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– reflections on different ‘opportunity-ontologies’.

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# The becoming of an entrepreneurial opportunity – reflections on different ‘opportunity-ontologies’.

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## Abstract:

As innovation and entrepreneurship is about bringing something “new” into the world, a key point must be focusing on the entrepreneurial opportunity and how we get access to entrepreneurial opportunities.

Contemporary research within entrepreneurship and innovation are mainly based in different forms of constructivist and social-constructivist approaches, by Alvarez and Barney (Alvarez & Barney 2007; Alvarez & Barney 2010) named creation theory. Within these approaches the entrepreneurial opportunity is growing from different forms of action and co-creation either among professions or between persons.

However, newer research such as Verganti and colleagues (Verganti & Öberg 2013), Steyaert (Steyaert & Katz 2004) and Hansen (Hansen 2014) points out the possibility of - and also need for - other scientific approaches in innovation- and entrepreneurship research. With a starting point in phenomenology by Max van Manen (van Manen 2007; van Manen 2014), philosophic- aesthetics by Dorte Joergensen (Jørgensen 2008; Jørgensen 2004b; Jørgensen 2014) and with an empiric departure in the work of Hansen and myself (Herholdt-Lomholdt et al. n.d.) on wonder-driven entrepreneurship, I suggest a phenomenological and aesthetic approach to innovation and entrepreneurship. In this paper I pay specific attention to the ontology of opportunities from such approach and how it differs from a social-constructivist approach to opportunities as something co-created.

Through this paper I show three distinct differences between creation theory and a phenomenological-aesthetic approach to entrepreneurial opportunities. At first opportunities within creation theory starts out in disharmonies, whereas a phenomenological-aesthetic approach would prefer to start with a sense of harmony. Second creation theory is based in different forms of constructivism while pointing to opportunities as a endogen human creation, whereas a phenomenological-aesthetic approach instead would suggest a dissolution of the subject-object dichotomy (in creation theory expressed by the words endogen and exogenous) by instead proposing the possibility of an ‘in-between’ world, and opportunities as the revelation of the inherent meaning in this world. Finally, creation theory tends to approach the becoming of opportunities before being in the world, which differs from the phenomenological-aesthetic approach presented in this paper, where being in the world always comes first.

**Keywords:** Opportunity, entrepreneurship, innovation, phenomenology, aesthetics

## Introduction and background

As innovation and entrepreneurship in its substance is about bringing something ‘new’ into the world, a key point must be focusing on the being and becoming of *entrepreneurial opportunities*, and on how the innovative or entrepreneurial person get access to such opportunities.

As shown by Alvarez and Barney (Alvarez & Barney 2007; Alvarez & Barney 2010; Alvarez et

al. 2013), it has huge practical implications how entrepreneurs and/or educators within the field of entrepreneurship approach questions like: What is an entrepreneurial opportunity? How do the innovative person or entrepreneur realize or obtain admission to opportunities? And within which contexts are opportunities thought to be arising? In their discussions of two different intakes on these questions, described by the concepts of discovery- and creation theory, Alvarez and Barney shows us that the underlying assumptions and often non-spoken answers on such questions in existing entrepreneurship-research, can be fundamentally contradictory.

Acknowledging the need for, as a researcher on entrepreneurship, to explicitly set out his main fundamental assumptions around entrepreneurship, opportunities, the entrepreneur and entrepreneurship education, Blenker (Blenker 2015) in a recent paper wrote 11 thesis on fundamental and also ontological questions of entrepreneurship-education. Blenkers argument to do so is seen in the following quotation:

*“Hereby it facilitates the development of either a common frame of reference – or an enlightened disagreement between different takes on the core elements – of entrepreneurship education”* (Blenker 2015 p.1).

By writing this paper, Blenker in an exemplary manner shows us, how it can be possible to be both explicit and consistent when it comes to the underlying assumptions of entrepreneurship-research. He thereby also show, how it is possible to enlighten discussions on disagreements within entrepreneurship-research, -education and -practice.

In Sarasvathy’s and her colleagues thorough work (Sarasvathy 2001; York et al. 2013; Sarasvathy et al. 2014), she develops the concept of “effectuation”, which we now see widely spread as a frame for understanding the process of entrepreneurship. A frame that off course is inhabited by some basic assumptions around opportunities. These will in the further be described within a frame of creation theory. Sarasvathy (Sarasvathy et al. 2014), with a reference to a recent literature review (Jones et al. 2011), points to questions of opportunity-recognition as indeed under-researched in existing and international entrepreneurship research.

