

# The Status and Relevance of Phenomenology for Integral Research: Or Why Phenomenology is More and Different than an “Upper Left” or “Zone #1” Affair

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**Abstract:** The specific treatment that Ken Wilber gives phenomenology in his model of integral theory requires a critical investigation. According to Wilber's model, different methodologies are situated in distinct quadrants or "domains of knowing," namely the subjective, objective, intersubjective and interobjective domains, labeled by their position in the model's matrix illustration, upper left, upper right, lower left, lower right. In this model, phenomenology is isolated in the UL quadrant, and even more specifically as the inside perspective of this subjective domain. What this means is that, according to Wilber's classification, phenomenology is an exclusive, rather than inclusive, approach that limits its field of inquiry and therefore its range of knowing also to an inside exploration of the subjective.

In contrast to this positioning, a critical reflection on the current status and usage of phenomenology in integral theory is provided. The goal of this undertaking is to show that phenomenology – particularly in its more advanced forms – is more and different than something to put merely into “upper left” quadrant or to understand only as a “Zone 1” affair suggested in the conventional integral model.

In the first part the paper outlines an introductory understanding and examines classical (Husserlian) phenomenology as well as illustrates some of its limitations. Based on various critiques and further developments of phenomenology, the status and usage of phenomenology in integral (AQAL) theory is discussed critically. Particularly, this concerns the ordering of phenomenology into a separate realm or zone, the status of consciousness, including the debate related to its structure and states, and inter-subjective dimensions as well as the relation to contemplation and meditation. In a second part the paper introduces the more advanced phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty that overcomes the limitations of the previous versions of phenomenology. Advanced phenomenology entails a strong proto-integral potential and as such contributes to compensating for some of the weaknesses and limitations of integral theory.

Furthermore, a third part proposes that such advanced phenomenology provides the foundations for an “adequate phenomenology” in integral research. Based on the specific ontological, epistemological, and methodological considerations, this final part and the conclusion outline some perspectives on what is called integral “pheno-practice.” The explicated criticism and the proposed pheno-practical approach might enrich integral research, improve its theory building and empirical testing by offering perspectives of a more inclusive, coherent and relevant nexus of ideas and possibilities for integrative theory and practice.

**Keywords:** Adequate phenomenology, integral theory, Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology.

## Introduction

Following multiple historical predecessors and developed and promoted inside and outside academia by avant-garde thinkers like Jean Gebser, Roy Bhaskar, Ervin Laszlo, Edgar Morin, Basarab Nicolescu and Ken Wilber, integral approaches have emerged responding to different contemporary challenges. In a way the emerging revival and further development of integralism manifests and provides a systematic and systemic response and guide to the complex environmental, economic, societal, religious, political, educational, as well as scientific crises we intensifying face individually and collectively. Among other aspirations integral orientations and theoretical practices attempt to reach a required synthesis grasping the major insights of pre-modern, modern and post-modern worldviews and re-integrating modern differentiation between science, arts and spirituality as the three major realms of human beings' expression and construction of reality.

In this context, the all-encompassing but difference-sensible integral thinking and theory of Ken Wilber and corresponding research inspired by it, represents one of the most sophisticated and advanced integral philosophies for understanding and dealing with the problems and potentials not only for current but also future realities. Moreover, it provides a well-founded base for a much needed integral science, which allows not only including, but transcending conventional research orientations in a coherent and adequate way. Integral theory – as developed by Wilber – has already achieved important insights and results as well as found extending developments, refinements and practices. However, what is necessary is furthering and deepening a critical appraisal and evaluations of integral theory and practice. Appreciating the tremendous achievement of integral research to date, the following criticism tries to contribute to a specific advancement and theory building. Accordingly, the following paper – and research initiative which may be inspired by this – tries to provide a constructive critique. In particular this analysis concerns the status and usage of phenomenology in integral theorizing.

