seeks to uncover something more fundamental, what was previously hidden (Palmer 1969; 149).

Both Tallis (2002; 30) and Malpas (2006; 239) consider that there is an equiprimordiality or non-regressive relationship between the physical world and the personal world. Tallis further observes that there is no doubting the efficacy of our interpretations of the natural world. They are able to provide us with the resources for technical solutions that aid our everyday life. He considers that Heidegger's claim that he replaces Cartesian epistemology with ontology is not logical. The attempt to overcome the problem of knowledge by the observation that the world is 'already to hand' must assume that this is what we know, re-introducing knowledge. We have to perhaps say that it is knowledge of the ontic that we gain, not an ontology of identified objects, if ontology entails identity (Quine 1969; 55). It has been observed that Cartesian solipsism cannot be logically refuted; Tallis thus attempts to reintroduce the logical analysis and thus does not escape the problem. The position he adopts of equiprimordiality of the physical and personal worlds, or what Davidson calls anomalous monism, seems to be a more productive avenue for development.

Heidegger's hermeneutic method needs to demonstrate its robustness. It is noticeable that Heidegger relies on different explications of Greek works to justify the conclusions he draws about the nature of truth. Rorty (1978; 256) considers that this attempt to rediscover the original Greek thought as a means of reinstating the centrality of philosophy in western society is mistaken. It is an attempt to reassert the centrality of philosophy's contribution to understanding. In his view the approach taken by Dewey that relies on 'intelligence trying to solve problems and provide meanings' avoids the historicism inherent in Heidegger's approach. This however is too simplistic because it restores the idea of truth as knowing such workable abstractions that effectively rejects any claim to generalisation based on historicism. This enables the production of distance from

what is self-evident (Heidegger 2002a; 6). These abstractions are either that pre-Socratic fragments reveal original ideas about being that have since become lost or concealed from us. Alternatively, his use of language relies on his appreciation of the original use that is concealed within words. By uncovering the original construction of words (Ek-sistant) this allows us to in some way rediscover what was thought at the time of their construction. Words almost become artefacts that can be examined for their original meanings. There is also an element of a prelapsarian idealization of both the fragments and the words. This is founded on the belief that previous generations knew more securely the basis of personal knowledge; 'the inception is what is uncanny and mightiest' (Heidegger 2000; 165). This has been lost to us, either through the adoption of later normative understandings or in consequence of our lifestyle. Richardson sees this as a desire to re-discover the simple experience of being (Richardson 2003; 645). We have lost something from the inception; we see the inception of history as primitive but it is uncanny and mighty (Heidegger 2000; 165). These comments are not made in an attempt to provide a psychological understanding of Heidegger's thought. The methods used to find what is concealed in our discourse somehow govern the project of unmasking what is covered over about our existence.

Heidegger's work is characterised as difficult to interpret (Murray 1978, xii), and the exposition of *Being and Time* can be characterised as ambiguous and opaque (Tallis 2002; x) with the later work possibly having more clarity. The use of this style of language creating the impression that the lack of understanding is the reader's not Heidegger's (Waterhouse 1981; 123-4). Dreyfus (1991; xiii) is of the view that the strange new language which Heidegger constructed becomes both illuminating and indispensable; in constructing a new pathway. This new language makes translation difficult. This difficulty in the interpretation of Heidegger's work takes place firstly on a textural level. Additionally and perhaps more relevantly, through rejecting our rational method of understanding the world, the resultant holistic posture presents a coherent unity. It is the totality as well as the language that becomes daunting. Rorty considers that Heidegger's project is to move away from the employment of perception as an assemblage of sensible engagements. He has the aim of developing a 'complete' picture, towards seeing the existence of the 'object' in a holistic way, something that is.

Heidegger presents the whole as providing its own meaning (Adorno 2003; 120). In Heidegger's defence it can be noted that the structure of Dasein is not entirely presented as a whole, it can be analysed in its movements and attunements. The difficulty with analytic reason is that it is not sufficient to completely describe successful businesses practices; there is more to it than analysis. The philosophy of business is much more located in the pragmatic tradition.

For Rorty, the initial dismantling of Kantian idealism became the vain attempt to be the first post-metaphysical thinker (Rorty 1990; 349). So with reference to the pragmatists the adoption of worldviews has superseded the primacy of rational logical (absolute) thought (Heidegger 1999; 304). There are aspects of Heidegger's thought that would support a view that he embeds truth in practices and can therefore be interpreted in the pragmatic tradition (Rorty 1992; 213). Alternatively, an interpretation of the work of Heidegger is that of a hermeneutic understanding, a self-interpreting human being (McPherson 2005). Another philosophic stance is that of pragmatism. MacAvoy (2001) rejects the pragmatic interpretation of Heidegger, relying on Heidegger's emphasis on phenomenology, 'the logic of phenomena'. MacAvoy's argument in the paper is developed further to suggest that there are two levels in Heidegger's beliefs about understanding. The first is everydayness, a pre-reflective understanding, from which develops an authenticity, a universal understanding. Earlier in the discussion of entrepreneurial vision, the individual business owner, who values autonomy and resolving indeterminacy could be said to adopt the authentic life. This interpretation fits well with this view. In this way, Heidegger's concept of authenticity makes of freedom a venture – a projecting forward – as well as a fact (Grene 1957). Lafont (2005) following Russell raises the distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description. The more grounded nature of knowledge by acquaintance, whereas knowledge by description can become 'idle talk'. Heidegger has also been categorised as a hermeneutic phenomenologist (Palmer 1969; 125); an existential phenomenologist (Wolz 1981; 300). The thought of Polanyi focuses on elements of knowing that are compatible with the Heideggerian approach, the attempt to restore the connection between knowing and being, and the inseparable combination of knowing and doubting (Gelwick 1977; 149-151). Warnock's (1970; 2) considers a sense of

freedom to be a practical problem in existential philosophy. To talk of a sense of freedom would be too 'psychological' in a Heideggerian interpretation but certainly, the presence of being allows for this practicality.

Another recent study of Heidegger proposes that his project is not the "particular practices and understandings but in the conditions of the possibility of interpretation (Carman 2005; 12). This places the interpretation by the individual of the equipmental objects as dependent on the understanding (Dreyfus & Spinoza 1999). This is not the usual way of approaching this dyad; the usual approach is to consider that an interpretation of the situation gives rise to an understanding. So in this analysis there is a movement away from the view that reflective understanding of activities developing knowledge towards appreciating how we are engaged in these activities. This is an 'inceptual' understanding that becomes authentic through understanding of being in the world as thinking occurs (Vallega-Neu 2003; 33). This inceptual understanding is located in the ready created human objects that already exist for us and like the theatre discussed above, meaning comes from the things that they are (King 1964; 7). In the same vein Glazebrook (2001) argues that the Heideggerian insight is that reality occurs before we do, we find it existent. Language is used to make entities present – the essential being of language is saying as showing (Heidegger 1971; 123). Earlier we considered language a semantic categorisation of the world, but it is one which we are trapped in the use of our descriptive facilities (Krajewski 2004). It was earlier noted [p70] that Heidegger did not subscribe to the *a priori* nature of a language structure, discourse -as talk- can be world disclosing (Carman 2002). So the instrumental view of science; that we find out reality in order to capture it, and fit it to our purposes, needs to be replaced by an interpretative understanding. This understanding is of not only what we find but also what we have made. The later project of Heidegger as revealed in the posthumous – recently translated – works such as *Contributions* and *Mindfulness* can be seen as an elaboration of the authentic nature of existence (Vallega-Neu 2003; 47), which can be seen as supporting the view of his work as a 'mystical and incommunicable intuition of being' (Olafson 1967; 82).

Ricoeur's (1989; 232) interpretation of Heidegger's concept of authenticity as recapture of experience in the face of death can perhaps provide some insights into the small business experience. The closure of the small business can be interpreted as the death of a way of living, thus we are in the situation of temporal finitude. So there is introduced the time frame, the temporality of the business, actions are undertaken to continue the business and prevent closure; the idea of the existential business (Handy 1994; 143). This appreciation of temporality provides the framework, the ground for the development of the individual through 'the problem of everyday life, self-knowledge, and the problem of the relation to the other' (Ricoeur 1989; 232). This recapture takes the form of resoluteness, the continual pressing engagement with the next business challenge. An earlier discussion on personal efficiency can now be reinterpreted in the light of this 'sway of truth'. If this freedom is the most fundamental – the ground of ground (Heidegger 1998b; 134), it becomes so, not through an endless iteration, but through a remaining open. Adorno criticises the idea of authenticity from a Marxist standpoint in that it idealises the artisan that has been overtaken by technology. To discuss alienation, caused by the current means of production is more vital (Adorno 2003; 83). The idea of authenticity also emphasises the subjective; 'the individual subject chooses itself as its own possession (Adorno 2003; 94). It is thus difficult to pronounce on the occurrence of authenticity outside the view that the subject is 'authentic to itself' (Adorno 2003; 103).

For Deleuze, representational thought conjoined the clear and the distinct but they are in fact inversely related. Ideas are thus characterised as distinct-obscure, Dionysian in nature, which interacts with the clear-confused Apollonian thinker (Deleuze 2004; 266).

This is not designed to create a metaphysics of presence (Glazebrook, 2001) but that the pre-existence of being is the situational factor of our understanding. Kant in saying that being was not a real predicate (Kant 1998; A598/B624), removed it from direct consideration, it became hidden. To reconsider the nature of being is not to reinstate a metaphysical ontology but to reconsider what it means where we are governed by what is present. Adorno believes that Dasein has been created

that is both ontic and ontological (Adorno 2003; 99). In this way it both exists and creates the structure of existence. As noted above Silverman also attempts to combine the ontic and the ontological but in semiotics (Silverman 1987; 342). This difficulty is perhaps the nature of Dasein; to be placed in that space. In terms of the entrepreneurial vision it can be expressed in the central ontological conception of Heidegger as an attempt to grasp and express a vision. Olafson (1967; 85) makes the case for a re-characterisation of the distinction of being not having an ontological basis but conceptual. In the classical formula, we tend to characterise an object as having certain properties. Now the Heideggerian project becomes one of asserting the non-attribute nature of being challenging the validity of the project that to discover the attributes of being is fundamental. The problem with this idea is that a conceptual basis for being tends to open the ground for the isolation of the attributes that apply to any concept. To have a concept means to know when to apply it. Whilst discussing the controversial life of Heidegger, Sheehan, in Guignon (1993; 92), believes that he was concerned with the essence of disclosure but also what might be more productive is to consider the modes of disclosure. This is in some way what this work attempts to do.

The earlier sections of the literature review have provided the justification, if it were needed, that business theory has a lot to do with what is termed the external environment (Elliot 1990). This is not only in the competitive standing of the business against other providers but also in terms of the externality of the consumers and product choices that they make, that provides the exchange nexus. This choice is often encapsulated in the product offering. It has been said that the creation of a product is the embodied choice for the customer (Strathern 1992; 170). The product is the focus of possibilities, choices offered and choices made. This analysis has brought out an existential interpretation of the personal situation in which this business owner uses to produce interpretations of the market in which he is placed. The extent to which description is supported or challenged by the idea of insight will be the subject of the next section.

Taking a View

As discussed earlier the literature on entrepreneurship has postulated that the process of entrepreneurship is the creative envisioning of a world where the entrepreneur's project has been realised (Spinosa et al 1997; 51). The value of this ability to the entrepreneur is presumably the holistic nature of the vision, and that it can be used as a reference at the points where a choice needs to be made. Does my choice fit with the way I see it happening? The construction of possible worlds, for that is what they are, is problematic. The approach set out earlier seems to provide a theoretical basis for the initial research findings. This consists in the production of a non-motivational understanding based on the Heideggerian Dasein.

In conclusion it seems that a Heideggerian approach to the questions underlying this research would be an approach compatible with a number of the issues that are identified in the literature concerning the situation of product-market development in small businesses. It is suggested this is composed of the following items which are not in any particular order: the lack of an analytical approach in many micro businesses; the centrality of the idea of perception in marketing; the desire to move towards the more active and interactive relationship marketing; the nature of entrepreneurial vision; the lack of robust identifiable characteristics in entrepreneurial activity; the centrality of business to personal identity in a large number of small businesses. Earlier the question was raised about small business owner's increase in knowledge, which was predicated on a situated placement with existent objects that develop this understanding. A Heideggerian approach would seem to tackle this difficulty given the importance of being at hand [*Zuhandenheit*] and presence [*Anwesenheit*] for an understanding of man's being that is contained in his philosophy (Heidegger 1962; 47).

The construction of the personal situation of the small business as one between the given and the might be, is not so much different than that existing for many other people. The difference might just be the economic necessity of making the business viable. The knowledge of existing things in the business coupled with

the necessity of possible actions will be explored in its application through the rest of this thesis.

It would be understandable to criticise the views of Heidegger, personally for any support for the Nazi approach to human conduct, and philosophically a Herculean challenge to the dominant conceptual theory of truth. He seemed to question so much and yet not produce a systematic philosophy that had ready theoretical implications. The fact that we do not have this 'solution' available to us does not entail the nullity of this philosophy. It may have merely pointed the way for possible further insights.