In contemporary innovation- and entrepreneurship-research, we mainly see two fundamentally different approaches to the above mentioned questions, by Alvarez and Barney (Alvarez & Barney 2007) but also others (Ramoglou & Zyglidopoulos 2015) named *discovery- and creation theory*. Of course these theories are seen in various forms, but on its basis, it seems reasonable to outline them into two main forms. As described later in this paper, creation theory seems to draw on different forms of constructivism and on an evolutionary approach, while discovery theory mainly takes its departure from Austrian economics and theories of entrepreneurial ‘alertness’ (Alvarez et al. 2013). Although co-existent, the majority of the present entrepreneurship- and innovation-research seems to be based in different forms of constructivist and social-constructivist approaches (e.g. Bager et al. 2010; Blenker 2015; Bason 2012; BASON 2012; Liedtka & Ogilvie 2011). Within these approaches the entrepreneurial opportunity is seen as growing from different forms of *co-creation* either among professions or between persons, and could be placed within creation theory, as described by Alvarez and Barney. Alvarez and Barney also position themselves within the frame of creation theory.

While creation theory at the moment seems to be the ruling paradigm, Ramoglov and Zyglidopoulos, who merely takes their stand in a discovery approach, makes the interesting notice, that the paradigm of creation theory is only seldom questioned (Ramoglou & Zyglidopoulos 2015).

However, other researchers on innovation and entrepreneurship such as Verganti and colleagues (Verganti & Öberg 2013), Steyaert and Katz (Steyaert & Katz 2004) and Hansen (Hansen & Herholdt-Lomholdt 2015; Herholdt-Lomholdt & Hansen 2015; Herholdt-Lomholdt et al. n.d.; Hansen 2014) points out the possibility of - and also need for - other scientific approaches and paradigms in innovation- and entrepreneurship research. This also means the possibility of other and new ways of attending the opportunity-questions above. In line with these new movements, I hereby suggest a phenomenological and aesthetic approach to innovation and entrepreneurship. Such approach is at the moment mainly seen developed by Hansen in his philosophic-hermeneutic work on wonder and wonder-driven entrepreneurship-education ((Hansen 2008; Hansen 2014; Hansen & Herholdt-Lomholdt 2015). In this paper I will focus specific on the *ontology of opportunities* from a phenomenological and aesthetic approach and discuss how it differs from a social-constructivist approach to opportunities as something co-created. By attending opportunities, not only from a phenomenological, philosophic-hermeneutic and wonder-driven approach as Hansen does, but also from an aesthetic approach, I hope to deepen the work of Hansen, by specially focusing on the aesthetic experience and 'call' from practice as an important trigger when it comes to wonder. A trigger which, I will argue could be understood as a kind of entrepreneurial opportunity.

When developing these thoughts, I will also pay a bit of attention to the kind of opportunity approach, which by Alvarez and Barney (Alvarez & Barney 2010) is described as '*Discovery Theory*'.

The word 'opportunity-ontology' refers in this sense to the fundamental assumptions of the being or, in other words, the existence of an opportunity and addresses questions of what an entrepreneurial opportunity really *is*. Instead of questioning what we *know* about opportunities, as an epistemic approach would do, and instead of questioning what we *can do with* opportunities as a technical and methodological approach would do, I want to question the *being* of opportunities.

In this sense I, with a reference to Hansen (Hansen 2014), differ the being of opportunities as at the one hand something *in itself* before it is coming to world within a human experience and language and at the other hand a merely existential-phenomenological approach as seen in the work of Max van Manen (van Manen 2014), searching for the lived experiences and descriptions of our being in- or with opportunities. In this paper the ontological questioning goes towards opportunities as such, what it really is or could be, before human experiences of it. But while saying so, it is also important to notice a key point raised from phenomenology by Max van Manen (van Manen 2002), that our admittance to the place where 'meaning origin', in this sense to the phenomenon of opportunities as such, always seems to hide from us when we come near. We will never get the full grasp of it, something always seems to escape. Questions on such ontological level are only seldom discussed in entrepreneurship literature, why I find it necessary to give some thoughts.

The aim of this paper then, is to explore and discuss ontologies of 'entrepreneurial opportunities', especially the ontology of creation theory, while introducing and start developing a phenomenological and aesthetic approach to the ontology of opportunities. This development, and the paper in its hole, is to be understood as work in progress.

As we will see, such phenomenological-aesthetic approach differs from the opportunity-ontology in creation theory and could offer a new horizon of both meaning and practices within entrepreneurship-research and -practice.

## **Theoretical departure and methodological considerations**

To begin the journey of developing a phenomenological –aesthetic approach to opportunities, the theoretical departure will be the work of the Canadian phenomenologist Max van Manen (van Manen 2002; van Manen 2007; van Manen 2014), philosophic aesthetics presented by Dorthe Joergensen (Jørgensen 2008; Jørgensen 2010; Jørgensen 2001; Jørgensen 2014) and wonder-driven innovation and entrepreneurship as developed by Hansen (Hansen 2014; Hansen & Herholdt-Lomholdt 2015). Neither Jørgensen nor van Manen explicit work with innovation or entrepreneurship, but on behalf of their thorough work and descriptions of different ways of insight, I develop some basic assumptions when it comes to an aesthetic and phenomenological approach to opportunities. Only very few studies deal with such approach to opportunities or more general to innovation and entrepreneurship, though it is worth mentioning the interesting work of Colas (Colas 2005) in his article: *“In search of new organizational values: the irruption of beauty in an entrepreneurial creation”*.