Generally, phenomenology is discernible as a specific style and “movement of thought” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: xxi). It is characterized by a flexible and vivid way of inquiry, as it takes different directions, tries out continuously new ways of reasoning. Thus, it approaches the experienced phenomena in question and its various and inexhaustible dimensions of meaning and ambiguities perspectively. Therefore, phenomenology can be seen as an attempt to understand what experience is and means, better to say a formalized account of conscious experience and its implications.

However, what is called phenomenology is not a rigid school or uniform philosophic discipline with an undisputed set of dogmas. Rather there is a great diversity in various points of view of thinkers and approaches who and which could be classified under the general rubric of phenomenology. Consequently, as a philosophical movement, phenomenology is marked by a variety of different forms, themes, ideas, problems, and issues and further developments and variations. Therefore, the horizon of phenomenology cannot be taken in at a single glance or framed as one united school (Embree, 1997; Moran, 2000; Spiegelberg, 1982; Stewart & Mickunas, 1990). Based on outlining some selective but important issues out of the diverse scope, the following will argue that the status of phenomenology in integral theorizing needs to be rethought and extended for gaining a more adequate and comprehensive understanding.

Especially it will be shown that as a methodology phenomenology is more and different than an upper left or Zone #1 affair, as it is modeled in hitherto existing integral theory and methodology.<sup>1</sup>

After introducing specific ontological and epistemological positions and limitations as well as discussing criticism of classical phenomenology, further developments and refinements are briefly presented. Based on this introductory understanding the status and usage of phenomenology in integral research will be problematized critically. In a second part, then the advanced phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty will be presented as a proto-integral philosophy and finally perspectives of an adequate phenomenology and an integral pheno-practice are outlined.

All in all, this article proposes that a more complete accommodation of an adequately understood phenomenological science within integral theory building and integral research development opens up a more enriched and coherent system of enlightening ideas and relevant fields for its applications.

## Part I: Understanding Phenomenology

What the following attempts to convey is an introductory understanding of phenomenology and its relationship to integral theory by indicating to some of its central themes, methodologies and applications. It would be beyond the scope of this article to describe phenomenology in a comprehensive way. The aim will be to show the relevance and potency of phenomenology for advancing a more integral research and practice.

In general, phenomenology represents a philosophical discipline that has been central to the tradition of continental European philosophy throughout the 20th century and still provides a relevant contemporary purview (see e.g., Hammond et al., 1995; Macann, 1993). Literally, phenomenology is the study of phenomena: appearances of things, specifically things as they appear in human experience. Thus, it concerns ways that humans experience phenomena, particularly the experientially realized meanings things have for them. Therefore the call *to the things themselves* (Zu den Sachen selbst) as they are given in experience marks in a nutshell is the program of phenomenology. However, this call is not a demand for a “realism,” because the things at stake are the acts of consciousness and the objective entities that are constituted in them, both forming together the realm of the phenomena. As its name connotes, phenomenology is, fundamentally, a philosophy which attends to *phenomena*. The term *phenomeno-logy* is derived from the two Greek words *phainomenon* (an “appearance”) and *logos* (reason or word). Accordingly, phenomenology is a reasoned inquiry: a method of scientific philosophy in general which tries to discover the essences of appearances which are anything which human beings can become conscious. More precisely the word *phenomenon* means *that which reveals itself*. Therefore, phenomenology refers in the more refined way of Heidegger’s ontology to the attempt

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<sup>1</sup> Wilber (2006) differentiates eight complementary perspectives or hori-zones whose paradigms and methodologies are used to enact, disclose, and bring forth valid data for any occasion within a community of the adequate. Phenomenology is put with introspection into Zone #1 within the Upper-Left Quadrant (Subjective Intention).

to let the thing speak for itself, specifically: “to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way which it shows itself from itself” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 58).