It is possible to draw some insights from the analysis of the first set of interviews reconsidered in the light of new approaches revealed by the philosophy of Heidegger. These insights are that some elements of the micro business situation could be revealed by an approach that saw the situation as one of sway between personal competence and world understanding. This process of inquiry is also central to our ability to come to see things more clearly. It would therefore seem to be a case to be made for analysing the notion of truth as un-concealing. The validity of Heidegger's interpretation is less important than the possible insight it provides. The next chapter will further explore this by undertaking the collection of empirical data from micro business people. It has the aim of both seeking to develop new insights but also critically examine the nature of being there.

Chapter 7

Further Engagement with the Field

Exploring new approaches

There has been a tendency to see entrepreneurship as grounded on some combination of the individual resources of the entrepreneur or the economic opportunity becoming available. Most recently these two elements have been combined in a general theory of entrepreneurship by Shane (2003). The possibilities that the foregoing study of Heidegger's philosophy has given us is to somehow loosen the ties that bind us into individual attributes and economic decision making. To further explore this situation following the first fieldwork it is felt that there is the opportunity to reveal in greater depth something about the small business situation in three main ways of holding to the truth of the business. To pursue this opening these three main issues were, the appreciation of the external market, the temporally located aspects of the business, and the personal attainments through the business.

These issues can be readily transposed from the Heideggerian concepts of the world as picture, time and being, and anxiety or mood. These are central concepts in Heidegger's work from the early publications. This is not to suggest that these concepts are exclusively mapped onto the above issues; there is some crossover. These same questions become developed in the later philosophy and are asked there in terms of a guiding thread of thinking and attunement, and the grounding question of belongingness (Heidegger 1999; 138 and 240).

Several further interviews were conducted with a series of small businesses which focussed on exploring the ideas clustered around the situatedness of the business its existence and possibilities. These were considered in terms of a letting absorption and a revealing engagement. These businesses were slightly larger than those in the first field research to see if there was any difference in these two cohorts. Most of them had about five or six employees. In this later series of interviews, a more structured approach was adopted and the same series of six questions was asked of all respondents. They were:

The view of the external world

- Tell me about your market?
- What does it mean to engage with the market?

Temporal Engagement

- Are you in business to make money?
- Is the business separate from yourself?

Personal Caring

- What sort of possibilities has this business opened up for you?
- Was there a point in your life when you decided to go into business?

The questions have been grouped in three themes as discussed above, however they cannot be constrained within the three specific areas. They will overlap the categories and might reveal interconnected insights about the topic under discussion. The questions were not always asked in the same order but in line with this increased structure any rephrasing was done with caution (Curran & Blackburn 2001; 80). As these interviews were semi-structured there is no identification of emergent themes for each interview in this phase of the research. The aim is to explore further the existing themes, and a summary is given at the end of this series of interviews. The results are analysed in conjunction with the first phase in the following chapter.

First Interview

The first interviewee runs a landscape architecture practice although this description comes under review in the following discussion. He had been interviewed earlier by the researcher for another piece of work and this previous visit is referred to in the interview. At the start of the interview he is excited

about the prospects for the business and starts describing this situation before the interview properly starts. The opening gambit is that

... to keep developing and (.) it means we're running (.) all the time. I mean we are actually pioneering (.) we are actually up at the front of it (.) but to keep up (.) takes an awful lot of work (2.0) so we are finding (.)

The idea of this business is the dynamic of the market and this sets the scene for a revealing engagement to be the story of this business. What is being opened up here is the dynamic market understanding, which has to be worked at. It could be inferred that it is being prized open, because the work required is emphasised, it does not just happen. What might have been an interest in traditional landscape architecture, the understanding of the nature of arboriculture, has been left behind. This new approach is an achievement, but there is some small amusement when it is suggested that it was 'an identified opportunity'. It is not seen in quite such formal terms, it's the character of the business. This engagement with what has been achieved has created a number of identities. This provides a difficulty in that the origin of the firm in landscape architecture is still retained.

"we actually feel that because landscape architecture may loose control if it (.) it may go to planning consultants"

The nature of what is being lost control of is difficult to determine. It might be the seeing of the opening as such. Why is there a difficulty with landscape architecture losing control of this opening? It is because this is where the original skill resides or from some determination of where they ought to be. Only by engagement with the possibilities has he brought this into his area, but the loss of control seems to be the mode of his attunement towards business openings.

The next section is one where a number of hesitations seem to indicate that a difficult area is being explored. This is concerned with the presentation of the business. The website for the business has remained as it was for the past three years, the period over which the openings discussed above have been developed. The removal of the all encompassing landscape architecture marketing image was

a difficult process. This may be because the process of concealing or forgetting was almost as difficult as that of wresting a space for the new engagement. How is this forgotten? Not through an instantaneous deletion of the current website material but by some compromise because the new opening had not been fully revealed to the extent that it could be portrayed. It would be in a 'separate sort of section';

'we need to (.) now (.) sort of (.) take away the(.) sort of all encompassing landscape marketing sort of image (..) and sell via either a separate (.) sort of section within that website or a separate (.) website (1.0) this this landscape (1.0) appraisal this character appraisal work that we do.(.) and then sell that in its own right to a market place that's out there... so its about (.) being able to (.) look like we're the right people to come to for the state of the art product that people need'

Both this seeing something and not being quite sure takes a further step because the image is 'floating'; 'we can appear as whoever we want to be'. This seems not to be a mere 'concealing in appearing' but as something qualitatively different. To progress means revealing our presence. We 'look like' the product we can provide. It is possible to interpret this section as mere competitive behaviour such that where a developing area of business is claimed by two trade groups then it is natural competitive behaviour to attract this business. Landscape architects can be left behind in the new market dynamics. This traditional view can however neglect the opportunity for a new interpretation. This new interpretation is about the projection of the new opportunity and the detraction of existing skills.

Later in the interview a new competence emerges, that of bringing information together. This seems like a new managerial role but might be based on the tacit knowledge existing in the business.

"its actually about changing the reports that we're doing (.) and the information and being able to (.) be sufficiently confident (.) because we understand our market place (.) that we can say they don't need that information (.) in this report (.) we can make a slightly different beast here (..) cut out the bit which will cost us two days extra work (.) fine tune it so that they're still getting what they want (.) but its that level of flexibility, it's the product which stays flexible (.) and it's

the product which is ever changing (.) not so much (.) that we're taking on (..) necessarily a new computer (.) or new software (..) its just we're interpreting the needs of the market place slightly differently"

The ability to make money was seen as necessary to 'stay in business' but it was the enjoyment, the challenge, and the lifestyle that was more important. What he aims to do is to deliver the best quality product, 'we actually seek to achieve things on the ground and in our own work experiences'. The business achievement as something on the ground is a pride in the output of the business, making or producing the output well. How can we interpret the achievement of experiences, is it just a figure of speech or does it reveal another aspect to this? Is the achievement of experiences that is the revealing engagement of being in business? The achievement indicates that something is gained as a reward, for the solicitude or care taken in the commission.

"the question is how does the identity fit in that? You create multiple identities that you sort of move into do you? And we've got a shell that we might ~ we:we never used to market (.) we don't market I mean we had no marketing presence other than the website (1.0) err.. which we haven't updated for a very long time"

With regard to the market, there is the statement that 'we don't market'. This effectively means that the marketing is done through word-of-mouth rather than advertising and promotion. The policy seems to be to develop a reputation that will generate future referrals. The reputation is desired amongst the reference group of fellow professionals. This develops into an explanation of the approach adopted as one of process, which emphasises the point that it is not just about money. The elements of process in the job are partially about their position in the planning function. This is a temporal and teleological process in that a specific outcome is desired. It is also finite in that it has a standard timescale – but it can of course be stopped at any point. This temporal finitude demands a certain approach. What is the nature of this approach? It is governed by uncertainty on two counts. Firstly, they may not know who the real client is, they are often only being sub-contracted, and they don't know the future planning decision. So the approach as such is methodological with regard to options for the physical site, and their understanding of precedent. It has been observed that SME's are better

at process improvements than other forms of innovation in their business (Caputo et al 2002).

During the delivery of this process-based service there remains the delivery of the original skills that comprise the business of landscape architecture: ‘and we still have people who come out and say I fancy a pond and a woodland and we ... we still deliver those’. With these words we are brought back to a touchstone, the skills of landscape architecture, which in terms of the business situation provides the security of the existing skill. He has the familiarity with how to do that and can fall back on that engagement.

“I guess it means to fully understand what’s it doing and why it’s doing it and where it’s going ~so it’s an understanding process ~ I would think so (.) for me it is because it is by understanding again if we go back three years (...) understanding where it was going we were able to realign (.) to take advantage of that (.) so we’ve now realigned (.) and we’re engaging (.) in the very market place which is giving us (.) work (.) when you know a lot of other people are sort of facing the impacts of recession (.) so I think engaging with it is understanding why its acting like it is , how it works (.) so that you can predict where its going (.) and keep your business realigned (.) to keep up with it”

Engagement with the market for the current interviewee is about understanding where the market is going; hence the need to run. He believes that it was an understanding of the market that helped them realign the business from three years ago. The importance of understanding is said again with emphasis, with this understanding being *how* it works. It is possible to see this understanding of the market in intentional terms. This is an activity where he sees for himself ‘where it is going’. What is brought forward from this passage is not only is the market moving, and this is repeated twice; it is also a place where people go. It is seen as a place for people rather than dislocated people. In the earlier discussion, the idea of seeing the market as a place and in Heideggerian terms a clearing. However the market becomes abstract, it is not so much as a forum but a point of movement. This market seems therefore to have a locus, the movement of a point, so we have to *concentrate* on it, because it is suddenly not there. The phrase ‘to stay up’ is used. This is presumably not to remain but to stay with it, to stay in the

right arena. This is then followed by the standard business phrase about delivering ‘the product which people want at that moment in time’.

“I think engaging in the market place means understanding what’s happening (.) fully so that you can (.) taper your product (.) to be able to make that type of adjustment. We’re not all out there trying to write (.) the (..) you know greater (.) oxford (.) dictionary (.) we can actually produce a more precise (.) Collins dictionary at less price (.) which still does the job (.) ° you know you’re still able to look up (.) the word we’re still delivering (.) what it meant to do but not going over the board° so understanding (.) engaging in the market place (.) fully understanding that”

Tapering as an activity is mentioned twice in this section. This description is unusual with an indeterminate meaning here. The most faithful interpretation to be made is that it refers to the reduction of the offering to fit the circumstances. Whether this is his normal approach, start with a high quality then *taper* back, seems to be the inference to be made. This interpretation seems to suit the case as the next section is about flexibility, and being able ‘to respond quickly’. This produces an emphasis on delivering the product process with more precisely defined requirements, at a reduced price. But like the definition, the job is still efficacious. There is a moment when the flexibility moves into a different modality with a significant pause in his talk. Flexibility becomes ‘building in the flexibility *now to respond tomorrow*’ about being able to do something different in the future. This has been made possible by the increase in what now becomes the meaning of flexibility. So to be flexible seems to be the nexus of which now seems to incorporate both market customisation and business capability. Whilst these are fairly standard management terms it is possible to see how they are linked in Heideggerian terms as the terms of letting and revealing that form the opening that is the market. Towards the end of this phase of the interview, the importance of flexibility is repeated as being important in both understanding and engaging with the market and the variation in the product.

In the response to the next question, he explains how the business has become separate from himself, initially through the empowerment of staff. He says that ‘once upon a time I would have said no’, but now the demands of growth have had the effect of diluting his personal involvement in a wider pool of work.

People have 'bought into the idea'. The interview was being conducted in an open plan office, and this fact was brought forward as a demonstration of the inclusive nature of the task. There is an element of space generation here so that the office was a general discussion forum. In the age of computers it is relatively easy to create this informal style because a large part of the confidential work can be done via e-mail, the access to and the circulation of which will be subject to protocols. It was probably also an indication that this interview was undertaken as a favour with little commercial implications. In addition, one of the outward signs of this separation was that the name of the company had been changed from the partners to an acronym.

"Now I'm still actively involved in it (.) and always will be (.) but it's now::: its direction is much more influenced by (..) the views of everyone (.) °they're sort of cooperative in that respect° (.) so that we draw on (.) the sort of knowledge (.) of everyone who's working (.)and everyone is working in (.) different areas (.) erm through their own (.) you know we have different skills (.) in different areas (.) I'm a report writer, other are designers, technical (.) detailers there's everyone has their own little specialisms (.) and: so:: by (.) talking (.) and sharing (.) and (.) listening to everyone we: actually (.) get a much better direction of where we're going (.) based on the skill base and from understanding the skill base we've got"

The co-operative nature of the venture is now emphasised with everyone 'having their own specialisms' and they all take some part in directing the projects. This use of directing here contains a double meaning in this context. The projects are directed but in a business context, directing implies the role of director. So this becomes; the new relationship that we are all committed to – aren't we? This is then a lifestyle for everyone, not a job, to enable people to become involved the emphasis is on a collegiate style. Towards the end of this session he emphasises his 'incredible vulnerability' which further emphasises the collective nature of the task ahead.

