

Why writing poems is essential for entrepreneurs and academics with a multiperspective perception: Reflections of an inter- and transdisciplinary Researcher, Lecturer, Entrepreneur, Coach and Poet

Birgitta Borghoff

Zurich University of Applied Sciences Winterthur
brückenwege and INNOVANTIQUA, Winterthur

About the Work:

In this essay, I reflect upon my experiences with emerging poetry for organizing as an inter- and transdisciplinary researcher, lecturer, entrepreneur, coach and poet. By evaluating the why and what of my own poetry-making, I outline the way how I try to inspire people and organizations with and through poems. The essay tackles the question why writing poems is essential for an entrepreneurial and academic practitioner with a multiperspective perception like me; and what poems can tell and teach us about a multifaceted genuine professional praxis. My reflections and insights might inspire other organizational practitioners, entrepreneurs, leaders, managers, educators, academics, researchers and communicators to grasp the ubiquitous presence and relevance of poetry for organizing, researching, teaching, coaching and consulting.

Keywords: emerging poetry, poetry for organizing, entrepreneurial practice, academic practice, professional practice, multiperspective perception, writing poems, spiritual poetry, courage, knowledge and wisdom, wise leadership, integral poetry, aesthetic intervention

About the Author

Birgitta Borghoff, M.A., is a passionate creative entrepreneur, scientific and spiritual researcher, lecturer, holistic life coach, storyteller and poet. She loves to build bridges between people, organizations and cultures. As an academic researcher and project manager at the *Zurich University of Applied Sciences* Birgitta has been conducting research and lectures in the fields of Organizational Communication and Entrepreneurship, specifically in Public und Entrepreneurial Storytelling, Discourse and Design, Start-up and Business Modelling. As an entrepreneur she build bridges from early music to new music with [INNOVANTIQUA](#) and develops holistic ways to success for people and organisations who want to break new ground with her business *brückenwege*. Birgitta has many years of varied practical and research experience in the fields of communication, entrepreneurship, arts management and creative industries and in coaching creative and highly sensitive people - always with the intention to activate processes of reflective potential and self-development and thus stimulate lifelong learning and transformation.

Why writing poems is essential for entrepreneurs and academics with a multiperspective perception: Reflections of an inter- and transdisciplinary Researcher, Lecturer, Entrepreneur, Coach and Poet

*While your heart
is soul art
creative flow
makes you grow.
Entrepreneurial spirit
you inherit!*

Poetry allows insights into the invisible, the hidden and unknown, the unspeakable and diffuse, that is often difficult to put into words. It opens the space for the genuine (Moore, 1994: 36). Given the fact that narratives and stories have their origins in poetry, the latter is numberless, international, transhistorical and transcultural, like life itself. "Present in every age, [...] place, [...] society [...] classes [...] [and] all human groups" (Barthes, 1977: 79). Considering this, one can say that poetry is everywhere where people work together in different roles and functions, e.g. as leaders, entrepreneurs, managers, consultants, researchers, educators, politicians, medicals, engineers, designers, architects, communication specialists or journalists to name a few; be it in working groups, projects or organizations; running certain practice routines such as leadership, entrepreneurship, management and consultancy such as founding, developing, designing, managing, organizing, coordinating or evaluating special tasks, processes and practices, products, projects or businesses (Gartner, 2004, 2007, 2010; Hjorth & Steyaert, 2004; Steyaert 2004, 2007; Czarniawska, 2004; Cooren, 2015; Fairhurst, 2007; Stücheli-Herlach, 2015; Borghoff, 2009, 2017, 2018).

I am a researcher, lecturer, entrepreneur, coach and poet with a strong multiperspective perception. I love building bridges between people, companies and cultures. My intuition and empathy, a trans- and interdisciplinary approach and pronounced management and communication skills enable me to tackle various topics and problems professionally, innovatively and unconventionally. - The way I think, act and tick always makes me think about the question why writing poems is essential to me; and what my poems tell and teach me in view of a multifaceted genuine professional praxis.

