



## Wonder-Driven Entrepreneurship Teaching - When Working with the Ethical and Existential Dimension in Professional Bachelor Education

<sup>1</sup>Finn Thorbjørn Hansen, <sup>2</sup>Sine Maria Herholdt-Lomholdt

<sup>1</sup> Professor, Ph.D. Aalborg University, Denmark

<sup>2</sup> Senior Lecturer, Ph.D. Candidate, VIA University College, Denmark

	<b>ABSTRACT</b>
<p>2016 Research Leap/Inovatus Services Ltd. All rights reserved.</p> <p><b>DOI:</b> <a href="https://doi.org/10.18775/jibrm.1849-8558.2015.41.3002">10.18775/jibrm.1849-8558.2015.41.3002</a> <b>URL:</b> <a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.18775/jibrm.1849-8558.2015.41.3002">http://dx.doi.org/10.18775/jibrm.1849-8558.2015.41.3002</a></p>	<p>For a decade or more research on innovation and entrepreneurship have been based on social constructive, pragmatic and socio-cultural approaches. Lately a more existential and philosophical – hermeneutic approach to processes of innovation and entrepreneurship have been suggested, eg. By Verganti &amp; Öberg and C.O. Scharmer. In these approaches, the idea is, in different ways, to anchor innovation and entrepreneurship in human meaningfulness. This paper continues in this line by suggesting a philosophical and wonder-based approach and by focusing on the educational consequences of such an approach. The empirical departure is a three-year phenomenological action research project in two different professional bachelor educations in Denmark (Nursing and pedagogy). In an overall and outlining way, this paper introduces to a wonder-based approach to innovation- and entrepreneurship teaching. Further, we describe why and how phenomenology of wonder can become doorways for understanding existential and ontological dimensions of innovation- and entrepreneurship teaching.</p>
<p><b>Keywords:</b> Wonder, Meaningfulness, Innovation, Entrepreneurship-education</p>	

### 1. Introduction

Contemporary research on creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship have now for a decade or more focused on social constructive, pragmatic, socio-cultural and socio-material dimensions of creative and innovative processes (Bager et al. 2010, Brinkmann & Tangaard 2010, 2012; Ledwith & Bessant, 2009; Sarasvathy, 2008; Bason 2012). New and innovative ideas are, following these approaches, understood as something individuals or professional communities of practices create in relation with specific others through product-, user- and design-driven innovation and different processes of ideation.

Lately, a more existential and philosophical-hermeneutic approach to innovation has been suggested. Verganti & Öberg (2013) talks about a change from user to meaning-driven innovation. Madsbjerg & Rasmussen (2014) write about ‘moments of clarity’ transcending what can be captured by the socio-cultural and constructive approach. Scharmer and Kaufer (2014) talks about pre-sensing as a place for “hearing the call” from an emerging future. Hansen (2014, 2018) suggest an existential and wonder-driven approach to design-, innovation- and entrepreneurship and Herholdt-Lomholdt suggest a philosophical aesthetic and beauty-oriented approach to

innovative processes (Herholdt-Lomholdt 2019). We want to continue in line with this new framework of meaning and wonder-driven innovation by focusing on the possible educational consequences of such an approach.

Our empirical departure is a three-year phenomenological action research project named: ‘Wonder-based Entrepreneurship Teaching in Professional bachelor Education’. Ten senior lecturers in nursing and pedagogy from VIA University College, Denmark participated as co-inquirers. The purpose was to investigate whether and how Socratic and philosophical dialogues and different forms of phenomenological and existential reflections in so-called ‘Wonder Labs’ could contribute to existing innovation- and entrepreneurship education. Specifically our interests aimed at two kinds of contribution: To deeply and existential root students in their profession and values and to bring students on the edge of their knowledge into a field of “not knowing but being.”