The above mentioned theoretical departures, and thereby the beginning of a the development of an phenomenological and aesthetic approach to entrepreneurial opportunities, will be described, discussed and sometimes even contrasted to creation theory, in this case represented by Alvarez and Barney's (Alvarez & Barney 2007; Alvarez & Barney 2010; Alvarez et al. 2013) discussions of *discovery* and *creation* as two alternative theories of entrepreneurial action, the Danish researcher Per Blenkers *“11 thesis on entrepreneurship”* (Blenker 2015) which he presented at the ECSB conference in Lüneburg this year and the Indian entrepreneurship researcher Sarasvathys (Sarasvathy 2001; Sarasvathy et al. 2014; Sarasvathy et al. 2010) concept (and practice) of *“effectuation”*.

The empirical departure, from which the examples of phenomenological and also aesthetic approaches comes, is a three year phenomenological action research named *“Wonderdriven entrepreneurship education”* (Herholdt-Lomholdt et al. n.d.) In which I took part. The research leader was professor Finn Thorbjørn Hansen and the main objectives were to develop a phenomenological, philosophic-hermeneutic and wonder-driven approach to- and pedagogical model of entrepreneurship teaching.

In the following I will discuss two questions by attending each of them from two approaches: 1) Creation theory and 2) what I preliminary will call a phenomenological-aesthetic approach. The questions are: What is an opportunity? And how do we recognize and exploit an opportunity?

The first question is the ontological questioning and will be given the most attention. The second question is merely a pedagogical question that can point out, how and why the ontology of opportunities we tend to draw on, have practical consequences and implications.

### **What is an entrepreneurial opportunity?**

On the one hand both discovery and creation theory understands an entrepreneurial opportunity as some kind of competitive imperfection on the market (Alvarez & Barney 2010) but on the other hand there seems to be huge differences when it comes to the mere epistemological and ontological assumptions. These differences are very well described by Alvarez and Barney, why I in the further will concentrate on the differences between creation theory and a germinating phenomenological-aesthetic approach.

### Opportunities in Creation theory

Creation theory takes its departure from different social constructivist approaches and, according to Alvarez et al., also evolutionary approaches (Alvarez et al. 2013).

Within these frameworks *“Opportunities are social constructions that do not exist independently of those perceptions and human actions”* (Alvarez et al. 2013 p. 308). In other words: *“Opportunities are constructed by entrepreneurs themselves”* (Alvarez et al. 2013 p. 307). The way entrepreneurs create opportunities is through *action*, not purposeful action, as the objectives of the process cannot be known beforehand. This means, that the recognition of an opportunity won't be possible until after action. While discovery theory advocate for opportunities as exogenous existent, creation theory advocate that opportunities are an endogen creation. The source of opportunities is, within creation theory, not in the existing market, but in the actions of human beings. Blenker point to that as well in his second thesis on the ontology of entrepreneurship teaching by writing: *“Opportunities are created by individuals – and individuals create opportunities”* (Blenker 2015 p. 3). The constructivist underlying assumption is that opportunities emerge trough actions and imagination (Ramoglou & Zyglidopoulos 2015) because reality is seen as a social construct (Alvarez & Barney 2010). Every individual is seen as having an opportunity nexus, which they can choose to deal with (Blenker 2015).

In this sense creation theory makes a distinction to discovery theory, where the entrepreneur merely is seen as someone having a predisposition towards entrepreneurship. Opportunities then, is in this sense not something that *is*, but something human beings *do*, and when creating opportunities through action, these human beings become entrepreneurs.

Although building on different forms of constructivist approaches, this does not necessarily mean that reality does not exist objectively – but that our understanding of the world in an extensive way is – and always will be - a construct. In this sense creation theory also fundamentally differs from discovery theory. Sarasvathy puts it this way:

*“Because they use a logic of nonpredictive control, expert entrepreneurs learn to see the future as cocreated through human action rather than unfolding through inevitable trends outside the purview of human action”*(Sarasvathy et al. 2014 p. 73).

The source of opportunities then, is action driven by available means.

When opportunities are seen as a creation, it is possible for entrepreneurs to create needs and the goods to fulfill these needs through different kinds of action and co-creative actions. But although everything is understood as constructions, it is not everything that “works”. According to Alvarez and Barney (Alvarez & Barney 2010), creation theory also draws on an evolutionary approach where the “strongest” or most suitable ideas survive while others may rest. Also this evolutionary process is a question of negotiation, creation and co-creation.