In the following I share selected self-written poems that I first let work on you. Then I reflect on them myself while disclosing why writing poems is so nurturing, grounding, encouraging and therefore vital for me.

Poems about courage**Original poem in German****Wenn der Mut Dich ruft**

Wenn der Mut Dich ruft,
 die Liebe tut,
 was Dich befreit
 und Deinen Geist neu mit Deiner Seele vereint.
 Heilsam und ganz
 wird Dein Leben zum beschwingten Tanz.
 Denn jetzt Du weisst,
 wozu Deine Seele wahrhaft ist bereit.
 Es ist Zeit!

Couragiert frei fallen

Die Angst vor der eigenen Courage:
 Wird es ein Hit oder Blamage?
 Wie es rauskommt, weisst Du nie.
 Du kannst nur fühlen, was geschieht,
 wenn Du wach lauscht Deinen Herzimpulsen
 und „erträgst“ die Zukunft schon im Jetzt
 geduldig.
 Wenn Du weder Angst scheust, noch Dein
 eig'nes Licht,
 das Dich erinnert stets: „Vergiss' mein nicht.“
 Dann erst wirst Du Dich aus der Komfortzone
 bewegen
 und mutvoll staunend Neues weben.
 Dich zu erleben im freien Fall,
 tief zu fühlen, wie Du schwebst im Weltenall.
 Der freie Fall erst wird Dich erheben,
 weil Du lernst, ganz neu zu geben
 und zu vertrauen,
 worauf Du kannst wirklich bauen.
 Was Dich schliesslich hebt und trägt,
 wenn der Tod Dir vorgaukelt, dass Du nicht
 mehr lebst.
 Halte inne,
 und handle stets in höchstem Sinne.
 Dann kannst Du getrost Dir sagen,
 ich tat nichts anderes nur als Neues wagen.

Nicht mehr Klagen.
 Nichts ertragen.
 Keine Narben.
 Stelle nur noch mut'ge Fragen.
 Du hast das Sagen,
 drum tu' es wagen!

English translation**When courage is calling**

When courage calls you,
 love does
 what frees you
 and reunites your spirit with your soul.
 Salutary and whole
 your life becomes a lively dance.
 Cause' now you know
 what your soul is truly ready for.
 It's time!

Courageously free falling

The fear of one's own courage:
 Will it be a hit or a disgrace?
 You never know how it will come out.
 You can only feel what is happening
 when you alertly listen to your heart impulses
 and "baer" the future patiently now.
 If you neither shy away from your fear nor
 your light
 that always reminds you: "Don't forget me".
 Only then you move out of the comfort zone
 and bravely weave something new.
 Experiencing yourself whilst free falling
 and deeply feeling how you float in space.
 The free fall will lift you up
 cause' you learn to trust
 what you can really count on.
 What finally raises and carries you
 when death makes you think you're no longer
 alive.
 Pause
 and always act in the highest sense.
 Then you can confidently say to yourself:
 "I did nothing but try something new".

No more complaining.
 Nothing more to endure.
 No scars.
 Ask only courageous questions.
 You are in charge,so, risk it!

Original poem in German**Von mutiger Kühnheit**

Nur kühne Gedanken
weisen jenen in Schranken,
der mit dem Herzen versteht
und dadurch seine Seele erhebt.
So befreit er sich aus der alten Bindung,
was ihn kostet so manch' Überwindung.
Doch letztlich er weiss um den wahren Wert,
den seine Seele in der Tiefe nährt.
Und er beginnt den Gedanken der Kühnheit zu
vertrauen,
um so den neuen Mut in sich aufzubauen.
Und er wird sich finden in sich selbst ganz und
gar,
wie es gestern und morgen einst immer schon
war.