The possibilities that the business has opened up are that '*it has allowed me to :: run with my own ideas*' and the freedom to go in the direction I think is appropriate. This seems to indicate a good fit with the ideas of bringing forward and a projecting openness. The interesting thing in this respect is that the next

passage emphasises that he feels that he has been able to pass on that freedom of choice ... I have experimented and enjoyed experimenting. In terms of the openness, it is what he could pass on, because what he expressed a lack of was the training, the skills, and the rootedness in what it was really like to be adept. He felt the lack of a deeper knowledge of that set of skills. This is quite a strong series of statements in a short passage. The definitive series of statements are offered with long intervening pauses, which seems to indicate a careful choice of expression as though he wanted to communicate these ideas effectively.

Finally, in the interview he said that he had always wanted to go into business since junior school. Not achieving much in academic results, he was lucky to have been given the *breaks*. This question does not seem to be a particularly interesting one for this respondent and he soon veers back onto the subject of the delegated professional management style that currently occupies his thoughts. It may be that this question presents itself as introducing a historical focus and requires him to cast his mind back to how he started up. He is much more interested in describing how he is creating opportunities for the business in the present. There was also a sense of urgency about what was currently being opened up rather than creating a reflective mood about what had occurred in the past.

Second Interview

The second interview took place with someone who had operated and owned a number of businesses over many years. He was currently involved in two businesses; a conference business with his daughter and a construction company with three partners.

“I’ve got six questions to ask about your business ok, so firstly tell me about your market~ Right: well I’m involved in (..) more than one business (..) °obviously° so which market would you like to focus on,(.) the building or the conference business? ~Err either~ the building probably”

At the time of the interview, the construction industry was feeling the early effects of the economic downturn. He said that they were in the fortunate position

of having sold their stock of houses about eight months ago. This may have been good management, or good timing. It may also have been related to management issues within the firm that were alluded to before the interview started. Since that time, and presumably for a period beforehand they had been operating as a project management company. Although they were a 'full service' management company they had maintained a good cashflow and he felt that they were now funding their client's projects. This issue of funding then tended to be the focus of the conversation about the market. The market is seen in terms of contract completion, funding other people's businesses, reserves, CBA, and taking property as security. His role in the business is the financial director, and it comes out later in the interview that he has extensive experience in the financial services industry. It is also noting that construction is a high sale value market and works on extended contract periods. So the perception of the market is all about getting to the completion of the sale. The market seems to start with those customers who are able to borrow money, the finance is the key. While the process of receiving the money was important to him, the actual business as an entity seemed to be a vehicle for his current activity. The need to become intensely involved in the business did not present itself in the interview. Whether this would have been different if he had talked about the conference business that he ran with his daughter it is hard to say. Perhaps the involvement in two businesses engendered the detachment.

Being exposed to the market is mentioned twice, indicating a theme of vulnerability and defencelessness to events. Later in the interviewee talks about keeping reserves and finding security that seemed to nullify the exposure.

"the feedback from our clients is: that the market has just dropped (.) the feedback from the agents it has just (.) practically stopped (.) that's what they're telling me. (.) Obviously this is very worrying err for us at the moment but I think we have enough (..) reserve should we say to get through it (.) and we may well take security from some of our clients to get through it but its not what we set out to do (..) so we're trying to find solutions to get through the problem (.) because:: (.) the alternative would be to put it into a CBA (...) err:: and do a deal with all our subcontractors where they get paid so much in the pound (..) but ultimately when the market picked up they would be paid(..) We don't want that to happen because we've had a very good relationship with contractors over many many years"

On the subject of the market there is an extended description of a public debate he attended about the sale of unsold properties. The essence of this story was that it was regulation that was hindering the ability of the market to clear. This regulation was both in terms of excessive standards and an over complex supply chain that consisted of building societies who were quasi-banks and housing associations. This prevented the councils from buying his properties. This of course is what he wants. It is nothing new for small businesses to complain about regulation but it reveals the market attitude. He saw the market in these terms, non-personal structural problems, which is not always the case in small businesses.

'well I suppose (.) if you brought it down once again (.) if you like to the finances (.) you could say a price per square foot (.) in the end (.) it all comes down to a price per square foot (.) you build a nice house (..) and if its too expensive (.) nobody's gonna' buy them (...) so:so the pounds per square foot (.) we know what we can build it for (.) and we know roughly what we can sell it for (..) although we don't at the moment (.) thank goodness we're not in that market right now but ~ or is the design thing so specified really that once you specify the price per square foot and you've got fit in standard features like that etcetera [there's not much to play with except for the trimmings you know large lounge small kitchen you know what do you do about all that ~] [well we tend to find erm well I mean when you say, you see] no you can't work like that Robin (.) because you (.) there's always a density problem'

When asked what properties sold the view was that 'nothing's selling'. A large amount of the next passage consisted in a description of the process of producing a contract. It was necessary to keep asking about buyer behaviour, and in fact very little was said about this topic. The supposition was that did not have much knowledge of house purchase from the occupier's view. They built them to what they wanted and 'they were absolutely delighted'. The latter expresses a confidence in his own product. This view of customers is unelaborated; what is absent is any description of what customers say. These encounters become unavailable to understanding. They only appeared after several promptings and then the description moved back on to the important thing being price per square foot. It is a density problem; what space you can work with. Recognising the issue of selling features is about customisation.

'so the selling features to me is once we've got (.) a design (.) an' a shell (..) lots of people may come along (.) at that stage (.) we've got the basic concept and layout (.) and then (.) if they have a choice to pick the kitchen, to pick the bathroom and those sorts of things: (.) then err that can be a nightmare for us by the way (.) but they like that (.) that's what they like (.) because they've got some input into it ~ some sort of customisation ~ yeah (.) <we don't mind customisation because it isn't really customisation> we give 'em a range of products:: to cho(hhh)se from (..) yeah you know if they change the fascia: (.) of something then it's still the same product (.) it's not it's not really a problem (..) But if I may say so (.) what you're saying (.) and it really:: gets up my nose (.) when I hear (..) people on the radio (.) talking (.) about <not just house building or anything> (.) we give the customers what they want (.) in my view that's absolute bollocks (.) the customers never know what they want (..) they think they know what they want (.) we are designing things and refining things all:: the time because we know what works and what doesn't work'

In this interview, there is a more distanced relation to the product than was exhibited in the first series of interviews. The product becomes one of producing something within the parameters of regulation, finance, which has to be presented in a manner that pleases the customer. It is the customisation that matters to the final product, but you have to work with what has (already) been decided. We like customisation because it does not really make a vital difference to the product. He cannot construct properties to what the customer really wants because they don't know what it is. The important thing is that he has the knowledge to produce something that he knows will be chosen. The temporality of this choice is in the extended span of time between design and sale.

'this is about (.) building a reputation (.) they're friends, relatives, (.) family members anything oh I brought a so and so home (..) obviously we're not a huge name in the market place because we're only a local firm (..) but (.) you know (.) that's very important (..) now because we had a very good name (.) for building our products (.) we:: had (.) other (.) developers (.) come to us (..) which (.) wouldn't have happened (.) so we (.) almost (1.0) by:: chance (.) more or less turned into much more of project management business (.) because we're building (..) to our standards (.) for other people'

There is a complex section about the value of building a reputation. This is promoted as a business strategy in what seems to be an inconsistent view. The emphasis on reputation is valued although it is a market where there is very little repeat buying, and they are only a small company in a local market. The

occasions where there is an opportunity to repeat buy, or to make a useful recommendation, must be small. A feasible interpretation for this view is that he is actually thinking about the developers of such projects where a reputation is likely to be much more valuable. They are repeat buyers in the main and building projects are geographically fixed which could allow any developer to choose a firm who could deliver on the ground. After sale care is also a big item and this would fit into the interviewee's view of their reputation as being able to *deliver* satisfied occupiers to the developers.

The personal factors in business were not ones of involvement and fulfilment but a responsibility. This responsibility seemed to be to do the right thing and not let anyone down. This was a demonstration of the way that the interpersonal factors became predominant.

On being asked about the purpose of business being to make money he felt it was more about achieving your aims. Achievement was mentioned three times, always in terms of outcomes or goals. Achievement in this passage is defined in terms of that which can be measured, yet later this business opportunity was about utilisation of your skills and purpose, as if there was an almost Christian duty not to waste your talents. Immediately following this view there was an utterance that articulated the view that he was an enabler, helping other people, through seeing their potential. In this business he is also dependent on others. He makes use of the metaphor of building something for the future. The motivations for these actions are difficult to interpret and would need to be imported from outside this context. Despite its projection as doing something for his partners now, and into the future, these are personal factors. They are also very existentialist in terms of where he is as an older and more experienced businessman.

'I'm always the one who comes out with the least (..) and I didn't think it would happen this time (.) and its gonna' happen again now (..) so other people have done a lot better out of it then I have (.) but that's you know ~ why why do you think that is~ because they've been greedy (.) they've been greedy (.) that's it pure and simple [if we'd set out on day one and everybody had done what we though they would do (.) they would be helping me (.) and I would be helping

them (.) the only thing is (.) it depends what you mean by help (.) if my contribution was cash and security (...) people will take a view on that and say well you should have had the lion share of the profit because you put up the money (.) and you put up the security (.) now I took a different view (.) I thought no we will have a contribution from all of us (.) in some shape or form (.) which will match (1.0) my contribution'

An insight to these experiences is revealed later when he says that he has done it a few times and is always the one who comes out with the least. He is not surprised that this occurs, or appears to occur. Often with the concentration on figures, it might be that this aspect becomes part of his views. Accounting for things is linked to control, being able to monitor the use of funds, but often to prudence and being careful. It also provides the knowledge of the monetary rewards of everyone, which is often partially concealed in a business. Others have been greedy in *taking* more than their fair share, rather than *building* for the future. He follows this by saying that his contribution was cash and security, and if this had been matched by others contributing as much, they would have *helped each other*. Business is a positive way of getting on with life, it seems that life is here to be lived and this is one way of making a difference to that existence. He stresses that he is in business for the longer term, not to make his money and bank it. A statement of being is offered in that everything is solvable, that is the position he takes. At the end of this section, the interpretation is concluded by the statement that if I hadn't done this I would probably have been 'bored to death'. Heidegger considers that boredom is an entrancement of time that allows the refusal of beings (Heidegger 1995; 148). This capture by time can be broken by the moment of vision.

The answer to the question about engaging in the market was about financial gain; engaging in the market was being aware of the prices of things. For example the price of houses he could possibly sell; the best price for skilled labour. He is in a position where existing contracts provide a degree of security so he can project forward this relative security in ensuring that he helps others who have helped him; but he does not overpay!

“my possibilities have shrunk (.) as a result of running this business (.) whereas I might have done that (.) had I not done the business (.) so my first commitment is to: the business so:so when we say possibilities if your saying about has it opened other doors: no (.) because I'm in a business (.) its probably shut some doors rather than opened them ~”

He felt that running the business had caused his opportunities to shrink, because of the commitment and the insecurity. The business has not opened other avenues because; revealingly he says he is *in* a business. The commitment precludes other opportunities. After this opening he seems to change his mind and says that the business has *of course* opened up doors. Being in business has meant that he was able to enter different markets. This occurred through a ‘turning towards’ other opportunities; this turning was described, after a little hesitation as ‘marketing our wares’. The description continued in a hesitant framework, the move was off the cuff, and this section contained a number of pauses as if searching for the right description. A chain of events, a domino effect, resulted from this move. Responding to the question, huge possibilities were opened up. When you are in a business, you are continually opening up new possibilities anyway. The use of anyway raises questions. Is it because in business they appear spontaneously? It is however difficult to get what you want, but it becomes possible through new ways of putting things together. The narrative continues via an expression ‘always go to the top’ to the important people. The important thing when you get an audience is to try to think what he should bring out. To bring out issues means can thus be linked with how multitudinous possibilities are opened up. In the next section these openings are still uncertain. They will *hopefully* lead him – lead the business onto other things. The business and the personal are connected and this will lead *into* other things; like the current contract they have entered into.

Although he had part ownership of this business it was not because he wanted to have his own business he just got bored with working for other people. The choice of going into business was the remission of boredom.

Third Interview

The third interview was conducted with an e-marketing and business developer. After a preamble describing his business, the question of the market in which the business operated was discussed. It was described in the following terms.

“so e- marketing (.) services (..) we build websites (.) we build online applications (.) you know software (.) that runs through through through websites.hhh (.) and erm: (...) through a growth of business we now:: (.) err:: we’ve got err:: probably there’s one, two::, three, four, five, there’s six full time: staff (...) all working on delivery of those services so (.) writing code (.) building sites (.) delivering e-marketing campaigns (.)”