Creation theory is today's most applied approach within innovation- and entrepreneurship research and -educations. Sarasvathy (Sarasvathy 2001; Sarasvathy et al. 2014) developed the idea of “effectuation” to describe the way entrepreneurship is going on within this framework and Neck and Greene (Neck & Greene 2011) in 2011 pointed to this approach as the newest departure within innovation- and entrepreneurship teaching.

We do see creation theory as the underlying and not always questioned assumption in various studies of innovation, entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship teaching for instance in different kinds of design-driven innovation as expressed by Krull (Krull 2013), Bason (Bason 2012; BASON 2012) and Liedtka & Ogilvie (Liedtka & Ogilvie 2011) and in

entrepreneurship-teaching as for example expressed in the research of Kirketerp (Kirketerp & Knoop 2012), Bager (Bager et al. 2010) and Tunstall, Neergaard & Nieminen (Tunstall et al. 2015) – just to mention a few.

### Opportunities from a phenomenological-aesthetic approach

In both discovery- and creation theory, opportunities are seen as the answer on unfulfilled needs – either as something existing objectively (discovery theory) or as something subjectively (or inter-subjectively) created (creation theory). This means, that both theories take their starting point in ‘something missing’, a kind of defect or problem – by some named a “competitive imperfection” (Alvarez & Barney 2010) that the entrepreneur either create or try to overcome.

### *Opportunities as disharmony or a sense of harmony*

The question Hansen and I raise, in our study of wonder-driven entrepreneurship-education (Hansen & Herholdt-Lomholdt 2015; Herholdt-Lomholdt et al. n.d.; Herholdt-Lomholdt & Hansen 2015) is whether an opportunity always rise from imperfection or, what in other studies (eg. Bager et al. 2010) is named ‘disharmonies’? We ask, if it instead would be possible to understand opportunities as experiences of harmony? Experiences in our daily life of something really meaningful, beautiful or good in which the entrepreneur wants to take part and long to see more of. Our question is, whether opportunities always depends on something missing, a loss or a defect – or if it is possible to enter a different world of opportunities by a change from imperfection – to the experience of perfection, a change from disharmonies to experiences of harmonies. An interesting question would in this sense also be how such ‘harmony-seeking’ opportunities differ from ‘problem-seeking’ opportunities. For a further description of the phenomenology of the innovative questions and thereby also the kind of opportunities we saw arise from wonder-driven entrepreneurship-teaching, I will point to a paper written by Hansen and I, on the phenomenology of the innovative question when it is based in wonder” (Herholdt-Lomholdt & Hansen 2015).

Now, where I differ from Hansen in my approach to inquire into how we can approach and think entrepreneurship from this kind of fundamental ‘harmonic-seeking-perspective’ is, that I approach this question from a phenomenological-aesthetic approach whereas Hansen inquiries into this question from a phenomenological-philosophical approach. Hansen’s focus is on the moment of wonder in entrepreneurship and innovation where I supply this approach with a more developed approach on how this moment of wonder is also triggered by some aesthetic experiences and ‘callings’ from the field or practices of the professionals.

In the following I will explore such view, by starting in the philosophic-aesthetics of Dorthe Joergensen (Jørgensen 2001; Jørgensen 2008; Jørgensen 2004b; Jørgensen 2014; Jørgensen 2004a; Jørgensen 2010; Jørgensen 2009). According to Joergensen, it is possible to experience such harmonies on a deeper ontological level, which she describes as ‘experiences of transcendence’ in our daily life. These ‘experiences of transcendence’ are also seen as expressions or result of a so-called ‘surplus of meaning’. Joergensen describe such transcendent experiences as experiences of the beauty of the world that gives rise to a mysterious recognition of truth. Colas (Colas 2005), in his interesting article, suggest that truth can be comprehended as something given to us, a revelation of something that has been hidden until now, a kind of ‘gestaltic vision’ of the world as it was – maybe even in an originally sense - meant to be. Joergensen (Jørgensen 2004a) points to this as well while

saying, that immanent in our daily experiences is a layer of transcendence, as a kind of echo of the world. And this echo leaves us with a sense of meaningfulness and importance (Jørgensen 2014).

As an example such experiences could happen when we go to an art museum and feel like a certain painting 'speaks to us' - touches our existence even though the 'words' are not possible to capture by our usual language or cognitive capacity. And it could happen while looking upon the stars on a dark winter night, sensing the greatness of the world and our own belonging and interconnectedness in this world. In such beautiful and awe- and wonder-awaking moments, we can experience a meaning much greater and much more difficult to grasp, than the meanings we ourselves are able to construct. And these meaning-experiences are not a matter of imperfection – but rather a matter of surprisingly and thorough perfection.