Ruhendes Tun und tuender Mut

Ruhendes Tun und tuender Mut
ist's, was in der Seele ruht
und nur darauf wartet, entborgen zu werden,
um zu entströmen all den Menschenherden,
die da streiken ob der Weise,
wie das Leben zu uns spricht oft sanft und
leise.
Doch in der Stille liegt die Kraft,
die das Gute tut und Neue schafft.
Besser in der Stille ruh'n
anstatt das Falsche nur tun.
Und lieber handeln als zu lang' zu warten,
um zu pflegen gut den Lebensgarten.
Wohlweise ist, der folgt dem inneren Weg
und so die Saat des Guten legt.

English translation**Bold thoughts**

Only bold thoughts
put that person in his place
who understands with his heart,
and thereby raises his soul.
Thus, he releases himself from the old bond
what costs him a lot of overcoming.
But in the end, he knows the true value
that nourishes his soul in depth.
And he begins to trust the thought of
boldness
to build that new courage within himself.
And he will find himself all within himself
as it was then yesterday and tomorrow.

Dormant doing and acting courage

Dormant doing and acting courage
is, what rests in the soul
just waiting to be salvaged
to escape all the flocks of people
who strike because of the way
how life often speaks to us gently and
quietly.
But in silence lies strength
that does the good and creates the new.
Better resting in silence
instead of doing the wrong thing.
And rather act than wait too long
to maintain well the garden of life.
That one is wise who follows the inner path
and thus, sows the seed of the good.

Poems about knowledge and wisdom**Original poem in German****Über Logik und Intuition**

*Wenn Logik und Intuition in Dir verschmelzen,
wirst Du Wunder wälzen.*

**Von der Weisheit des Wissens
und vom Wissen der Weisheit**

*Lausche hin.
Was genau ist in Dir drin?
Ist es Dein Gewinn?
Welche Gedanken haben sich gezeigt,
sich vor Deinem Inneren verneigt?
Sind es Fetzen längst vergang'ner Zeiten,
die Dich heute ach' noch reiten?
Bist Du sicher, was Du denkst,
oder (!) ein Gefühls Geschenk?
Und was denkst Du, will's Dir sagen,
das Gefühl, die Denke oder die Wahrnehmung?
Ich freu' mich auf Dein Wortgelaut',
auf das nun meine Rede baut,
die so denk' ich wird Dich plagen,
weil sie wird Dir Wahrheit sagen.
Nämlich, dass das Wissen nicht
die allmächt'ge Weisheit von Allem ist.
Erst das Wissen neu vereint,
mit Gefühl', Gespür und Lauscherei
wird Dir zeigen, wie es wirklich ist,
auf dass Du niemals mehr es je vergisst:
Nur im Innen kannst Du gewinnen,
der inn'ren Weisheit kann nichts entrinnen.
Das Wissen nur ein Teil davon,
das Alt' Dich macht vielleicht benomm'n?
Doch das Neue sich in Dir gestaltet,
Herz, Geist und Seel' in Dir durchwaltet.
Auf dass Du Fremd' und Eigenes verbindest
und dadurch alle Wahrheit überwindest.*

English translation**About logic and intuition**

*When logic and intuition merge within you,
you will roll miracles.*

**About the wisdom of knowledge
And the knowledge of wisdom**

*Listen.
What exactly is inside of you?
Is it your profit?
Which thoughts have shown up,
bowing to your inner self?
Are they shreds of long gone times
who still ride you today?
Are you sure what you think,
or (!) is it an emotional gift?
And what do you think
the feeling, thinking and perceiving want to
tell you?
I am looking forward to your words
on which my speech now builds
which I think will plague you,
'cause it's gonna tell you the truth.
Namely, that knowledge is not
the omnipotent wisdom of all.
Only the reunited knowledge
with feeling, sensing and listening
will show you what all is really like
so that you never forget again:
Only inside you can win.
Nothing can escape the inner wisdom.
Knowledge is only a part of it.
Does the old make you dizzy maybe?
The new, however forms itself inside
and vibrates your heart, spirit and soul.
So, you connect the own and the foreign
and thereby overcome all truth.*

Poems about wise leadership

Original poem in German

Fühlend führen

Im Denken
kannst Du nur unfrei lenken.
Allein durch Fühlen
wirst Du wahrlich führen.
Wer denkt,
ist abgelenkt.
Doch wer fühlt,
ist nicht mehr unterkühlt,
denn er führt mit Liebe
und verbreitet so die neuen Triebe.
Endlich Friede!