“I think we’ve got clear objectives about the business strategy but erm (.) we haven’t gone after a particular market (.) they’re quite varied and general the solutions that we provide so (.) we’ve got (.) err: recruitment (..) organisations (..) we’ve got err technology companies manufacturing (.) retail (.) they’re all clients of ours it crosses all sorts- and some small we do stuff for: (.) for example a restaurant down the road:: (.) erm we:we’ve provided services for: a one man band (.) up to (.) you know <some of our clients we’ve done stuff for> Sony, Apple and 3I:: and people like that so it’s (.) it’s really:: generic (.) really varied”

This section seemed to be rambling but ended with an assertion that the business had 30 products not one, they are all different. To consider that he has 30 products means that he has constant focus on all these products. Unlike curtain production where all the products are usually different but finite, these products seem to be in continuous flux leading to the need for a constant focus. They all require servicing which implies he is working for 30 organisations. The basic operation is that he is providing skilled labour through the operation of the websites. The effects of this seem to be that the idea of providing a product is inchoate and unformed. His view is that ‘we don’t go down the traditional route’ of product and then selling but gain work through ‘word of mouth recommendation’. This method of marketing was emphasised considerably. Their use of telemarketing was relatively ineffective so it had been outsourced and which stopped and started because it was not very productive. The strategy seemed to be that rather than develop a product for sale, say a lettings management program, they infinitely customised what they did. This gave the above impression that they were a labour supply company. They saw their market

in personal terms, getting people to choose them; looking for individual customers. This further emphasised their concentration on website work, doing what they preferred to do. 'We are a funny fish if you put it like that'.

"nearly all of our work has come through referral and word of mouth recommendation rather than us having to go out and find it 90 well 80, 80 percent probably is come through referral and word of mouth and recommendation so those that work through Sony, Apple, we've done stuff for Microsoft and Intel as well ~ and they came from not your telemarketing but from~ through other people who've recommended we spoke to them, went in to pitch to them and err kind of won the business so erm yeah we have won work through that telemarketing but ironically we've switched that off at the moment because it wasn't generating enough leads to justify the costs of of doing it"

He sees the business as something he has created, but also something that he has to step away from for it to grow. The 'stepping away from' seemed to mean finding the right skills so that he did not have to do everything. This takes place in a context where external funding was not available, whether this was through choice or lack of profitability was not clear. In one respect this seems to be an example of him moving into a new mode of business development. He adds the statement that he sees the business as having a finite end, and would continue without him. It however satisfies his need to create something, which perhaps fits in with the extensive customisation described above. He also talks about getting things moving which seems to promote activity as it fits in with his avowed stance of getting bored very easily. He talks about leaving, but keeping some interest in the business, but it seems that he needs to try to keep his interest levels going. The excitement is creating the business and getting involved in something new. Whilst this narrative presents itself as an example of a standard 'growth stage' narrative moving from start-up to professionalization there are elements that provide a different interpretation to present itself.

His business ownership started in a partnership with two other people who ran what is described as a fairly intensive tele-marketing operation. The real motivation for this move is not apparent, as he had been working in Cheltenham before that. He describes himself as an inquirer; in search of novelty. He wouldn't mind going back to work for someone else providing it was something

he could be passionate about. He indicates that there might be a tension about doing this, which is indicated by a passage saying that he couldn't see him being employed by someone else. It would appear to be difficult to do this because you would be thinking differently than other employees; to have available a different reality.

Money's a driver but its it's the focus of of the:: sort of economic viability of a job has changed with having children such that you know err initially before I had a family as it were you know I wanted to take on the world and earn as much as I could and I'd do anything to do that an' it was like oh fantastic and you know you jump ship the next minute if it was you know it was earn some more money I didn't actually do that but that was almost the perception that I had about being successful

The rewards emanating from the business had become multitudinous. At one stage, he thought that it was all about what money you earned and how this was, to him, a measure of self-worth. He says he values self-reliance and not being dependent on anybody. The idea of independence is here but perhaps there is a feeling of peacefulness against the activities of the market. There may be one day when I am not so busy. This interviewee uses the phrase 'pushing I'm always pushing' which strikes a chord with what the first interviewee said; he was always running. In the current interview, it feels like a very personal effort he is busy and busy pushing seems like to want to get there against some resistance. Running seems to indicate a lack of pace of somehow falling behind. By keeping up with developments he is very aware of temporality; opportunities can easily pass you by. Pushing seems to open up the market as you would a door with a rusty hinge.

"for me to engage with the market is really well there's two aspects to that there's the human side where I'm actually meeting people meeting clients that important I enjoy that I enjoy meeting people and talking to them because what we when we're selling stuff we're usually solving problems for them and I really enjoy doing that and for them to sort of almost faces to light up and of that brilliant, fantastic you know this is great erm but then in terms of a commercial sense engaging with the market is kind of preparing the business to take the products and services to the most appropriate market and that an are of weakness that we've got as a business and that I've got I think because we haven't actually said ok right we're gonna go after this market or that market"

The interviewee draws the distinction between engaging with the market in a human sense – the customer interaction – and the commercial sense. In the commercial sense, this is about bringing a product to market that was not available before. This is no longer about customisation, busyness or pushing as such, but about thinking over the longer term and applying consistent pressure to realise it. It is possible to see that engagement with the market in his commercial sense is centred on the product, by making a complete product available that was not there before.

The possibilities that he had opened up did not seem very strong. A lot of the time was spent talking about what he would do if this one didn't work. How he might scale down and have a low-key business. His family had become more important (Culkin & Smith 2000). He did not feel that he had more decision-making autonomy. The view was expressed that it was easier to start this company on the back of working for the old one. The previous business had opened up the possibility of this one.

Potentially this is maybe a first version of a business that I've run that might be other things that come off from that but this is nowhere near even sort of got its self started properly yet so I don't see it as being a stage in that process yet but it could be erm there's a lot more time and effort that need you know putting into this to get it up and running properly and then where I'd like to see it going is that its kind of not self sufficient but that there's a team in place that are running it for me and I'm managing without me having to literally having to get in with the spanner and the hammer an' sort of actually make things work myself you know

He always wanted to go into business from an early age. There was some family history of being in business. He left school to work for his uncle who then went bust. He then worked with his father before going out on his own. He went back and did a degree in IT which gave him the opening to become a director of a company and then his own business. Right at the end he seemed to be still trying things; if this idea does not work, he will try something else. There was no feeling that what he was doing now, or some close variant, was what he really wanted to do. There was no substantial feeling of closeness to the IT and his abilities in that area. I can always try my hand at something else.

Fourth Interview

The fourth interview was an interview with the joint owner of two beauty salons. It took place in a quiet corner of one of her salons. It started with a long preamble about the promotion and location of the business. It turns out that the partner I interviewed took responsibility for the promotion of the business. The first section of this interview was all about the difficulties she had experienced getting sufficient publicity in the local media. She tended to rely on getting publicity from winning awards, organising charity events, and feature articles. Over the last few years they had also had a number of premises problems. They were operating from two premises one in the local leisure centre. The leisure centre had been redeveloped and then they had to move into temporary premises for two years. They successfully bid for the space in the new leisure centre and then there were extensive floods locally, resulting in the leisure centre being used for an emergency rescue centre. It can be appreciated that this did not produce the right atmosphere for a beauty business. Their other premises had also been badly damaged by fire. At the time of the interview, they had just decided to consolidate into one set of premises at the leisure centre and redevelop their other property as flats for rental.

She starts the discussion of the market by saying that she considers it to be varied the chosen factor for the variation was age. She details her customers as varying in age from eight to eighty, with a wide income distribution. They were predominantly drawn from the local area.

Erm our markets really varied I mean we get everybody from:: probably 8 years old upwards so:: you know clients bring in their daughters sometimes for a quick manicure or something erm or ear piercing we start at age 8 right upto a lot of my clients are in their 80's so:: it's a real a really broad spectrum of ages and financial sort of situations and things so its just about every everybody you can think of really. Predominantly female ~ I was just about to say that~ but other than that everybody across the board. ~And is it locally?~ yeah I mean the majority of it is local but because we:: we do the IPL and Laser hair removal in Hucclecote which is quite specialist

This local trade had one exception. It was for a specialist treatment that means that they are in competition with private hospitals. People for this treatment will

travel from Bristol and Swindon. For this treatment, their advantage is that they offer continuity of treatment with the same person. People seem to value the personal connection. She was then asked how she saw the market.

“yeah I mean clients are much more aware now than they use to be erm. ~ About what’s on offer or what they want?~ Both both I think when I first started out years ago you’d have maybe two machines well three machines, You’d have an electrolysis machine, a wax heater and maybe a sort of slimming machine with the pads that contract the muscles whereas since then your spending like 30 odd thousand pounds on laser hair removal and extra sort of machines and things the technology is hugely moved on so to keep up with the trends we’re having to spend huge amounts on machines but clients demand that because obviously there much more awareness now they read a lot more magazines there’s a lot more articles about beauty and I think whereas it used to be seen as a bit of a luxury its now sort of common place”

The market seems to have changed in terms of customer knowledge – people are more aware of what is available. This may be a manifestation of greater demand. It also may be that they have to follow the market that is created by the professional marketing spend of the larger players. In this way, she seemed to be similar to the curtain maker who found that it was important to have the latest fabrics available. In this way they kept up with the market in considering that they should have the latest products. She does tend to see the market in terms of abstract details. As noted above these were the determinable factors of demographics, location, and customer understanding. This stance was partly modified by other comments she made. In the first section of the interview, she did say that they lost a number of clients when they moved back to the leisure centre.

“if we moved of out here (.) we’d lose everything (.) all the money we’d invested on doing it up (.) and we’d walk away with nothing (.) and somebody else could walk in (.) and take over (.) so I’d suggested doing it the other way round because we own the building in hucclecote so we’re actually going to develop that into flats and bring the business here. So its huge changes going on at the moment its literally just happening in the last sort of month so.hhh ~ Is that public knowledge or-? Just yeah literally just. Yeah I mean we told our staff last week and then obviously we’re not hiding it because clients are very you know they’re like family you know if we don’t tell them they’d get funny and its better to you know”

Clients are like family; being a family is a relationship that is personal and enduring. She also mentions later that the difficulty with her being ill is that she would have to ring up the clients and rearrange appointments, which would upset them. She also said that the rewards of doing what she is doing are that she enjoys clients and helping people. She also thinks about further customer groups. One of these groups could be the Asian population and whether it would be a growth area for her treatments.

“so erm we were talking about this actually coz we put our prices up recently and:: most people have been very sympathetic about it because of the credit crunch everybody’s doing it we haven’t actually put them up for a year and a half anyway we’re hoping not to do it this year but one of our suppliers has put their prices up twice this year and we said the only clients that seem to have been concerned about it are the electrolysis clients and I said my theory behind that is because they see it as an essential as a necessity rather than a luxury so you know it it’s a luxury facial and your enjoying it and relaxing you don’t mind paying an extra pound whereas if its painful and not particularly relaxing but its functional you sort of think a bit like petrol you know you don’t mind paying extra for a pair of shoes or a nice dress but you don’t wanna pay more for your petrol(hhh)”

This is an indication of her ability to see different groups of customers, and understand the market in those terms. The former are more price sensitive than the latter but are more consistent. The market contains this constant need overlaid with the latest fashionable treatments. The biggest element of her trade was the hair removal that fell into the essential category. The other aspect to this business is the constant engagement. It is more than a full time job.

“like that sort of took over my days off for quite a few months and now were having all these changes constantly at home on my computer my husband goes mad always on the computer its like part of me ~ what what just ~all the time just proofing things emailing people chasing things up erm you know at the moment I’m just doing the yellow pages advert doing an article for the citizen erm I’m doing Christmas cards for our clients vouchers to go in the Christmas cards new style Christmas gift vouchers you know the marketing side of it there’s always lots of lots of things to to do –and you almost , that’s your whole life”

When asked how much she felt the business was part of her; she felt that it had taken over her whole life. This dominance was described in terms of activity. She

was constantly working in her business even in her days off. Her children had now started school and the fact that they could play by themselves more often, gave her more time to work on the computer. The level of activity was going to increase in the near future with the move; and the associated paperwork; and applying for new certificates; and the launch promotion. She hoped that, once the consolidation into one premises is completed there will not be such a volume of activity. This personal commitment could be connected with her ownership of the business. When asked if she could sell the business she said she would if she was offered the right money. The reason for this is that she suffers from guilt about the family. This would probably be like a 'career break' because it would be fine to start with and then she would need to do something else later. Most of the business owners in the research were like this. They cannot imagine life in the long term without doing it. Through her constant involvement and responsibility for the business, she has put her husband off any thought of being in business. She could not take the day off ill without a lot of effort reorganising her client list, which they would find inconvenient. It is a constant insistent being there.

She is in business more for the clients than the money; they are the most important factors. It was not explored in the interview but the importance of clients may have grown whilst being in business. Perhaps it was not the case when she just finished her college training as a beauty therapist. She did however go into partnership because there were limited opportunities to increase her earnings working as an employee.