In the earlier mentioned phenomenological action-research 'Wonderdriven entrepreneurship teaching' (Herholdt-Lomholdt et al. n.d.) we heard several students tell about such experiences when they as nurse-students and pre-school teacher- students had their internships. As an example Mette, a second year preschool teacher student, told us about a little disabled boy she had met in her internship at a home for disabled children. One day Mette entered his room and felt like sitting with him on her knees. While sitting there, feeling how his little tensed body relaxed, feeling his breathing in her own breast and sensing his small arms around her neck she thought 'this is how it should be – this is exactly how it is to live in a real home – sitting closely and quiet not for a purpose but just because we long to do so'. This beautiful experience in a mysterious way changed Mette's view on the institution and herself as a coming preschool teacher, and she started questioning how the institution could be more homelike and how she in her future professional life could contribute to the development of institutions always driven towards homeliness and familiar character.

What Mette experienced here, can be described by what Joergensen, as earlier mentioned, names a surplus of meaning. Mette's daily life experience could be said to reveal a sense of meaningfulness, which she wants to – or even long to - fulfill. In this case the experience of meaningfulness and harmony became an important leading star in a process of innovation and in the future maybe also a process of starting up a new kind of institution.

It seems as such a harmony-seeking approach and longing rely on an experience of familiarity with and *in* the world and at the same time a wish to belong to such meaningfulness *in* this world - whereas the seeking of disharmonies merely rely on a wish to make a rupture to the world as it appears to us.

If we follow Colas (Colas 2005), Mette's experience could be understood as kind of call to take of the veil, revealing life as it in an original way was meant to be. 'Originality' she was given access to through a sensitive and open being present in her life. Colas at one place, and with a reference to the German philosopher Hannah Arendt, even describe this as a revelation of Gods indigenous intentions and point out how such experiences can motivate to create, similar to the way some artists are pushed towards creating.

But we do not need to relate to a religious background, as I suppose Colas will agree about, in order to think with this kind of ontological and phenomenological understanding of harmonies in our daily living. A point which late Merleau-Ponty's writings (Merleau-ponty et al. 1962; Merleau-ponty 1997) displays, and which Colas for that matter draws heavily on.

From a phenomenological approach, van Manen (van Manen 2002; van Manen 2007; van



Manen 2014) describes a certain 'seeing into the heart of things', a seeing into – or at least very near – the point where meaning seems to originate. In this kind of 'in-seeing', meaning can disturb us, touch us and infect us and we can't really get rid of it again. The sense of meaning takes possession, 'speaks' to us, calls upon us. Such points of in-seeing or seeing behind the things we usually take for granted, is described and explored by Hansen (Hansen 2014; Hansen & Herholdt-Lomholdt 2015) in an educational and innovative context by the meeting between a person and a subject matter. A meeting that goes beyond what we already can and know into an innovative and renewing field of becoming. A field Hansen connects with the becoming of opportunities and the persons attending this field as wise openers of the world.

What I further, and with a reference to philosophic-aesthetics in the work of Joergensen suggest, is that the meeting between a person and a subject matter can be a metaphysic experience of hearing or seeing a surplus of meaning, sensing that the world 'speaks' about its own and original meaning and 'calls' us to participate in- and fulfill this meaning. Metaphysics should in this sense not be understood as something fixed, but merely as a horizon of meaning that suddenly opens to us and from there needs interpretation. Such 'call' from a horizon of meaning, could actually be understood as a phenomenological-aesthetic entrepreneurial opportunity, quite similar to the moment where an artist loses his hold on the composition, instead realizing that the composition has its own will and are now 'talking' back to him.

In this sense I draw on Joergensen comprehension of Heideggars phenomenology as actually aesthetic (Jørgensen 2014), among other because of his thoughts of the self-manifestation of phenomenon's as having a connection to truth. In the example of Mette, she experienced such kind of harmonic 'truth', and this truth in a way showed itself as a horizon of meaning from where opportunities for new practices in a remarkable way showed themselves.

#### *Opportunities as human creations or as the revelation of a surplus of meaning*

To enter the ontology of entrepreneurial opportunities from a phenomenological-aesthetic approach deeply questions a basic assumption in creation theory, namely the assumption that opportunities in its basis are a human creation. Of course many opportunities are such constructs – but is it always so? Or would it be possible to take on another view, where opportunities could be thought of as a gift of meaning from life itself?

In his later work Hansen describes such shift, as a shift from a 'meaning-making paradigm' to a 'meaning-receiving' paradigm (Hansen 2014). I acknowledge that this would be a radical and fundamental shift as it involves pre-assumptions of meaning as something not only created but also as something inherent in the world. Pre-assumptions that involves a radical shift, not only when it comes to fundamental assumptions about entrepreneurship but also when it comes to fundamental assumptions about the origin of meaning.