The classical phenomenological approach focuses on the world appearing to us through our stream of consciousness as a configuration of meaning. Elements of consciousness, i.e., perceiving, willing, thinking, remembering, anticipating, etc., are our modalities of self-world relationship. They give us access to our world and to that of others by reflecting on the content (i.e., its meaning or the *what*), which we thus encounter, and also by reflecting on the process (i.e., the *how*). What makes an experience conscious is a specific awareness one has of the experience while living through or performing it. Specific refers here to a direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced, “without theories about their causal explanation and as free as possible from unexamined preconceptions and presuppositions” (Spiegelberg, 1975, p. 810). With this orientation, phenomenology refers not only to a philosophical inquiry, but serves also in an adapted way research purposes and methodological pursuits. Being a specific research methodology, it is striving to portray phenomena from the personal and contextual perspectives of those who experience them. Accordingly, classical phenomenology – as initiated by Edmund Husserl (1859 – 1938) – approaches phenomena by studying conscious experience as experienced from the *subjective* or *first person point of view* along with relevant conditions and horizons of experience, within the larger sphere of the unified field of a person's consciousness and existence; “the psycho-cosm” (Eckartsberg, 1981). Accordingly it basically represents a philosophy that considers anything appearing to consciousness as a legitimate field of inquiry (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990, p. vii).

As a distinct philosophical movement, phenomenology emerged largely from the philosophical views of Husserl, who was struggling against psychologism, historicism and scientism, in so far as they reduce the life of man to a mere result of external conditions acting on him. He was seeking to reaffirm rationality at the level of experience, without sacrificing the vast variety that it includes while laying aside (bracketing) all the processes of conditioning which psychology, sociology, and history reveal. Moreover, Husserl dealt critically with the Cartesian philosophy regarding the rational justification of knowledge. Instead of the Cartesian distinction between the subject and the object of thinking, he maintained that the two must be considered together (Husserl, 1963, 1964, 1989). Thus Husserl, like Heidegger, also early on understood that the phenomenology project could not exclude the objective domain even though the starting point and approach was from the subjective perspective.

Husserlian philosophy considers the unique and virtual experience of things themselves that is to allow experience to speak for itself through conscious subjectivity. With this aspiration, Husserl is part of a movement at the end of the nineteenth century and early 20 century to transcend the limitations of the materialist, empiricist and positivistic approach to science and philosophy.

Husserl's call to return to the investigation of the things as they appear tried to overcome examining and explaining only their material conditions, extrinsic causes etc. without finding out what they are and mean intrinsically. He extended the Cartesian *cogito, ergo sum* (I think therefore I am) to *cogito, ergo die Welt ist* (I think, therefore the world exists). Accordingly, the objective world is “proved” through subjective identification. Thereby ontology is consequently

founded upon epistemology, more precisely on transcendental (inter-)subjectivity that is a reflection of the possibility for knowledge and experience.

Husserl used the concept of experience to mean anything of which we may be conscious or aware of: perceptions of natural phenomena, affective states, desires, moods, but also ideas, mathematical entities, or values etc. All these are phenomena which one can be aware of are phenomena to be investigated. Consequently, phenomenology studies various types of immediate and given experience ranging from perception, bodily awareness, feeling, and volition to thoughts, memory, imagination, and social and linguistic activities.

Importantly, Husserl tried to investigate the formal qualities of the concrete reality which human beings become aware of as their experience. He was searching for an architectonic of thought, which would express and uncover the specificity of the world that is “the genesis and development of phenomena from their most primordial roots in pre-reflective consciousness to their most reflectively sophisticated exemplification in science” (Natanson, 1973, p. 5). Correspondingly, a phenomenologist distinguishes between how phenomena are experienced from how they appear in a subject’s awareness for investigating the structures of consciousness and essences.