"I think as soon as I was at college I thought always thought because you know that's the only way to sort of achieve anything really. Erm I've always had a bit of a chip on my shoulder about being a beauty therapist to be honest I think if I was anything else then I wouldn't have minded working for somebody but to me being a beauty therapist is a bit nothing its not very important in the scheme of things"

So the opportunity of greater rewards was an incentive at one stage at least. She finds it amusing that she might want to make the opposite move and go back to having no responsibilities. Her moment of wanting to go into business was at college because she saw it as the only way to 'get on' in this business. Strangely

enough, she seems to devalue the occupation of beauty therapy, and feels that businesswoman is a more valued role. It is probable, but not certain, that this valuation comes from her social world. She does enjoy helping people and caring for them.

Fifth Interview

This interviewee was the joint owner of a country pub with his father. He had trained as a chef and worked in large hotels in different parts of the country. They then bought the pub between them near the family home. When he was asked about his market he starts by saying how the pub is the same for all comers and then goes on to say how relaxing the country pub is.

“rule number one as a publican is (.) doesn't matter what people drive up in or: (.) how much money they've got (.) they're all buying the same.hhh (.) they pay the same price (.) for the same product (.) erm and they all () in and that (.) really is (.) one of the secrets to a good pub... its much more relaxed (.) its err:: its all about personalities and enjoying themselves... That's the idea (.) you know it's just like (.) running a big old party all the time”

He seems to offer an anti-segmentation strategy, emphasising the personal and individual aspects of customers. The view that he gives is that the pub is therefore a great leveller, all social classes can interact. When asked about the operation of the business he said that people just turned up but they did not always turn up at once.

the British public will always know to either all turn up at the same time (...) or just not to turn up at all (.) very (.) very rarely (.) do they all come in through the door (.) with 5 minute periods in between...(.) but on a day to day basis (.) minute to minute basis (.) you've just gotta fly by the seat of your pants (.) makes it very interesting (.) erm:: but there isn't a guaranteed (...) lunch time trade...you'll wonder why your busy on a Tuesday night in the middle of January of something (.) and it just happens that (.) 4-5 of the parties that are in (.) have got a birthday on that day (.) erm:: most of it is bookings (.) which gives us a bit of a head up (.) in the evenings (.) anyway

This constant difficulty with the flow of customers did not seem to be a particular worry to him. Often a large part of business strategy is to alter the temporal flow

of customers; to segment by time. It could have been that he thought this situation couldn't be changed so he has to live with it; it is inevitable that all come at once. Whilst admitting that the notice received through bookings was useful it was his ability to cope that was valued. This ability to cope was a belief in his own competence. Alternatively he was doing reasonably well anyway and this was a standard tale about the vagaries of being a landlord. It was hard to decide definitely between these two. He did think about how he could overcome these vagaries but was reasonably sanguine about his precognition. He then followed this by saying what he thought was important in this trade.

I'd love to be able to nail down (.) exactly why people come in the door (.) or you know (.) I suppose maybe we ought to make them (.) fill in a questionnaire (.) but erm (2.0) it, I haven't got a handle on it (.) after 13 years (.) to be honest [...] you gotto' love people you gotto' you gotto' (.) enjoy being a people per- (.) well you are a people person in this trade (.) otherwise (.) it's:: it's hard just to be a business man:: (.) or just a chef (.) or:: I dunno (.) just an expert (.) on wines really (.) you need to be a bit of a (.) I was gonna say master of all trades (.) but jack of all trades an' (.) just (...) just be yourself I think.

There is a desire to acquire some data about his customers, perhaps through the use of a questionnaire. The desire was not strongly felt but if implemented, would have the effect of conflicting with being a 'people person'. You needed to be yourself and this is what he was. His thoughts about the business being separate from himself start off about expressing his personality in the pub.

Err::: (3.0) That's a tricky one because (...) I can easily say (..) end up saying something sort of a: bit conceited.hhh (.) I try and put my mark on (..) everything we do [...] you know maybe if I (1.0) if I erm (.) sold this place (.) and picked up somewhere else where I didn't know the area (.) maybe I wouldn't fit in [...] but because I've got the background of (.) knowing the area (.) I was brought up in the area (.) I've always been in well (.) pubs or hotels

Throughout this passage he finds it very difficult to separate himself from the pub, he has always worked in a pub and feels himself to be part of the locale, being brought up here. The business is a very personal operation, his mark is on everything. The next question was about making money. He is not in business to make money, but to survive and to do his bit for the need to socialise. He then

goes on to describe the difficulties with expansion. You need an incredible amount of trust to allow someone else to manage it. There are always so many enticements to theft in running a pub you are better keeping your eye on your own pub. He demonstrates anxiety about losing control and sees people in very personal terms. He needs to be close to them rather than manage them through procedures. This is more of being as a people person but also it reveals more about the personal nature of the business. It is too integral to him to let others do it.

“No° (.) is the short answer (.) we’re in business to survive (.) erm:: but I mean we’re just a Mike out there (.) must hit his head against a brick wall (2.0) erm he’s:: (.) he is our financial [...] it’s it’s socialising when there’s not enough socialising in the world (...) everybody’s so wary of each other [...] I mean a lot of people might think oh well we’ve done well here we’ll kind of franchise it or whatever, it doesn’t work with pubs because you need the people in there (2.0) possibly if a youngster came along was really keen on the business and I could nurture him and trust him. And the trust you’ve got to have for this sort of business for this sort of business is unbelievable because there’s so many temptations around [...] it’s taken me thirteen years to get to the point where I let anybody else lock up, apart from me or my father”

This view means that he is not prepared to put systems in place to monitor the stock and the takings. This is probably because this is complicated and not what he is in business for; to promote conversation. The operational control is part of the personal competence. With regard to engaging in the market, he started a website because he did not want to be left behind, but it needed to be based on a personal contact.

“how did you go through this website? ~ (3.0) Again another local lad (.) coz I always like to use the smaller people if I can because I think there’s a lot to be said for personality, you get value when you know somebody err whereas if your just going on price alone to the biggest boy erm:: you might have you know scale erm (...) of size is what I am after. He might be able to produce everything for you a damn sight cheaper (.) but you don’t necessarily get exactly what you want (...) err:: err:: (.) a nice local company will tailor, will bend towards you [...] Why did we do it? (.) Coz I don’t want to get left behind [...How does he get ideas?] Talk to the people coz (.) you’re on the front all the time and your getting a feel for things (.) You’re also living life as well, so we sit down and watch these programs as well erm and sometimes you think well yeah I like the look of that erm:: err”

The discussion about the website was full of hesitations indicating a difficulty with expressing this topic. He keeps up with customer requirements because he talks to people. He said earlier that being out of the kitchen allows him to converse more with the customers. He also operates in the same society as his customers and sees new ideas on the television. He is able to look forward in the business through these mechanisms. There was very little comment offered about the opportunities he has opened up apart from the fact that he could do what he enjoyed. He said it was always his plan to go into a pub with his father and he undertook the earlier work to gain experience of doing this. There was a possibility that the main idea for owning the pub was his father's and not his, or at least it was a family project.

Emergent Threads

The six questions were revisited to produce a number of emergent themes for this phase of the research.

Tell me about your market? Two of the interviewees saw the market in terms of movement. This was either in terms of catching up with it, or pushing it. One saw the market traditionally in terms of client groups. The pub-owner had a non analytical idea of the market, it was all about people. The house builder was very corporate in terms of the market, and was more inclined to see it in macro-economic terms.

Is the business separate from yourself? This was the question that the interviewees had most difficulty in answering. Most did not see any distinction between themselves and the business even though they were slightly larger firms than the first group. The one who did was the joint owner of the house building business. The pub owner described how he felt this business was very personal.

Are you in business to make money? Most of the respondents were quite dismissive about this being their motivation. It was a living. The house builder's response was more about money as an essential input to the business. The software man said that he used to define his success in terms of how much he

might be able to earn. He never did test this, but was now more interested in supporting his family. The pub owner denied it was about making money *per se*.

What does it mean to engage with the market? Most of the interviewees had difficulty with the concept of engagement. It was supplemented by the description 'to get involved with'. For the beauty therapist this was all about promotion. The house builder felt it was getting to the decision makers. To the publican it was providing a space for conversation. It was these people who wanted conversation he was doing it for. The e-marketing man tended to develop continuous relationships.

What sort of possibilities has this business opened up for you? Most of the respondents felt they were different people than before. They had a bit more freedom to do what they wanted, but this was constrained by the large amount of involvement in the firm. The software man felt that he was probably unemployable now. Having had to do this for so long would mean that he probably would not fit in that position. The housebuilder was ambivalent about the opportunities created. The beauty therapist felt that, although she had more possibilities now, there was an insistent workload.

Was there a point in your life when you decided to go into business? Two people had wanted to do it from an early age; the landscape architect and the software supplier. The beauty therapist said it was what she realised that she had to do when she was at college. The house builder worked for other people before becoming constrained by the organisation. The publican felt it was a long term aim of his to open his own pub when he went to catering college.

Chapter 8

Findings and Reflections

All too often, each new day in business is dominated by the task at hand. The insistent compulsion of the present governs the locus of our thinking. It can also be observed that in our thinking there also occurs a compulsive and insistent search for direction. All too often this is interspersed between the routine activities of business maintenance. This is a different form of thinking that we are called to investigate in an active construal of the market. The nature of this thinking could be a constant theme or one that arises as contrapuntal interjections to the rhythm of business. In a business situation, reflection is not directly productive. It is an activity that might be seen as an indulgence; a distraction from the daily rhythmic urgency of business life. The only trouble is that somehow we must engage with the future. This is particularly true in areas where responsibility is engendered by a personal commitment, such as in a small business setting. In this respect, this original questioning is little different from most other areas of activity, but business enquiry has an importance generated by the need to provide for oneself and others. It is our livelihood. Additionally the results of our business activity are often governed by socially determined outcomes in the form of actions undertaken or results achieved; especially those realised as tradable assets. Although this business activity is governed by, and is in the end redeemable through, social worth, it is not entirely enclosed by the achievement of these considerable benefits. It remains located in the personal.

This research has sought to answer three research questions.

Firstly the question was asked whether micro business owners are often so involved in their competence in realising the product of their business that they see the market mainly as discrete customer interactions.

This conjecture arose from the researcher's own experience of being in a micro business and the first piece of field research confirmed this as a credible interpretation. A good number of small businesses interviewed were absorbed in their production of things for sale. This was noticeably the case when what was being sold had a tangible element, such as curtain making, computer assembly, or furniture sales. Product based competence was also evident in the cases where the product had non-tangible characteristics, such as the architect and the marketing consultant, but this was not so prominent. On occasions this direct product engagement was attenuated by particular business experience. One of these attenuating experiences was generated by owning another business either concurrently or sequentially. Often the process of separation from the intensity of the first business, led to a view of business as being less personal, less absorbing. This also appeared to be so for the consultant in his telecommunications business. He talks about what sort of business he wants, not what exists and how he would like it to be able to reflect his style.

"I don't want a business that reflects that sort of style ~right~ because that's not me ~yes umm~ I'm reasonably conscious of that although I am also conscious of that doesn't mean it is the () way it reflects my personality ~right~ rather than it's the better way to do it, in some respects"

Additionally in this business, the main product was not available for launch yet which may have governed his responses. The talk about the business was in the future. It was therefore more centred on what might be available and a reduced absorption on the existent competences. This reduced absorption seemed to be the case with those interviewees who had been employed previously in another business, or came to business with a financial perspective. This trait was not noticed in the first field research, but was noted in the further set of research interviews. In the latter case, they saw business as an investment such as the housebuilder.

“Err well obviously we deal in economics, it’s all about money (.) you know supply and demand (.) err you know if people can’t buy houses then we’re: not gonna’ build them (.) and they’re not gonna’ get sold (.)...I’ve done lots of things (.) and never ever (.) come out of anything (.) and left a disaster (.) behind me.hhh (.) my credit record is intact (.) my reputation is intact (.) especially in the financial markets (..) and:: that’s very important to me”

In avoiding disaster this interviewee had never left a business that was not in some way successful and he retained his understanding of his own competence. The experience of the first business would need to be sufficiently positive to enable the engagement with subsequent businesses. This would be the majority of interviewees as those with a negative outcome were not likely to be in business again.

This creation of the small business situation can be determined by antecedent factors. So for the curtain maker the main one was the way she was brought up;

“you know that’s what you did you made your own clothes, knitted jumpers you know that’s what we did, just assumed everyone did it”.

There was also the particular incident that got the business started; I didn’t want to go back to work um as an engineer, because basically I didn’t want to leave the kids. In the case of the PC man his incident was being made redundant:

“I used to work for the generating board and at the time of privatisation and so on when they were offering large amounts of money for people to go away, essentially, that was the root of it”

One initial finding of the research is that it reveals evidence for the view that the market knowledge of micro business proprietors is intimately connected with the situation they are in. Whilst our experience in some way governs the creation of knowledge for human understanding, the situational aspect of knowledge in these businesses remains strong. This aspect could be produced by various involvements, one important one of these is the product offering. The research discussed the necessity of survival leading to the focus on the product. The following are from the PC repairer and the furniture supplier.