When reading the article of Colas (Colas 2005) of beauty as involving the possibility of making irruptions, and acknowledging his very interesting thoughts and also his clash with economy as the only driver for entrepreneurship, I still miss to see an exploration and positioning when it comes to such basic assumptions of the origin of meaning. When Colas, with a reference to the artists, describe discovery and creation, it's something different than I, in this paper have presented as discovery- and creation theory. In Colas' explorations he draws heavily on the work of Merleau-ponty and on the same time he tries to learn from different traditions within the arts of painting. While drawing on Merleau-ponty it seems as

Colas is in line with the thoughts of the connection between truth and aesthetic experiences as I explore, but when he learn from the traditions of painting and when he later on also draws on the work of Sartré, his positioning is more unclear to me.

With inspiration from painting traditions Colas fundamentally approach creative and entrepreneurial impulses from two different perspectives – either as 1) a kind of *discovery* of the beauty of the world and thereby a wish to imitate ‘Gods original intentions’ or 2) as *creation* with an aim of repairing some failures in the world by entering the possible but still probable. These two approaches are by Colas described as follows:

*“... it means that the **discoverer** (...) like an artist, takes of the veil, a veil that represent a kind of chaos, hiding until now from human sight, the order that God had established when creating the world”*(Colas 2005 p. 84)

and

*“To **create**, in theology, consists in drawing from nothing and in making something from nothing. In the human order it is a question of producing something starting from pre-existing data. This production takes the form of a new and originally assembly.(...) Correcting nature was a theological revolution, because it implied that God had failed his creation. (...) Correcting nature, amounts to favoring “becoming” before” being” ”* (Colas 2005 p. 84)

When I in this paper write from a phenomenological-aesthetic approach, I tend to be more in line with Colas’ discoverer than his creator. But while presenting these two ways of creative impulses, he – as Alvarez and Barney - sticks to the subject-object dichotomy in entrepreneurship, suggesting that the entrepreneur either discover something outside of him or create something on the basis of a need for correction. This means that Colas unfortunately end up with almost the same suggest of opportunities, as we have already seen in contemporary research.

What I would like to suggest, would instead be a giving up on the subject-object dichotomy, that discovery theory, creation theory and also Colas’ descriptions of the discoverer and the creator seems to stick to. On the basis of a phenomenological-aesthetic approach, opportunities would not be a matter of endogen creation neither on exogenous existent opportunities. Instead I, based on the thinking of Joergensen, Van Manen and Hansen, suggest going beyond the subject-object dichotomy and consider *opportunities as a surplus of meaning revealed through daily life experiences*. Opportunities then both exist outside the human mind and imagination, as an inherent meaning in the world and are at the same time dependent on revelation – a coming into the world – trough daily life experiences of human beings. As van Manen suggest, it would not be possible for human beings to grasp the entire original meaning, the origin or source seems to hide from us. But this, in van Manens sense, does not mean that we are forced to give it up, it just means that we can always and only be on our way. We can, as Joergensen (Jørgensen 2004b) with a reference to Gadamer puts it, see such revelation of meaning as a play between a composition and a viewer in an ‘in-between-world’. A world that is not entirely endogen and not entirely exogenous, but in its own remarkable way just ‘in-between’. Colas with a reference to Merleau-ponty actually writes about such in-between world as follows:

*“...the painter joins the world, plunges into a pre-human silence in which it becomes impossible, even for him, to say “what comes from him and what comes from things.”* (Colas 2005 p. 83).

While having another agenda in his work, Colas does not further explore how the entrepreneur can attend such in-between worlds, and how it could be a new (third) way of attending entrepreneurial opportunities and a supplement to the existing paradigms of

discovery and creation.

Assuming the existence of such third possibility, it would be a basic entrepreneurial assumption, that in in-between-worlds-experiences can new and meaningful opportunities rise. Opportunities, arising from a sense of the world speaking to us about beauty, goodness and truth instead of, as in discovery- and creation theory represented by Alvarez and Barney, from a sense of imperfection, disharmonies and problems either found or created by human beings.

*Opportunities as based in becoming or in being*

At last I would like to question the assumption within Colas' creation-approach, that 'becoming' could be before 'being'. Is it so that human creations can be drawn from nothing – from a not already being in relation with the world? Or is it so, as I would suggest that our being-in-the-world always in a Heideggerian way is our starting point? And is it so, that our visions of repairing the world can grow entirely from the human imagination? Or is it so, that our visions always and already are deeply intertwined with our being in the world and a sense of an inherent meaning in this world?