### 2. The Phenomenology of Wonder

Philosophical wonder is different from curiosity, systematic analyzing inquiry, and critical reflection. The philosophical wonder is, as Hansen (2008, 2010b, 2012, 2014, 2015a)

describes it, not as much an act or an effort of the subject as an ontological event and reaction that calls on us while living our lives (Gadamer 2006; Rubenstein 2008; Vasalou 2012 ). We experience the philosophical wonder when life meets us with severe beauty, goodness or truth and we - on behalf of this experience - stop and rethink understandings we often take for granted. Philosophical wonderment can be described as a special kind of thoughtfulness, restored to life from touching life-situations (see also Van Manen 2014).

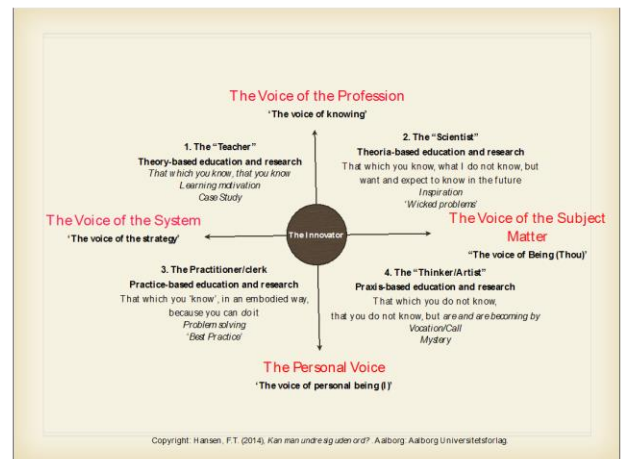
Wonder can also grow from any kind of aesthetic experience, if we understand the aesthetic experience in a philosophical way, as an existential and ontological experience (Jørgensen 2006, 2008, 2011, 2014). If we follow Jørgensen, aesthetic experience can be characterized, by the meeting of something greater than oneself - and sensing of meaning or truth given to us by life. Jørgensen name such experiences, experiences of “immanent transcendence.” In that sense, the phenomenology of wonder could be understood as a dance between poetic dwelling and Socratic dialectics (Hansen 2012). While being in wonder, we are under the impression of both ‘something’ evocative that speaks to us and a philosophical questioning, which ask for what the analytical concepts cannot in logical and argumentative ways capture. Through aesthetical, philosophical, dialectical and playful dialogue, which Socrates was so good at, we open ourselves for an ontological and silent dimension in our lives and professional practices. Thus, the phenomenology of wonder is a phenomenology of both sensuous openness and philosophical presence.

In professional bachelor educations in Denmark, students mostly learn problem-identification and problem-solving skills. Such skills are indeed needed qualifications, but at the same time limits, the extent of the students view. Great deals of the ongoing innovation and entrepreneurship-teaching, also take such departure from “irritations” and disharmonies (e.g., Bager et al. 2010, Blenker et al. 2011, Digman et al. 2012).

With phenomenology of wonder as an underlying tone and a wonder-based approach to innovation and entrepreneurship teaching, we try to take on another view. We do not think innovation and entrepreneurship from a “meaning-making-paradigm,” but from a “meaning-receiving-paradigm” (Hansen, 2014, 2018) and instead of disharmonies we take our departure from experiences of harmony.

### 3. A Wonder-Based Approach to Innovation and Entrepreneurship

In a former research-project, Hansen (2010a) introduced a model of “four voices” in higher education. This model has been further developed by Hansen (2014) to include four different views of innovation and entrepreneurship.



**Figure 1:** Model of “four voices” in the pedagogy of higher education.

At its basis, the model points out how different voices make different kinds of educational rooms as well.

In the first room, we see the voice of the System. This voice is a voice of both law and practice telling students about right, wrong and what a good professional is. The reality is taken for granted in this room, and society and market set the agenda for what the professionals are supposed to do.

Next, we see the voice of the Profession, expressing theory and empirical knowledge foundations of the profession. This voice makes a room of the already known.

The third voice is a Personal voice engaged in questions of “who am I?” and “what do I think of the voices of the system and the profession?” Through this voice, students develop personal touch and style in their profession.

At last, there is also a voice of the Subject Matter. This voice is connected to a ‘call’ and a sense of meaningfulness or dialogue with a phenomenon that comes to presence in life. This room is a place where artists or philosophers often breathe, as they listen and step aside for the matter, phenomena or materials self to speak.