## Investigating the Structures of Consciousness and Essences

The program of phenomenology aims for disclosing and clarifying the *true* epistemic and ontological significance of consciousness. As mentioned before, phenomenology is specifically dedicated to describing and reconstructing the structures of experience as they present themselves to consciousness. This implies a systematic study of the structures of consciousness that enable consciousness to refer to objects outside itself. Thereby, phenomenology deals with phenomena that are with those *objects* as we experience them in consciousness and with our different ways of *relating* to these *objects* experientially as content of consciousness. Accordingly, phenomenology investigates conscious experience (as experienced) by analyzing the structure, that is the types, intentional forms and meanings, dynamics, and (certain) enabling conditions of various forms of experiences.

The basic structure of forms of conscious experience typically involves what Husserl – following antique and medieval precursors and Brentano – called *intentionality*. This orientation refers to the directedness of experience toward things in the world. It is a special characteristic, of consciousness that it is always one of or about something or someone. According to phenomenology, our experience is directed towards something through particular concepts, thoughts, ideas, images, etc. These modes make up the meaning or content of a given experience, and are distinct from the things they (re-)present or mean. Corresponding to the anti-representationalist stance of phenomenology, consciousness via intentionality reaches out beyond its own acts to the phenomena. However, it can do this only because it constitutes these objects as meaningful. Importantly, constitution for Husserl is not the recognition of a pre-established meaning or value. Rather it is the realized and reflected establishment of a meaning or value in the first place. By the study of consciousness in its world-directedness phenomenology claims to provide insights into not only the structure of subjectivity, but also into the nature of objectivity, thus about the world. In other words objectivity is co-constituted by structures, which are giving meaning-value.

In order to study the structure of consciousness, a phenomenological researcher distinguishes between the act of consciousness and those phenomena at which it is directed. Therefore, classical phenomenology makes a distinction between the perceiving act of consciousness (*noesis*) and the phenomena at which it is directed (*noemata*) that which is perceived. While the noetic refers to the act of consciousness (e.g., believing, willing, hating and loving); the noematic refers to the object (noema), as it appears in the noetic acts, for example as being believed, wanted, hated and loved etc. What we observe is not the object as it is in itself, but how and inasmuch it is given in the intentional acts. Accordingly transcendental phenomenology<sup>2</sup> is the study of the basic components of the meanings that are made possible by intentionality. This implies that something cannot be meaningful unless it is constituted accomplished by (transcendental) subjectivity. For that reason, traditional phenomenology is kind of *a priori science* of subjectivity to study human consciousness in its relation to its objects.

Corresponding to the underlying transcendental orientation, phenomenologically we can know nothing that is non-constituted; in other words there can be nothing, which is not given meaning by acts of a transcendental subject. The implication of this orientation is that phenomenology is not concerned with situating consciousness (as merely yet another object) within an already well-established naturalistic framework and captured by a corresponding objectivism. Rather consciousness is seen in connection with overarching transcendental dimension, which implies also non-psychological reflection. It is important to add that this transcendental subjectivity should not be taken as some kind of other-worldly, ghostly, homunculus. The empirical subject and the transcendental subject are not two different subjects, but rather two different ways of conceiving one and the same subject(ivity). The difference between the two refers to either one being aware of oneself as a causally determined known object, as a part of the empirical world, and on the other hand being aware of oneself as a knowing subject, as the limit of the world.

The underlying goal of phenomenological investigations is to understand essences or essential themes. However, knowledge of essences is only possible by suspending all assumptions about the existence of an external world and the inessential aspects of how the object is concretely given to us. This implies putting into {brackets} the pre-set *framing* that constitutes the ubiquitous background of everyday life. To access essences, what is needed is an unassumptive and non-intervening study of a personally or socially significant phenomena, which are investigated as an experience, rather than as a “conceptualization.” By holding off pre-