From a phenomenological and aesthetic approach, our being in the world always comes first, why I would deeply question the assumption made by Colas that it is possible to become before being. I would therefor also question whether it is possible to make up opportunities without already being in some kind of lived relation with these opportunities or with a sense of the world that surround or maybe even contain these opportunities.

Such questioning about the relation between being and becoming could be of interest in future entrepreneurship research, and bears both practical, pedagogical and ethical implications. As an example I could mention ethical considerations within entrepreneurship. If opportunities are a construct only drawn from human imaginations– and if the best (in pragmatic sense) and most functional ideas (in an evolutionary sense) win, how do we then discuss or appraise the value and ethics of these new ideas? Which scale are we going to use? And who is going to tell us, if we are wrong or chose the wrong scale? In creation theory I believe the ethic scale would be thought to be a human creation, and in the sense of Colas' creation approach the becoming of this scale would be before our being in the world. But is it so? Or is it possible, as I, with a reference to Joergensen, would suggest, entering ethical questions within entrepreneurship by listening to a horizon of meaning that has its origin outside and before the human mind and words. A horizon of meaning, that we can get access to through aesthetic moments of transcendence? This means trough a sensitive and suspicious listening to the world as something that can show itself.

My suggest would be, to supplement the prevailing opportunity-ontologies, by entering an approach where being is comprehended as before becoming. In this sense, the first thing would not be the becoming of human-created opportunities but the being of a meaningful world and our being in this world. Off course such approach would raise a great deal of new questions and considerations, where I hope to discuss just a few in my ongoing PhD. Dissertation on beautiful moments in nursing as a source of innovation. And off course such approach would just be a supplement – and not an alternative - to the prevailing paradigms in entrepreneurship research.

The next question I will discuss is how the entrepreneur recognizes and exploits opportunities within creation theory and within a phenomenological-aesthetic approach.

## How does the entrepreneur recognize and exploit opportunities?

### Creation Theory

In creation theory *action and re-action* is central. Opportunities are thought to raise through actions why *“the creation process is path dependent”* (Alvarez et al. 2013 p. 308) and it is not possible to know the outcome or the opportunity beforehand. The process is described by words as emergence, incremental, iterative, responsive and inductive (Alvarez & Barney 2007). Although the entrepreneur might have intentions from the beginning, these are re-created several times through innovative and entrepreneurial processes. This means that both process and objectives are under constantly revision relying on co-creation, co-action and response from the market. The entrepreneur or innovative person is not necessarily different from non-entrepreneurs and if they are, it is considered to be the result of being in entrepreneurial creation-processes rather than an ex ante difference.

Blenker describe the process of opportunity-recognition as follows:

*“Opportunity creation and entrepreneurial becoming are processes of social construction”* (Blenker 2015 p. 4)

Neither the opportunity or the entrepreneur is in this sense seen as something that *is*, but as a construct that by Blenker is comprehended as mutually constituting. In a footnote to this thesis Blenker further writes:

*“In the entrepreneurial process we must see both opportunities and entrepreneurs as social constructions. Not simply in the traditional academic understanding of social construction which merely claims that our knowledge is made up of jointly constructed understandings and meanings – but more radically as real world social processes, where opportunities are created through the entrepreneurs social interaction with other actors (Blenker, 1991) – and where an individual through his interaction with other actors creates opportunities and because of that construct herself and become an entrepreneur – or as Marx states in his second thesis on Feuerbach “Man must prove the truth” (Blenker 2015 p. 4)*

The interesting part in this quotations is not only that, in Blenkers sense, the becoming of an opportunity goes before the being of an opportunity, but that he points to *interaction* between an individual and others, as something that goes in advance of the becoming (or creation) of an opportunity. Alvarez and Barney show us the same understanding, while saying that the creation of opportunities grows from action and re-action and Sarasvathy’s (Sarasvathy 2001; Sarasvathy et al. 2014) concept of effectuation as opposite to causation points in the same direction. Effectuation refers to the way the entrepreneur act without a specific purpose but driven by available means. This means, that seen from creation theory, the bottom of the heart of entrepreneurial opportunities is *human action*. The creation and explorations of entrepreneurial opportunities is in its substance dependent on human action.

In this sense, learning entrepreneurship is in different ways a question of learning to act and thereby develop an effectual approach to the world. This is also seen in different literature on entrepreneurship teaching (Kirketerp & Knoop 2012; Tunstall et al. 2015).

### A phenomenological-aesthetic approach:

From a phenomenological-aesthetic approach, opportunities could be understood as a surplus of meaning revealed through daily life experiences. The question in this section may now be how the entrepreneur or innovator, from a phenomenological and aesthetic approach, can get access to- or take part in such *revelation* of a surplus of meaning.

Colas (Colas 2005), who in this part refer to Merleau Ponty, explain it by a special way of

seeing. About this 'seeing' he writes:

"... it is to enter a universe of beings who show themselves and who are in relation with each other"(Colas 2005 p. 82).