In professional bachelor education, the Professional voice and the voice of the System so easily take over and stand in the way, so the ontological voice of being or the phenomena itself are not able to ‘speak’. Even the Personal voice, if it is too self-absorbed, can weaken our sense of the Subject matter.

As the model shows, the four voices can open up different rooms for innovation and entrepreneurship.

In room number 3, we see a commercial and problem-solving understanding of innovation and entrepreneurship. In this understanding, the driver for innovation and the innovation-management comes from outside the profession, e.g., the user,

the politicians or managers. In this room, innovation seeks to solve specific problems in new ways but staying within known paradigms.

In room number 1, science is the driver for innovation. Innovation is in this sense the application and translation of new research into practice.

Where rooms 1 and 3 relies on a world of the known and a kind of no-risk situation, room 2 and 4 are looking into the unknown and risk-taking thinking and actions. In these rooms, we experience an inner steering and breaking through the common paradigms in research and practice. These places could be rooms for radical innovation, as they seem to make transcendence possible.

In room 2, we would usually see a search for wicked problems and questions, that contemporary research and professional knowledge is not yet capable of dealing with. In this room, the driver of innovation is an inspiration from the Subject-matter but seen through the epistemological and knowledge lenses of contemporary research. In this room innovators look upon, and try an inquiry into, matters which we know, that we do not know yet.

In room 4, a wonder-based approach to innovation is expressed. In this room, the center is phenomena arising from practice through our 'being-in-the-world' and in an original sense without analyzing or theorizing. A wonder-based approach seeks to hear the call from practice and listen to the wonders of life. This room is a room seeking for the matters, which we do not know that we do not know – but already - in some peculiar way, are called by as beings. This room might be a place for sensing the unknown but emerging future, as also Scharmer speaks so beautifully about (Scharmer 2009).

When entering this fourth room of wonderment and not-knowing, new ideas and meanings are not solely created by human beings. Meanings are merely understood as a call and as something given to us. This implies a shift from an understanding of innovative ideas and meanings as co-created to a new paradigm of meaning-receiving (Hansen 2018). This is a field of new beginnings, which we philosophically approach through the lenses of existential phenomenology (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Knud Ejler Løgstrup, Gabriel Marcel), philosophical hermeneutics (Hans Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur), philosophical aesthetics (Jørgensen) and what Max van Manen describes as 'the phenomenology of practice' (Van Manen 2014).

Through our action-research project, we have tried to bring students from professional bachelor educations into this fourth

room. On behalf of eight teaching experiments in 2014, we have developed a model for wonder-based entrepreneurship education named the "wonder fish." In this article, we will only concentrate on some of the central aspects of the pedagogic movements in our wonder-based approach.

#### 4. Wonder-Driven Entrepreneurship Teaching

First, we separate the process of innovation and entrepreneurship into two connected parts – a project and a project (see also Darsø 2011).

The project is a place for sensing and listening to a call and wonder through dialogues, reflections, and longing. To let people reflect on what they are longing for in their life and professional work on an existential level is, we have now experienced, a very inspiring springboard for new and deeper questioning.

The project is a place of making things happen by following a now qualified wonder and longing, drawing on available resources, making plans and realization.

In this paper, we concentrate on the educational consequences in the project phase. The objectives of the project are to get in contact with a call from practice, listen to the meaningfulness of life - what the students find precious - and on behalf of this formulate a longing.

In the project, we have been working in so-called "wonder-labs" (see Hansen, 2014, 2015a). We have done four different pedagogical movements through dialogues and in some cases through music and drawings. These are:

1. The phenomenological turn and wonder
2. The Hermeneutic turn
3. The Socratic and dialectic turn
4. The existential and phronetic return to our ordinary living<sup>1</sup>

The fourth phase (the phronetic and existential return) is present as a kind of bridge to the project, where the three first three turns are settled in the project.