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<sup>2</sup> Transcendental is used here in its Kantian sense to mean an investigation concerned with the modes or ways in which objects are experienced and known, as well as the a priori conditions for the possibility of such experience and knowledge. However, transcendental phenomenology focuses not on what things are, but on the ways in which things are given. For Husserl, this means focusing on phenomena (appearances) and the senses or meanings they have for us and asking how these meaningful phenomena are constituted. Constitution does not mean fabrication or construction; the mind does not fabricate the world. To constitute, in the technical phenomenological sense, means to bring to awareness, to present, or to disclose. That is objects are disclosed or made available to experience in the ways they are thanks to how consciousness is structured. Things show up, as it were, having the features they do, because of how they are disclosed and brought to awareness, given the structure of consciousness. Consequently, transcendental phenomenology attempts to reconstruct the structures, which are underlying and making possible these constitutive achievements.

conceptions, personal knowledge and habitual beliefs the stage is set, as it were, for a phenomenological description and reflection of the various counters and relations that make up the life-world and its meanings. Consequently, one of the key principles in Husserl's development of phenomenology as a means of philosophical inquiry is the methodological suspensions of all assumptions about the nature of any reality.

## Methodologies of Phenomenology

Based on the need for suspension, the phenomenological inquiry is specified by methodological procedures and techniques of epoché, bracketing, reduction, and as well as free variation.<sup>3</sup> These methodological concepts, although being often used synonymously, refer to the

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<sup>3</sup> Epoché, (literally: abstention) is borrowed from the Greek skeptics, refers to the questioning of assumptions in order to fully examine a phenomenon. The *epoché* requires the suspension of commonly held beliefs about one's object of study. By suspending our beliefs, we open ourselves to new experiences; we allow our object of experience to present itself to us in new forms. Bracketing describes the differential setting aside of some portion of an inquiry, so as to look at the whole. It engages in a process in which the *natural attitude* is placed aside such that the researcher may begin with the things themselves, that is in the phenomena as they show themselves in experience. (Phenomenological) Reduction – as a kind of attentive wonder at the world in which we live – phenomenological reduction is simply the consideration of only the basic elements of an inquiry without concern for what is accidental or trivial. It involves ignoring one's prejudices about the world and focusing on the essential aspects of one's object or subject of study. is a specific method of “Rückführung” drawing-back (re-ducere = to lead back) of what appears to how it shows itself, allowing a return to a presuppositionless world. Thus reduction reverses – *re-flects* – man's direction of sight from a straightforward orientation toward objects to an orientation toward consciousness. The aim of the reduction is to re-achieve a direct and primitive contact with the world as we experience it rather than as we conceptualize or construct it. What is left over then is the pure transcendental ego, as opposed to the concrete empirical ego. The reduction to the sphere of immanence, can then be followed by or in concert by heuristic, hermeneutic reduction, methodological and particularly the movement from fact to essence via eidetic reduction. Eidetic reduction requires a shift to consider things not as realities but as instances of idealities, as pure possibilities rather than actualities. With this the various acts of consciousness are made accessible in such a way that their essences--their universal and unchangeable structures--can be grasped. Foregoing everything that is factual and merely occurs in this way or that, this “Wesensschau” is a means of intuitively grasping the essence and essential structures. For Husserl, this second reduction is necessary to fulfill the conditions for genuinely rigorous science. By eidetic reduction Noema can be reduced to their essential (invariant) form or “essence.” With this phenomenological interpretation steps back decisively from everyday perspectives and involvements to comprehend their encompassing intelligibility. Transcendental Reduction consists in a reversion to the achievements of that consciousness that Husserl, following Kant, called transcendental consciousness. The most fundamental event occurring in this consciousness is the creation of time awareness through the acts of protention (future) and retention (past), which is something like a self-constitution. To do phenomenology is tantamount to returning to the transcendental ego as the ground for the foundation and constitution (or making) of all meaning (Sinn). Only when a person has reached this ground can he achieve the insight that makes his comportment transparent in its entirety and makes him understand how meaning comes about, how meaning is based upon meaning like strata in a process of sedimentation. Finally there is free variation or imaginary variation of the reduced thing to a common variation or essence (eidos) that is changing - as far as possible - all kinds of aspects (e.g. color, shape, etc.) to see what is essential, what we cannot leave out.. These variations can be put into the service of whatever becomes the focus of the analysis: perception of