Wenn die Liebe das Ego berührt

Nur einen kurzen Wimpernschlag
unser Leben wahrlich vermag,
zu erfahren,
welch' ein sonderbares Gebaren
das Leben auf der Erde doch ist.
Mal himmelhochjauchzend und die Fahne
gehisst
und zu Tode betrübt,
wenn Du bist in Dein Schicksal verliebt.
Doch wenn Du ruhest in der Mitte
im seienden Tun ohne Schritte,
dann kannst Du den Lebenswagen lenken
und unglaublich viel Liebe verschenken.
Und sie kommt zurück, wenn Du auch lernst zu
nehmen
und Dein Ego mehr und mehr zu zähmen.
Wenn Deine Seele das Ego küsst,
wenn ihr beide nicht mehr müsst,
dann erst kann der Tanz beginnen
als ihr glaubtet, sei euch vergönnt
und ihr werdet entdecken, wieviel ihr könnt.
Verborgene Gaben
kommen da zum Tragen,
wo das Ego lässt die Seele wagen
und die Seele hat das Sagen.
Sie inspiriert das Herz durch das Fühlen der
Mitte
und das Ego setzt demütig um, die einzelnen
Schritte.
Zusammen vereint in einem Leib
mit dem Geist als innere Führung und zu allem
bereit

English translation

Sensitive guidance

While thinking
you can only steer unfree.
Just by feeling
you will truly lead.
Who thinks,
is distracted.
But who feels,
is no longer hypothermic
for he leads with love
and thus, spreads the new shoots.
Peace at last!

When love touches the ego

Only a short blink of an eye
our life is truly capable of
experiencing
what a strange turmoil
life on earth is after all.
Sometimes high up in the sky and the flag is
hoisted
and saddened to death
when you are in love with your destiny.
But when you rest in the middle
in the being of doing without steps
then you can steer the life wagon
and give away an unbelievable amount of
love.
And it comes back, when you also learn to
take
and to tame your ego more and more.
When your soul kisses the ego
when both of you no longer need to
only then can the dance begin
and you will succeed much more
than you believed you were granted.
And you will discover how much you can do.
Hidden gifts
come into play there
where the ego lets the soul dare
and the soul has the say.
It inspires the heart by feeling the center
and the ego humbly implements the
individual steps.
Together united in one body
with the spirit as inner guidance and
ready for everything

*kann das Abenteuer des Lebens nun beginnen
und alle gewinnen.
Die Liebe in Dir wird vor Glück zerspringen.
Seel', Herz, Leib und Geist vor Freude singen.
Und das Ego herzlich lacht,
weil endlich es hat die Wahrheit erfasst.*

*the adventure of life can now begin
and everybody wins.
The love in you will burst with happiness.
Soul, heart, body and spirit will sing with joy.
And the ego will laugh heartily,
because finally it has captured the truth.*

By writing poems, I learnt that interweaving multiperspective patterns of experiencing, perceiving, feeling, thinking and acting in various disciplines and fields of work foster the emergence of a holistic-driven, spiritual poetry. I call it *integral poetry*. From a philosophical perspective I see connections to the *integral theory*, a comprehensive philosophy seeking to unite opposite (pre)modern and postmodern worldviews, west-eastern wisdom teachings and scientific thought (Gebser, 1966, 1970; Wilber, 2000, 2008; Esbjörn-Hargens, 2010; Esbjörn-Hargens et al., 2010; Küpers & Pullen, 2016; Deeg & Küpers, 2012; Borghoff, 2012). Considering this, writing poems helps to improve cognitive functions, e.g. learning new words or finding new ways to articulate thoughts or feelings. This is not only good for the brain but for our overall mental and spiritual health. Moreover, making poems leads to a greater self-awareness and holistic consciousness. Most of us do not take the time to reflect on the meaning and sense of our lives or what makes us deeply happy. Feeling one's own sense and calling in life is truly essential with respect to the manifold areas of life we are acting and performing in day by day. Writing poems gives a constructive way to do that. It does not only support me to gain deep insights but also reveals inner reflections on themes or situations experienced when I am done. Universal and spiritual questions, fear and other emotions are lived through by everyone, no matter what country, culture, religion or organization she or he is working for. Finally, poems help to celebrate life as they reflect some of the most emotional powerful and joyful times of life. These I can relive again and again because I wrote it all down. Sharing my written poetic perceptions is also helpful and inspiring for others. This enriches and touches me and gives my life a deep meaning.