Further he describe this kind of seeing as a way of letting something be visible that was hidden before, a taken off the veil and an answering of a call comparable with the call an artist can experience from his or her material.

Van Manen (van Manen 2007) describes this as a "pathically tuned body", an immediate access to the world only made possible of a completely present being. In this sense the entrepreneur do not discover the world, neither does he create the world or even act in the world. Instead the entrepreneur tries to *grasp and reveal* the beauty and hidden meaning *in* the world.

To do so depends, according to Jørgensen (Jørgensen 2014) who again refers to Baumgarten, on a special sensitive awareness, which differs from our typical logic thinking. Sensitive awareness implies both feeling and senses and is described by words as sensation and suspicions. Where our logic thinking makes our visions precise, forceful and unmistakable, sensitive knowledge is more shadowy, but at the same time in position of its own clearness based on a richness of details and lived life.

Because of the character of sensitive provided knowledge, it is necessary for the entrepreneur to stand or rather walk in the openness, as Hansens puts it, while receiving meaning given to us (Hansen 2008). Hansen (Hansen 2014) even develop a concept of 'meaning-receiving' as differing from 'meaning-making'. Jørgensen follow this up by saying, that openness is only one of three important skills, because people who try to grasp the meaning also need to *understand* this meaning and must carry with them, a *love* of beauty (Jørgensen 2004b). Following such approach, opportunity-recognition is not mostly a question of action but of seeing or listening to the world in a sensitive – and in Joergensens sense also a loving - way.

Of course, when realizing an opportunity, action would also be needed. The entrepreneur, who had a glimpse of some kind of meaning, would have to react and act on behalf of this meaning. But where 'action' in creation theory is oriented towards available means, I, from a phenomenological-aesthetic approach would suggest that entrepreneurial action could be oriented towards a horizon of meaning and a longing to take part in this meaning. The driver for action would then shift, from action driven by 'who I am, Who I know and what I know' as Sarasvathy describes it (Sarasvathy 2001; Sarasvathy et al. 2014) to actions driven by the world speaking meaningful to me.

Doing innovation and entrepreneurship will in this sense be a kind of praising the world by trying to fulfill its own meaning and order. How to take up and practice such phenomenological-aesthetic approach to innovation, is what we in the earlier described 'Wonderdriven entrepreneurship teaching' has just started to develop (Herholdt-Lomholdt et al. n.d.).

It is now possible to sum up the most important statements and also differences between creation-theory approaches to opportunities and a germinating phenomenological-aesthetic approach to opportunities. This can be seen in the scheme underneath:

	Creation Theory	Phenomenological-aesthetic approach
<b>What is an opportunity?</b>	Endogen creations An individual or collective construct Raises from disharmonies or problems	An inherent meaning in the world An experience and a revelation of a surplus of meaning The world speaking to us about beauty, goodness and truth Raises from harmonies
<b>How does the entrepreneur recognize and exploit opportunity?</b>	Through action and re-action driven by available means. Through Creation, Co-creation and Imagination Through Negotiation  Becoming goes in advance of being.	Through sensation and suspicion Through a sensitive and aware kind of seeing Through daily life experiences of beauty and the love of beauty Grasp and reveal the hidden meaning IN the world  Being goes in advance of becoming

### Conclusion and further perspectives

In this paper, I have started out some dawning explorations on the differences between the ontology of opportunities as it is mainly seen in contemporary entrepreneurship-research and from a germinating phenomenological-aesthetic approach. The work is still in progress, and need further explorations, why it is not possible to draw permanent conclusions.

Nevertheless, this paper shows mainly three distinct differences between creation theory and a phenomenological-aesthetic approach to entrepreneurial opportunities. At first opportunities within creation theory starts out in disharmonies, whereas a phenomenological-aesthetic approach would prefer to start with a sense of harmony. Second creation theory is based in different forms of constructivism while pointing to opportunities as a endogen human creation, whereas a phenomenological-aesthetic approach instead would suggest a dissolution of the subject-object dichotomy (in creation theory expressed by the words endogen and exogenous) by instead proposing the possibility of an 'in-between' world, and opportunities as the revelation of the inherent meaning in this world.

Finally, creation theory tends to approach the becoming of opportunities before being in the world, which differs from the phenomenological-aesthetic approach presented in this paper, where being in the world always comes first.

The expressions of such fundamental assumptions and differences can lead to enlightened disagreements, as Blenker (Blenker 2015) points to. The explorations of a phenomenological-aesthetic approach to entrepreneurial opportunities – and to entrepreneurship in general – could, by further explorations, lead to new ways of practicing, researching and learning

entrepreneurship. To do so, the phenomenological-aesthetic approach presented her needs further exploration and a more thorough theoretical and empiric foundation.

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