“(I) can’t think of one time we ever totally failed, well I can think of one where we...worked on that all of Sunday and at eight o’clock we decided we weren’t going to do it, so we put it back and we finished at twelve and we ended up with a machine which was...exactly the same as it was when we started”

“(...) it was survival really more than anything else... we did not have a penny to our name it was a make or break”

It is worth noting that this was not universally the case. Where a distance existed between the customer and the business owner, or the goods were not significantly customised, then there was a reduced knowledge commitment in this form. The majority of the companies in the further field investigation were like this. They were no longer dealing with customers on a daily basis. This was true of the interviewee who ran a country pub.

“if your cooking that is a full time job especially this time of year its it its err one dish after the next and your prepping for the next session, before you’ve finished the other one (.) and you haven’t got time to worry about the VAT rate or changing the price on the bar or talking to the customers I suppose... I’ve got more strings to the puppet now... At the same time you have also got to make sure behind the scene that your making your 60% and you’ll still have pub at the end of the year that’s running and paying the bills so its fun mix of professionalism and err”

This research thus reinforces the idea that significant elements of the micro business practice incorporate situational factors which are similar to those of the ‘artisan’ discussed earlier, autonomy, product focus, and personal contact (Smith 1967; Stanworth and Curran 1973). It has been observed that a large part of the entrepreneurial effort expended in a small business attracts descriptors such as energy, commitment and persistence (Collinson & Shaw 2001). This tacit knowledge, developed as a result of ‘indwelling’ with the outputs of their business, may restrict the ability of the small business owner to realise a vision of the business. This reduced vision can sometimes appear as being comfortable.

“it was always a matter of finding the place that fitted us and the area ...and I think that, (1.0) that makes life an awful lot easier if you know a bit of history to the people that are coming through the door, you can sit back and chat to them about the wife, the home this that and the other it all makes it that much easier

rather than having stilted conversation about the weather or the news or whatever. It's a lot easier its nicer to be part of that like your friend rather than a landlord (.) and to be able to run a business based on that"

It can also be construed that being there can appear as a general 'busyness' of the firm, and a high level of activity can be comforting; we are busy we don't need to worry about the near future. This illustrates the temporality of the firm, the available time to bring forward future ideas and the avoidance of boredom as an attunement. The profound form of boredom results in being held in limbo and being left empty, this leads to a loss of the attunement which is responsive to temporality (Heidegger 1995; 144).

"((We've got customers)) through other people who've recommended we spoke to them, went in to pitch to them and erm kind of won the business so erm yeah we have won work through that telemarketing but ironically we've switched that off at the moment because it wasn't generating enough leads to justify the costs of of doing it so erm we've just switched it off and we:we're so busy at the moment anyway with existing clients that are doing other things that we're doing other things with so erm we're a funny sort of business in that sense"

The extent to which this business is atypical is a moot point. This business was in the position of having a greatly customisable product, the search was then for what he could do for existing customers. In contrast to this view on busyness, it may be that the failure to realise this product awareness, by remaining too busy, restricts the progress of the venture (Caputo et al 2002). If the knowledge of what our products are through realising their equipmentality, then we are more secure about our knowledge of them. The diversity of the offering brings complications in gaining this understanding. The activity-based knowledge is predominant and preferred to environmental scanning, this was not an option mentioned as a productive direction to choose in developing the business in the current difficulties.

"pubs are such a different business from anything else because it's so difficult to put a price on things or erm (2.0) I don't know just to label you product really as erm:: you know if you're running a shop you have a certain stock. If you're a butcher you have meat, you, you I don't know, you you you have a sign above the door and that's what you are (.) whereas with a pub it's, I don't know, there's so much,"

In conclusion, this research question about the extent of micro business owner's knowledge produced a number of revealing insights about management of micro businesses. It has allowed the view that what is productively generated is a self-defining aspect of the practice that is micro business management; it can be said to have explanatory power in the understanding of the business. This knowledge was more secure where the product they were in required a degree of customisation. In this way their customised product often becomes the focus of possibilities (Flores 1998). Whilst it might have the appearance of being intuitively obvious, and in line with previous small business research, the method adopted here has permitted a situationalist exploration of the knowledge in use by micro business owners. It has thus provided a deeper understanding of micro business practice and the understanding generated.

The literature reviewed earlier explored the interactions between the business and its construed environment. The attitude of the small businesses to the competitive environment is revealed in the interviews as located typically on a personal level. The owner of the furnishing business was more concerned with competition from other people, than larger organisations. *“Some designers um especially if they have been like to interior design school um they just do room sets as such I tend to try and make them um ‘what are you going to use the room for?’”*.

The PC business was more overtly concerned with competition from larger organisations but he felt there was little he could do about it.

“because there is always smaller people that the big guys can't be bothered with, if you are Dell you are not interested in someone who wants to buy 3 PC's really”.

Whether this is really the policy of Dell is not the issue. It was the view of the kind of customers who he felt he could do business with, and those who escaped the presence of larger competitors and would eventually find him. Competition from larger organisations was like the silent pressing of an iceberg against a ship,

a force that cannot be countered by direct reaction. The comments of Lien (1997, 261) that 'marketing practice is characterised by contingency, ambivalence and doubt' seems to be relevant here. It can be noted that the knowledge of the 'market' as distinct from practice, is much more conceptually distant and the businesses often start with their customised offering.

In answer to the second research question, it was also possible to see from this research that there were some of the micro business owners who saw their main task as realising the business itself, not realising the product. There were fewer businesses in this category in this research. This may reflect either a preponderance of smaller product related businesses in the population, or difficulties of access to those that have a greater concentration on the bringing forward of new ideas because they can be more difficult to discover in prospect. The process of revealing the business itself was related to a view of the market as abstract and holistic. From a total number of possible customers they are able to analyse those that are more likely to be interested in their product. Those who sought to construct a business from a study of the market tended to adopt a more investigative approach to the market. It was possible to observe this in the business that was trying to develop an internet provision. This was a business more driven by abstract ideas than production competence. There is an argument here that the view of the market is a preliminary to the development of an understanding. Noticeably the view becomes before the understanding here; but some have suggested that this order is reversed (McNeill 1999; 23). Seeing, even at the phenomenological level, is not identical with believing.

"Yes I mean the business that I have got that I set up, aim to establish is, it's doing something because I believe it's right but also because others seem to believe it's not. You know there's an element of 'up yours' in there they are trying to prove something can be done when the world says no, there's no need for it, it's too expensive"

This was not a case of customers requesting a familiar product, but instead what they might want if it was offered to them. The product was currently abstract. The case of the architect in the first field research tended to fall between these positions. Architecture, it can be argued, is about offering feasible solutions to

customer needs. The feasible practical solutions could be radical, so to that extent this business is different to the application of design skills; it also has the realisation of ideas. This realisation became connected with an envisioned output when the project was commissioned. It then had a telos that resided in the customer acceptance and payment.

Being able to provisionally accept the first and second research questions it was thought at this stage that there was a contrast between operating within the market, and orientating the business towards the market. In order to answer the third research question it was important to revisit this research and consider if there was any connection between these modes of thought, and consider how such a connection might affect the operation of a micro business.

Exploring the various approaches that have been adopted towards this issue in previous literature allowed this research to generate some productive proposals, in somewhat greater depth, about the nature of understanding of the micro business owner. The idea of market understanding being absent, it therefore becomes a question that is not asked in those terms. Their understanding is about the business, but is contextual. This led to a focus on the epistemological stances of the various approaches to small business development. The twin aspects of the practical nature of micro-business ownership and the involvement with the world led to the investigation how Heidegger's philosophy might illuminate this question.

It cannot be assumed that the productive engagement and the market openness are on a line of continuous transition. In the section on small business development, it is often proposed that progress within that clearing is via distinct stages. There is an argument to be said that as these are two different concepts and the movement from one to the other is not necessarily progressive. These are what I shall come to call the thrownness and the vision. It is the interface between them that is the issue. It is not managing the transition but the leap that is important.

It may be that the timidity of small businesses, in their explanation of new product development, is a result of their lack of unique knowledge. In starting a business someone knows nothing about the actual operation of the business and the development of this knowledge occupies a large part of their attention.. They learn about how the product is received and acquired by the customer. It might be the case, in a number of instances that some previous knowledge of the product delivery process is available, but not fully transferable to the current business situation. Once you have attracted the initial customer, the business needs to be maintained. In terms of business knowledge, only when the entrepreneur has attracted subsequent customers, and is happy with their ability to bargain or to organise the process, are they able to have conversations with others about future development. Their temporal horizons are on the immediate aspects of being there in terms of maintaining a business presence. This prevents them exploiting the tacit knowledge of other potential partners. So a picture framer might consider the development of a new lightweight product and might need to know the possible attributes of various aluminium mouldings. It might be the case that a general enquiry might elicit little response. It might be the case that the specific enquiry cannot be formulated with current knowledge, it is difficult to ask for something you cannot describe reasonably accurately. Because of the greater explicitly available knowledge of a larger organisation it might be likely to generate a more detailed response, and would 'read between the lines'.

The field research supports an interpretation that sees the move to opening up the market as a leap into a different form of activity. The interviewee who expressed his views in this light was the landscape architect.

"we need to (.) now (.) sort of (.) take away the(.) sort of all encompassing landscape marketing sort of image (..) and sell via either a separate (.) sort of section within that website or a separate (.) website (1.0) this this landscape (1.0) appraisal this character appraisal work that we do (.) and then sell that in its own right to a market place that's out there"

In this passage he tries to articulate the idea of opening up opportunities and refocusing the attention onto something else. The market is still 'out there' but

the firm is opening up to receiving it. This seems not to be just projecting a new image but attempting to generate a new competence; a new method of working in a new area. Rather than concentrate on the current engagement in the practice of landscape architecture there is the projecting outward, almost like fishing for something.

“so I think engaging with it is understanding why its acting like it is (.) how it works (.) so that you can predict where its going (.) and keep your business realigned (.) to keep up with it (..) just brings us back to where I started about (.) having this (.) image this business which doesn't get tagged with doing one job (.) it actually allows to remain flexible so that if you engaged in the market place it always seems to be (.) the place where people go to (.) because its hitting the spot”

There is a need for re-alignment *to keep up*. This realignment is not about presentation anymore, it is about the flexibility of going where people go. Later in the interview, he talks about experimenting.

I think ((being in business has)) allowed me to: (.) run with my own ideas (.) so its given me complete freedom (..) to go in the direction that I think is appropriate (...) erm but at the same time (.) its allowed me to pass on (.) that sense of (.) freedom of choice (.) and direction to other people I work (.) with

He does not know what he wants to do in a cognitively constructed manner he is looking to cross over into a new area. None of the other micro business interviews has generated this approach.

The understanding of the leap needs to be elaborated further. Previously the market understanding was described as being absent from the daily engagement. It seems that the understanding of the market has particular difficulties for some small business owners because it is not there, it is not present. If this is possible then we could see a richer knowledge of the market as an acting about, and this develops its meaning in conjunction with a projecting forward, opening up a space for possibilities (Olafson 1967; 96-7; Sheehan 1995). The description of being-away is the Heideggerian terms of concealing and revealing. The idea of concealing and revealing is a manifestation of the sheltering truth of procuring,

with labouring, and the projecting open as releasement and perseverance (Heidegger 1999; 273). This, it is suggested is the mode of productive engagement that reaches beyond the productive competence. This leap does not produce a new conceptualisation; it is about a new mode of awareness. The determination of this as the difference between theory and practice would return to the world as a mode of reflective contemplation (McNeill 1999; 131). The market in being-away is non-real so it is not part of our thrownness into business as product(ive) engagement. The nature of the market as absent was introduced above. The market is something that is not ready-to-hand or letting-present (Heidegger 2002c; 45) for micro business activities as the products and customers of the business are. If we allow it as a perceptual object then this creates difficulties by taking us no further forward than Husserl's categorical intuition (Heidegger 2003; 67) a mode of pure representation. The influence of temporality is significant here. It is possible to see the difficulty as the determination of the market as that with an absence of telos. There is no conclusion to the market dynamics. A part of the productive competence of micro business people does not have this aspect. They develop an abstract competence that can be applied to a variety of finite projects. The market is not limited. If the market is characterised as the totality of the individual transactions then this is not sufficient because the market must contain some potentiality. It should not be merely descriptive in a business context. The market of all the potential transactions is too vague. Coming to terms with this leap is difficult because it is not the primary concern about the operation of the business, which, noted earlier, is the problem of survival, of avoiding finitude (Mayer 1953). The focus becomes the cashflow; cash is king in the majority of cases. As we have noted this cashflow is developed at commencement through competence. The conclusion to this is that uncovering the market in terms of resources becomes the appropriative event (Castrogiovanni 1996). This event is difficult to grasp.