Some years ago, I launched a blog where I share scientific and entrepreneurial insights not only in the form of studies, essays or stories but also in the form of spiritual-inspired poetry on organizationally relevant themes. By publishing the poems, they creatively contribute to the authentic positioning of my academic, entrepreneurial and coaching activities, projects and businesses. Be it in terms of academic, entrepreneurial, spiritual or poetic storytelling. Thus, poems also work as an *aesthetic or artistic intervention* (Berthoin Antal, 2009, 2014, 2016, 2018; Johansson Sköldberg et al., 2018) that strongly promotes organizational learning; but also entrepreneurial learning, as it allows a "practical atheoretical" approach (Smith, 2015: 25) offering "implicit, intuitive, tacit and situated insights into entrepreneurial practices and processes" (ibid).

To conclude, poems either resonate with us or not. They offer the possibility for lifelong learning in our individual and professional lives. In this way they help us to awaken to a multifaceted and genuine professional practice. They do this by allowing us original access to knowledge and skills as well as ideas, inspirations and intuitions which are essentially perception- and therefore practice-based. They should therefore be promoted in a targeted manner. Regarding my own experiences as a professional practitioner in various contexts and fields of work I am convinced that "everyone is born a poet - a person discovering the way words sound and work, caring and delighting in words." (William Stafford, American poet).

References

- Barthes, R. 1977. Introduction to the structural analysis of narratives. In R. Barthes (Ed.). *Imagemusic-text*, 79–124. Glasgow: William Collins.
- Berthoin Antal, A. 2009. *Transforming Organisations with the Arts. Research Framework for Evaluating the Effects of Artistic Interventions in Organizations* - Research Report. Gothenburg: TILLT Europe.
- Berthoin Antal, A. 2014. When arts enter organizational spaces: implications for organizational learning, In A. Berthoin Antal, P. Meusburger & L. Suarsana (Eds.). *Learning organizations: extending the field*. Dordrecht: Springer. 177-201. Retrieved November 30 2020 from http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-7220-5_11.
- Berthoin Antal, A. 2016. Artistic interventions in organizations: Beyond the fad. In A. R. Örtenblad (Ed.). *Handbook of Research on Management Ideas and Panaceas: Adaptation and Context*. 320–337. Retrieved November 30 2020 from <https://www.econstor.eu/handle/10419/155322>
- Berthoin Antal, A. 2018. Wirkungen und Wirkungsweisen künstlerischer Interventionen in Organisationen. In P. Marcus & T. Schmitt (Eds.): *Kreativitätsroutinen. Organisierte Kreativität* - 17. Innovationsforum der Daimler und Benz Stiftung am 28. Mai 2018 im Haus Huth Berlin. Ladenburg/Berlin: Daimler und Benz Stiftung.
- Borghoff, B. 2009. Führen - Leadership, Management oder Entrepreneurship?, *KM - das Magazin von Kulturmanagement Network*. 2009(37), 36-43. Retrieved November 30 2020 from <https://doi.org/10.21256/zhaw-1656>.
- Borghoff, B. 2012. *Integrale Theorie und Lebenspraxis: ein Plädoyer für ein umfassendes kulturelles Lebenskonzept und ganzheitliches Bewusstsein*. KM: Das Magazin von Kulturmanagement Network. 2012(63), 33-37. Retrieved November 30 2020 from <https://doi.org/10.21256/zhaw-1642> .
- Borghoff, B. 2017. Entrepreneurial Storytelling: Narrative Praktiken und Designstrategien in der Projekt- und Organisationsentwicklung. In D. Perrin & U. Kleinberger. (Eds.). *Doing Applied Linguistics. Enabling Transdisciplinary Communication*. 175-184. De Gruyter Collection. Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter.
- Borghoff, B. 2018. Entrepreneurial Storytelling as Narrative Practice in Project and Organizational Development. In E. Innerhofer, H. Pechlaner & E. Borin. (Eds.) *Entrepreneurship in Culture and Creative Industries. FGF Studies in Small Business and Entrepreneurship*. 63-83. Springer: Cham.
- Cooren, F. 2015. *Organizational discourse. In Communication and constitution (Key themes in organizational communication)*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Czarniawska, B. 2004. *Narratives in social science research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Deeg, J. & Küpers, W. M. 2012. *Integrale Steuerung von Organisationen*. Oldenbourg: Wissenschaftsverlag.
- Esbjörn-Hargens, S. (Ed.). 2010. *Integral Theory in Action: Applied, Theoretical, and Constructive Perspectives on the AQAL Model*. State University of New York Press.