The phenomenological turn is a turning towards a touching situation in practice. All students are asked to tell a real-life situation connected to their profession. A situation that made an impression on them. The story has to be open-ended in the sense that it is forbidden to identify problems, do problem-solving or to have any point telling the story beforehand. The students are also asked to listen with an open heart and mind to the stories of each other. By telling these stories, we often see the vulnerability of the students and at the same time their

<sup>1</sup> For an in-depth description of these movements in the WonderLab, see Hansen 2015a.

proudnness - and values. From these often remarkable, phenomenological stories we try to open the students and ourselves as teachers for genuine wonderment and stepping into communities of wonder. As mentioned above, wonder is characterized by questioning our pre-understandings and the “taken for granted” - by a silent listening for the meaningfulness of life. When wonder happens, we take a step into the open and thereby experience the possibility of enlarging our horizon or even sense a radical break through. Philosophical and aesthetical wonderment then can be a doorway into the fourth room of innovation and is grounded both existential and ontological.

But, to enlarge horizons, we need a dialogue with something or someone outside our subjective and cultural views. Therefore the hermeneutic turn is of importance by letting personal wonder meet humanity’s Grand Stories about themes and questions that came up within the personal stories. Great stories refer to philosophy, arts, music and other kinds of artistic comprehensions of life, that are well-known by the majority. In dialogue around these great stories, we do have the opportunity to discover and even break through some of our historical and cultural pre-understandings.

The Socratic and dialectic turn refers to the way dialogues take form in communities of wonder. As Hansen (2008) with reference to the German philosopher, Hannah Arendt, points out, we can learn from the Socratic way of thinking and questioning. What Socrates did, was to ask human beings to think by themselves instead of downloading the thoughts of others. As educators in the project, we ask for the student’s independent and original thoughts and beliefs in a friendly and playful atmosphere. At the same time, we tease, provoke and search for the limitations of these thoughts.

In truth – but also surprisingly – it seems to be a great challenge for students of today, to think by themselves. Students in professional bachelor education have for several years learned to replicate the knowledge and research of their profession. To think for themselves seems to be both difficult and way out of comfort zone.

The project ends up defining a newly qualified longing and often, also a new but deeper wonderment. This longing, a longing for a fulfillment of life, will be an important leading star of the project and is now ready to meet reality for further qualification, ideation and realization.

In the project, students develop and connect their values and thinking to processes of innovation and entrepreneurship, which makes us talk of it as an existential turn in entrepreneurship-education. At the same time, the students also listen to something experienced as a wondrous “call” from practice. This can be described as an ontological turn in entrepreneurship education.

## 5. A Vision

Existential and ontological turns in entrepreneurship education have implications of importance. In professional bachelor education, phronetic judgment and ethical dimensions are at stake all the time. We do not connect the Aristotelian concept of phronesis to a practical cleverness in getting things done as quick and effective as possible intuitively. Instead, we follow Gadamer (1986, 2006) when he connects the Aristotelian concept of phronesis to our existential and ethical awareness of being-in-the-world, meaning having an ontological musicality for the voice of being, or voice of what the situation, relation or phenomena is calling us the professional to do. This demands a readiness to stand in “openness”.

Every time a nurse meets a patient, every time a pedagogue meets a child, she has to make decisions and create unique solutions, and these decisions draw on her values and ability to judge. With a meaning-receiving paradigm instead of a meaning-making paradigm – and with a wonder-driven entrepreneurship education in professional bachelor education - these solutions might tend to draw on ontological-based meaningfulness given to us by life itself, rather on an epistemology of practice and the “functionality”, that the system, profession or pragmatic and problem-solving practice calls us to do.

To get a musicality for the voice of being or Subject matter, so to say, requires training to meet other people and situations with a special kind of ontological attentiveness and wonderment.

If the phronetic judgment is a key competence in professional bachelor educations, and we think it is, this would mean, that entrepreneurship education would not only be for the few enterprising students starting up a business - but for all of them. However, then we have to think differently than most of the contemporary approaches concerned with entrepreneurship-teaching. We have to think about how to bring existential and ontological dimensions into entrepreneurship teaching. That is: To see the wonder in daily life and profession as a new source for radical innovation- and entrepreneurship teaching.

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