The development and growth aspects referred to earlier are also implied in this observation. Often the approach to understanding business is to know more about the market, more data, etc. However the study undertaken by Daft & Macintosh (1981) discovers, against their expectations, that uncertain situations do not generate more data. They conclude that the amount of information

required is related to the perception that the situation will respond to analysis. Our approach to the market is what develops our understanding.

Whilst the micro business often eschews the development of a data collection strategy there are indications of another pathway. Knowledge development in a micro business can be characterised as the interplay or sway between the twin factors of clarification and engagement. This is not the clarification through the adoption of a decision making approach but a general grasping of things more clearly. These are things that are tenable; we are able to hold on to them; a holding fast for the opening between (Heidegger 1999; 44). In one way these two factors are implicated in the twin themes of 'bringing forward' and 'having present'. These are alternative descriptions of the projecting open and the sheltering truth. Ideas about business outcomes are brought forward and made clearer through the having present of the objects in use through a productive awareness. This bringing into appearance [*apophainesthai*] is dependant on the telos of productive thought. This productive awareness does not however come to be a falling into a general absorption with things. The productive entailment is generated from instrumentality to our purposes. The actualisation of the business can have an element of bringing into appearance, but this is not always the case. It is recollected that like the issue of competence, the business development can lack a telos. Our commitment to the business in this respect is similar to a commitment to a vision of reality (Polanyi 1962; 64) which through our efforts becomes clearer through continual refinement.

To explore this situation of knowledge development in a small business the following diagram is offered. The hermeneutic reading of the empirical interviews is represented in the diagram below, which applies the visualisation shown in Figure 4 included in the discussion of Heidegger's philosophy above.

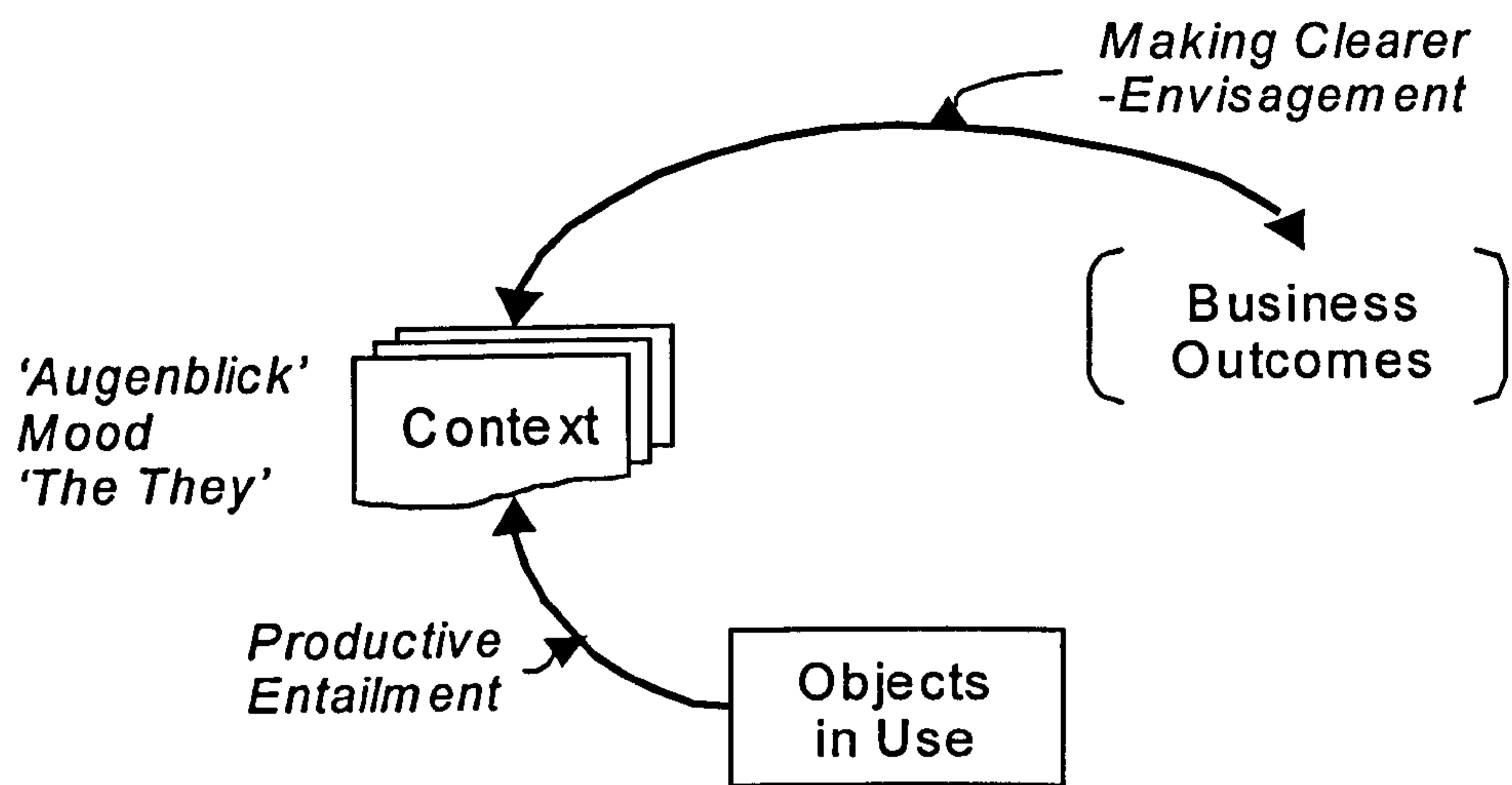


Figure 5 The Learning Dynamic in Micro Businesses

This schematic outline provides a way in, to increasing awareness of the market in a micro business as the development of a grounded openness through these two engagements. In a diagrammatic form there is shown the two tenable engagements in the small business. There is the productive entailment provided by objects in use. In this way the business is established in the effectiveness of product supply. There is also the need to make clear the nature of the business in terms of the envisagement of achievement; the outward projection of possibilities. It has been previously noted that this openness is a theme in Heidegger's philosophy which at a number of points he identifies as a productive seeing (Heidegger 1994; 92). This productive seeing is encountering through physical engagement (Heidegger 1994; 86) which reveals truth but importantly this is not through the falling into a limited craftsmanship. As discussed above this productive seeing is distinct from the formation of reflective judgements about objects ready at hand. The new nature of being is ensprung for the new knowing awareness (Heidegger 1999; 342). This personal inquiry becomes one that holds sway in the business context. This context can be the need to move from the average everydayness typified in 'The They'. The roots of this average everydayness could be in Nietzsche's last man (Magnus 1978 ;33). There is some argument that the average everydayness is not overcome by the hermeneutics of facticity but by the move to the decisive leap or *Augenblick*

(Davis 2007; 27). To achieve this there needs to be a holding open to what can be developed by a better awareness of our waiting existence in the business. To an extent, this resembles Polanyi's twin processes of; a fumbling to be corrected later, and a pioneering to be followed up later (Polanyi 1962; 93). Heidegger develops the understanding of being which goes beyond that of indwelling with objects, to consider the productive leap to openness. This is founded on the event of appropriation, a rich ownership of the business. This is a richer view of ownership than the merely legal.

The uncovering of the event of appropriation, as enowning, is founded on Heidegger's analysis of Be-ing in *Contributions to Philosophy*. The approach to Be-ing that is given there is that it is not something that is the most general determination of otherwise uncommon beings (Heidegger 1999; 182). It can be the uncommon determination of general beings. This provides us with an opening to discuss the conception of market in small business. We are led to believe that the market for small businesses is a general determination of the practices of their customers. In seeking to make this determination general it can become a world that is set against us. In this manner it becomes the totality of all customers; some of whom we can then select from the totality through segmentation and targeting. This process thus becomes divorced from the customers we encounter, except in the most general terms. It is often proposed that the approach to this juncture is to apply rational analysis to the market as a whole thus developing a more businesslike approach. This then becomes the triumph of the world in general, in a theoretical approach. It also transfers the teleological aspect from choosing achievable general outcomes from those particular customers. In seeking to abandon the approach to environmental analysis, what is there to offer in its place? The approach offers the idea of a double 'holding-to' of competence and temporal awareness. We can approach the openness of market determination in the clearing created by the leap from the ideological aspect of customer satisfaction. What is difficult is to conjugate or join the two approaches, especially in a situation where the business has been established, perhaps contingently, on the ground of customers as individuals. It can be recalled that the importance of Heidegger's philosophy is in the determination that the world is available already. We do not have to see it in a

reflective manner, but through the combination of anxiety and the *augenblick* there is this liberation (McNeill 1999; 133). Heidegger's use of the term *sway* can be productive here. It has elements of movement and holding on. In one of the second phase interviews one interviewee described the locus of the market as a point of movement. This seemed to be the basis of his engagement and could be a description of this way of seeing the world. Heidegger is left with the difficulty that there is no clear transition between the past and the future; retrospect, aspect, and prospect. It requires a leap to dislodge us from the expanse of the temporal horizon (Heidegger 1995; 151). The idea of the momentary glance [*Augenblick*] is that it contains the elements of seeing and having seen in a temporal moment (McNeill 1999; 336). In Heidegger's later philosophy this way of overcoming the connection of being and time is in the openness, and hence stillness, of the clearing (Heidegger 2002c; 68). Without this clearing then the event of appropriation [*Ereignis*] is unavailable. The knowledge about our customers is tenable but is held in our attunement towards the situation. It can be postulated that the owner who keeps trying this is continually attempting to make things clearer but never quite succeeding. In this way the objects in use, the real relationship with the proficiency fails to reveal their true power. There is always something that is not quite right – 'let's try something different'. There is a failure to let beings to reveal what they are which is hinted at in the connection and production. The jointing that explicates the two factors of knowing awareness is the context of the business situation. Without a context of attunement in the individual proprietor as *Da-sein*, then the potential revealing becomes abstract.

In the *Origin of the Work of Art* Heidegger gives us an example of how we are able to understand what and how a being is and indicate the process of an alethic understanding (Heidegger 2002b; 16). It appears that this process of understanding is dependant on a pathway to understanding. In the *Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger uses the Greek word for war – *πολεμος* - to give the idea of confrontation that allows joints to open up (Heidegger 2000; 65). Opening up the joints allows us not to see what a thing really is but allows us to see how a thing develops possibilities. This does not mean that truth becomes dependant on subjective belief, but it sees more facets to the situation than a correspondence

between belief and object. This openness allows us to develop the anticipatory envisioned idea - εἶδος προαιρεσις (Heidegger 1998d; 192). This emergence of truth as revealing is dependant on the context. These ideas are not generated in isolation and attunement is the vitality of this emergence. This vitality is dependant on attunement and could be enabled through distress (Heidegger 1994; 133). This is not a psychological motivation but arises from the way that being is concealed and revealed. It is the surplus of a gift (Heidegger 1994; 133).

In order to further develop the context of the joining it can be conceived that the population of small businesses can be described on the following two dimensions. These are those of being successful (however defined) and whether the owner has made an authentic existential choice. Thus the table represented becomes:

	Authentic	Inauthentic
Market Success	<i>Market Engagement</i>	<i>Serendipity</i>
Ignoring the Market	<i>Craft Engagement</i>	<i>Inauthenticity and Probable Market Failure</i>

Figure 6 Micro Business Outcomes

This diagram shows the result of the possible choices made by micro businesses in their coming to terms with the market. It is offered as an outcome of businesses that have responded to the market either actively or passively. It also presents the current understanding of micro businesses within a new dimension. This is an interpretation based on the empirical data and postulates the existence of four types of business. The label authentic is shorthand for those proprietors

that have opened themselves to an uncovering of beings and a consequent market awareness. This is an engagement that dwells in the truth of being there.

Whilst success is noticeably difficult to define except post-facto it can be postulated that this is what we are in business to achieve. Business is an intentional activity and is aimed at successful outcomes, which can be on a number of dimensions. It is noticeable that there is not a great desire for the achievement of personal fame or great wealth amongst the interviewees. Hirschman (1990) identified this as a relationship that required further study. The lack of evidence for this linkage in these businesses is perhaps a factor for their concentration on locally embedded product focused knowledge. The important factor here is the equipmental being of the business. The business has equipment as such, but the business itself has an equipmental purpose for us, in that we direct the business to achieve our intentions. This equipmental standing towards the business can become dominant as our view of the equipmentality of things has become dominant in the understanding of beings (Heidegger 2002b; 17). In *The Provenance of Thinking* Heidegger points out that our alethic understanding is not an empty rigid openness but an encircling revelation. As we have seen the thinking that comes to play here is glimpsing [*Erblicken*] (Heidegger 2003; 96). This glimpsing is a way of responding to the call of Being that is not based on a subjective willing (Davis 2007; 97). The insight of the authentic glimpse [*Augenblick*] can be one way of revealing the truth of the business. Figure 6 above shows how it is possible to place this opening within the situational outcomes of small business. By raising the issue of authentic grasping of the business situation, this diagram can be used to read back into the small business situation the issues of equipmentality and openness. It may be useful to talk about apprehension in this context as meaning the capture of understanding. It is distinct from the apparent. In this regard it is not analytical; it is in its function, a way of opening up to business understanding. It allows a way back in to the discussion of the productive leap to openness as shown in Figure 5

The e-marketing interviewee described himself stepping away from the business. This is a glimpse of a removal from direct operations as the business grows. It is

possible to reveal this as a stepping out. A stepping out can break with the compulsion of time discussed earlier. The stepping out is a choice to revisit the jointure of letting/revealing in the business. This is the way the small business owner develops the new world. This resoluteness avoids the dangers of serendipity and market failure.