- Esbjörn-Hargens, S., Reams, J. & Gunnlaugson, O. (Eds.). 2010. *Integral Education: New Directions for Higher Learning*. State University of New York Press.
- Fairhurst, G. T. 2007. *Discursive leadership: In conversation with leadership psychology*. Thousand Oaks. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Gartner, W. B. 2004. The edge defines the (w)hole: Saying what entrepreneurship is (not). In D. Hjorth & C. Steyaert (Eds.). *Narrative and discursive approaches in entrepreneurship*. 245–254. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Gartner, W. B. 2007. Entrepreneurial narrative and a science of the imagination. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 22, 613–627.
- Gartner, W. B. (Ed.). 2010. *ENTER: entrepreneurial narrative theory ethnomethodology and reflexivity: An issue about the republic of tea*. Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press.
- Gebser, J. 1966. *Ursprung und Gegenwart (1. und 2. Teil)*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt.
- Gebser, J. 1970. *Der unsichtbare Ursprung*. Olten und Freiburg im Br: Walter-Verlag.
- Hjorth, D. & Steyaert, C. (Eds.). 2004. *Narrative and discursive approaches in entrepreneurship*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Johansson Sköldberg, U., Woodilla, J. & Berthoin Antal, A. (Eds.). 2018. *Artistic interventions in organizations: Research, theory and practice (Vol. 4, Routledge research in creative and cultural industries management)*. London: Routledge.
- Küpers, W. M. & Paullen, D. J. 2016. *A Handbook of Practical Wisdom. Leadership, Organization and Integral Business Practice*. The Practical Wisdom in Leadership and Organization Series. New York: Routledge.
- Moore, M. 1994. *Complete Poems*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Smith, R. 2015. Entrepreneurship and poetry: analyzing an aesthetic dimension, *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, Vol. 22 No. 3, 450–472. Retrieved November 30 2020 from <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSBED-09-2012-0103>
- Steyaert, C. 2004. The prosaics of entrepreneurship. In D. Hjorth & C. Steyaert (Eds.). *Narrative and discursive approaches in entrepreneurship*, 105–124. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Steyaert, C. 2007. Of course that is not the whole (toy) story: Entrepreneurship and the cat's cradle. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 22(5), 733–751.
- Stücheli-Herlach, P. 2015. Beratungskommunikation in der Kommunikationsberatung. *Working Papers in Applied Linguistics*. Winterthur: ZHAW Zürcher Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften. Retrieved November 30 2020 from <https://doi.org/10.21256/zhaw-184>.

Wilber, K. 2000. *A theory of everything: An integral vision for business, politics, science and spirituality*. Boston: Shambhala.

Wilber, K. 2008. *Integral life practice: A 21st century blueprint for physical health, emotional balance, mental clarity, and spiritual awakening*. Boston: Integral Books.