At the start of this study it was noted that frequently normative solutions have been applied to this type of firm in an attempt to place their operations and development into a standard business model. The history of the development of marketing in a micro business has resonances with the feminist idea of a hidden history, which has been concealed from the standard androcentric narrative (Belenky et al 1986; 5). This is because what has been called the situatedness of small businesses is one that has been largely concealed beneath the standard business narratives, involving research into the environment as a totality and coordination. This relegates the study of small businesses to a neglected area from whence it emerges as an occasional subtext.

This research has addressed the identified need for further research on how entrepreneurs develop their individual and situated realities (Thorpe et al 2005), this can be combined with the perceived uncertainty of opportunity recognition (Shane 2003; 267). It has discovered a new approach to adopting a market-awareness in the micro business. In the case of marketing, the research is too occupied with piecemeal conceptual development and suggests that some of Schumpeter's creative destruction is applied (Gummesson 2005). It has been proposed in this research that the situation of small businesses is governed by a focus on product delivery to particular customers. They do not open up to the market that reveals the clearing for a more resolute stance. They maintain their economic activity by letting be in the appropriating world of machination, but do not adopt the fundamental attunement that is necessary for the admitted engagement (Davis 2007; 233). It has been proposed in this research that the authentic glimpse is what can reveal this transition. The authentic leap is motivated by the context of mood and the effect of 'The They'; those people who have power over you. To use Heidegger's terms this research has thus

projected an opening to seeing small business understanding in a different way. Further research is needed to develop this new understanding and to study its wider implications.

It may be the case that the possibility of reflexive phenomenological research into entrepreneurship is rare (Bergland 2007; 80). In that case this research may have a rarity following the researcher's past experience, and it has adopted a methodology that adds to the value of this research. It is recommended that this methodology is employed and developed to support further research in this field.

To conclude, this chapter has a combination of two things. A reading of Heidegger's philosophy combined with the results of reflective empirical research. It is shown that this combination has revealed a new understanding of the micro business situation and the possibilities for market understanding. This study has revealed that this new way of understanding the market is a consistent interpretation of how micro businesses respond to their situation. It has also revealed a new way of understanding small businesses that has the possibility to be productive in its own right as a method of developing businesses.

Chapter 9

Conclusions

This research started by considering the difficulties with understanding market knowledge in a micro firm. The majority of micro firms gain their rewards from mutual beneficial exchange with their customers. The gaining of new customers is often difficult and requires a considerable degree of effort. The standard business approach is to apply cognisable rationality to this task. This research has found evidence for the development of market knowledge in a micro business can result from a leap into a new engagement. This leap requires a break from the content but not the methods of small business understanding. This leap can be enabled by the current attunement of the business owner.

This research has discovered some evidence for the interpretation of small business operations as an engagement in competence. This competence continually has a telic engagement in the production of customer requirements. This engagement is undeveloped in the appreciation of markets. Further research is needed to develop this insight and employ it in other situations and places where small business development is needed. The questions that should be explored in further research are covered in two areas. Firstly there is the need to deepen and enrich the empirical basis of this research to make it more robust. This can occur both in the application of the reflexive methodology and in an extended population of small businesses. Secondly is it possible to research further the applicability of these findings as an application to business development and entrepreneurial education? The need for further research in

particular is the possible transition forwards and backwards from Figure 5 to Figure 6. The movement from one to the other in terms of particular strategies could be a productive research direction. Shane (2003; 267) considers that one of the areas for future research is that of how entrepreneurs overcome the uncertainty of opportunity recognition. It may however be that the idea of mood or attunement is more important in the small business than abstract opportunity recognition. The idea of mood is that which relieves us from the falling-into that is the characteristic of thrownness. Acting within as product knowledge skills, thrownness and lapsing. If we have engagement with things on the factive understanding that they are always already there then this produces an understanding of what we are able to do.

Developing this research in the future may be dependant on broader developments in society. At the end of the first decade of the 21st century there are possibilities of a movement towards a sustainable future. If this movement continues to gain strength, then the social worth of a business might be appreciated more in terms of sustainability than the generation of monetary value. The aim is not to see this in utopian terms but as a response to the challenges facing economies in the future.

A retrospective view of this research journey sees the importance of two notable outcomes from the commitment involved. It has provided some new research insights into the development of a micro business market understanding. It has also seen the personal development of myself as a researcher that has allowed a more robust approach to emerge. Somewhere at the end of this research journey I find some echoes of McPherson's (2005) observation that coping with complexity we need some sort of self-confidence and resilience. Although the study of Heidegger was undertaken for this research, I can appreciate more fully the way he also places the need for resoluteness within the need to develop a new understanding. I hope this final chapter has demonstrated some small amount of both. At the start of this thesis, this research was held out as a personal journey. There was not only the result of the research but it was the process of doing it, which was part of the outcome. Heidegger was introduced halfway through this

research and two of his constant metaphors are the pathway and the clearing. This journey has made me into a researcher through sticking to the pathway. I was not always sure which was the right path but it mostly ran forward ahead of me. It has at times been difficult and has necessitated me taking one or two leaps of my own into new ways of thinking. This is what I think the clearing might be; that which draws you into new ways of being. I can see now that these two have governed my life since I started this research. It has been life changing. I hope you have found it as productive as I have done.

Appendices

Appendix A. Interview Transcription Conventions

The glossary of transcript symbols given below is taken from Have (2004) and used to broadly follow the major conventions for rendering details of the vocal production of utterances in talk-in-interaction as these are used in most current CA publications. Most if not all of these have been developed by Gail Jefferson but are now commonly used with minor individual variations. The glosses given below are based on, and simplified from, the descriptions provided in Jefferson (1989: 193-6), at times using those in Atkinson & Heritage (1984), Psathas & Anderson (1990), Psathas (1995), or Ten Have & Psathas (1995). Whilst Have amended the set provided by Jefferson to the ones most commonly used, omitting some of the subtleties, I have not needed to use some of the conventions especially those that relate to multiple interviewees and the overall timing of the interview.

Sequencing

- [A single left bracket indicates the point of overlap onset.
-] A single right bracket indicates the point at which an utterance or utterance-part terminates vis-à-vis another.
- = Equal signs, one at the end of one line and one at the beginning of the next, indicate no 'gap' between the two lines. This is often called latching.

Timed intervals

- (0.0) Numbers in parentheses indicate elapsed time in silence by tenth of second, i.e. (7. 1) is a pause of 7 seconds and one tenth of a second.
- (.) A dot in parentheses indicates a tiny 'gap' within or between utterances. Characteristics of speech production

Characteristics of Speech Production

- word Underscoring indicates some form of stress, via pitch and/or amplitude; an alternative method is to print the stressed part in bold.
- :: Colons indicate prolongation of the immediately prior sound. Multiple colons indicate a more prolonged sound.
- A dash indicates a cut-off.
- „?? Punctuation marks are used to indicate characteristics of speech production, especially intonation; they are not referring to grammatical units. . A full stop indicates a stopping fall in tone.

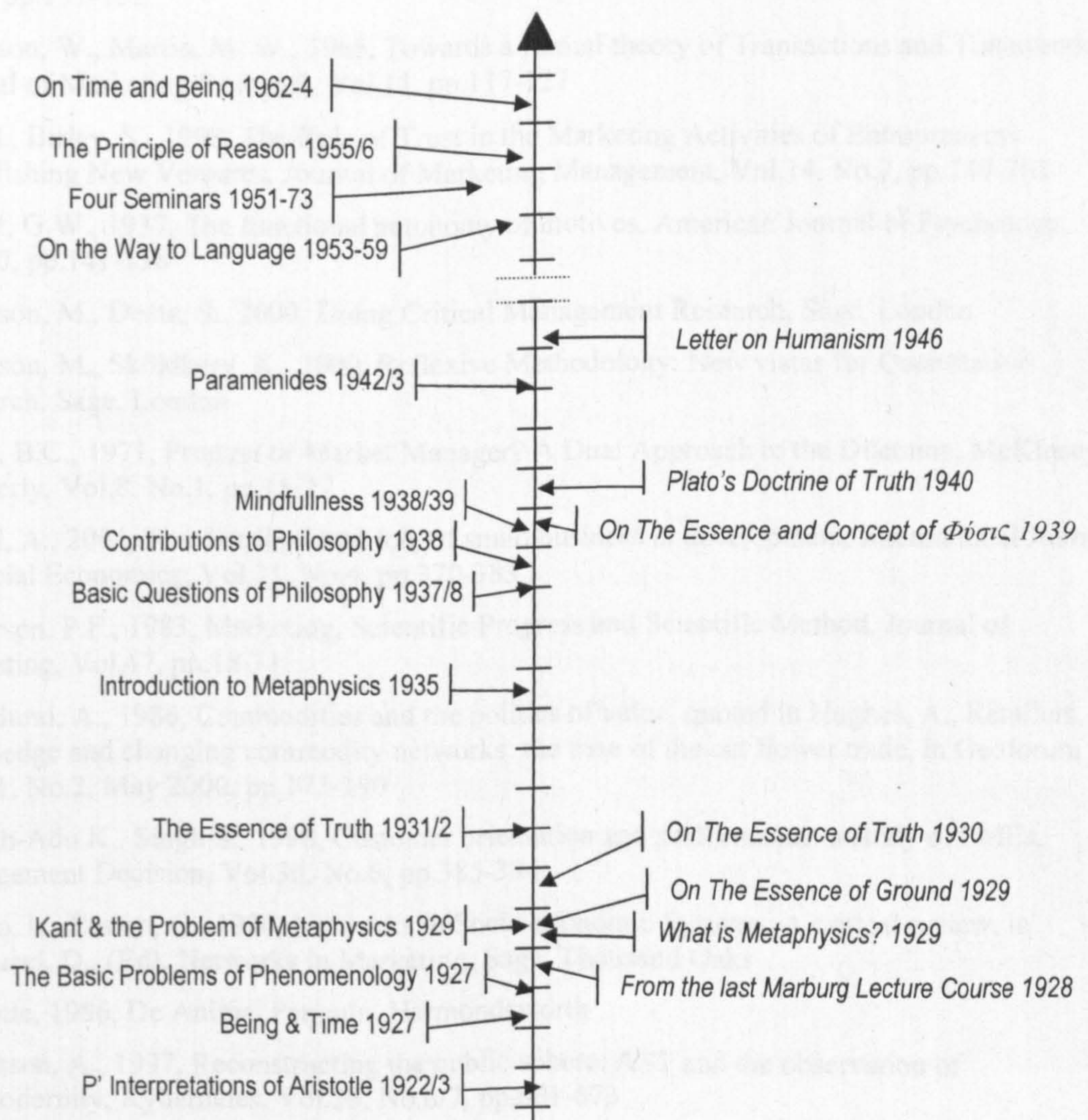
- , A comma indicates a continuing intonation, as when you are reading items from a list
- ? A question mark indicates a rising intonation.
- ↑↓ Arrows indicate marked shifts into higher and lower pitch in the utterance part immediately following the arrow.
- WORD Upper case indicates especially loud sounds relative to the surrounding talk.
- ° Utterances or utterance parts bracketed by degree signs are relatively quieter than the surrounding talk.
- < > Right/left carets bracketing an utterance or utterance part indicate speeding up.
- .hhh A dot-prefixed row of hs indicates an inbreath. Without the dot, the hs indicate an outbreath.
- w(h)ord A parenthesised h, or a row of hs within a word indicates breathiness, as in laughter, crying, etc. items from a list.

Transcribers' doubts and comments

- () Empty parentheses indicate a transcriber's inability to hear what was said. The length of the parenthesised space indicates the length of the untranscribed talk.
- (word) Parenthesised words are especially dubious hearings of speaker identifications.
- () Double parentheses contain transcriber's descriptions rather than, or in addition to, transcriptions.

Appendix B. Heidegger's Works Timeline

Given in the diagram are the works studied for this thesis and their recognised year of composition. This however is to be treated with caution as the works consulted are often later editions than the first and have therefore been amended. Whilst there is a current programme of first publication of lectures and notebooks it is also to be noted that some of the works published during Heidegger's lifetime were published some time after the date of composition⁴. The works on the left of the diagram are complete publications and those on the right are papers collected in *Pathmarks* [Wegmarken] and *Off the Beaten Track* [Holtzweg].



⁴ On the Essence of Truth was conceived in 1930 but not published until 1943. On the Essence of Φύσις not published until 1958.

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