suspended judgment necessary for phenomenological inquiry. From a Husserlian philosophical stance, only by suspending our judging and a corresponding phenomenological clarification can inquiry proceed, as only this frees from masked assumptions about the nature of the phenomena observed. For Husserl this methodological freeing of the mind from the culturally prevalent habits of thought, and feelings brought with it a strange change in consciousness, which he called a “new universal direction for our interest” (Husserl, 1954, p. 147) which he interestingly compared to a spiritual “Umkehr” (turning or conversion) (Husserl, 1954, p. 140). By consciously investigating the phenomena of life that we habitually take for granted, the world changes before our eyes and reveals the mysterious lining of the all embracing world horizon and the entwining of each thing with universal being. The world then becomes the universal field into which all our experiencing, understanding, and doing are directed. To investigate the relational structure of consciousness and meaning of this plenum of the world as they reveal themselves to reflective consciousness became the task of phenomenology ever since Husserl.

Realizing this phenomenological clarification can metaphorically be compared with using a brush, (a) negatively, doing away with the “dust” of entrenched interpretations or theories, etc., and (b) positively, polishing revealing the phenomena in their full brightness. This suspending and bracketing gesture transforms a naive or unexamined experience into a reflexive or second-order one, which is shifting from the natural to the phenomenological attitude. The result of these procedures is that a field of experience appears both less encumbered and more vividly present, as if the habitual distance separating experience and world were dispelled; which then can be further explored in imaginary variation as and communicated.<sup>4</sup> The methodological disengagement from the empirical is practiced in order to highlight consciousness itself and to approach conscious experiences of the world. It is only through the suspension of the natural thesis of the world, that consciousness attains by reflection a level of pureness, which transcends nature and which operates its transcendental constitution of meaning.

As a transcendental philosophy, Husserlian phenomenology is ultimately interested in the possibility conditions and foundations for justified knowledge; not factual, empirical, descriptions of psychological processes. To address this constitutional problem of how meaningful phenomena are brought to awareness or disclosed, transcendental phenomenology tries to uncover the invariant formal principles by which experience necessarily operates in order to be constitutive. As a transcendental project, phenomenology involves a search for a priori structures of consciousness. These structures are the conditions of possibility for any experience,

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aesthetic forms, the manifestations of empathy, the structure of nowness for improvisation and so on. It is through these multiple variations that a new stage of understanding or intuition arises, an 'Aha!' experience which adds a new evidence and “vision” of connecting structures that carries a force of conviction.

<sup>4</sup> After investigating a particular phenomenon; attending to the mode of appearance involved; and watching the constitution of the phenomenon in consciousness as well as practicing free variation, the intuited need to be expressed and communicated. To stop at reduction followed by imaginary variations would be to condemn this method to private ascertainment. Therefore with a next component the gain in intuitive evidence must be inscribed or translated into communicable items, usually through language or other symbolic inscriptions. The materialities of these descriptions however are a constitutive part of the phenomenological approach and shape our experience as much as the intuition that shapes them. In other words we are not merely talking about an 'encoding' into a public record, but rather again of an 'embodiment' that incarnates and shapes what we experience.



including the experience of the objective world as well as the very idea of objectivity that forms the basis of science. According to Husserl, this transcendental sphere represents the inevitable juncture of object and subject of the thinking self and the object of one's thoughts – in any inquiry.

Even more in the systematic work of phenomenology the old traditional ambiguous antitheses of the philosophical standpoint like oppositions such as between rationalism (Platonism) and empiricism, relativism and absolutism, subjectivism and objectivism, ontologism and transcendentalism, psychologism and anti-psychologism, positivism and metaphysics, or the teleological versus the causal interpretation of the world can be resolved (Husserl, 1927).

For Husserl the objective truths of science must be recognized as grounded in the living acts of human consciousness in relation to worldly phenomena. Accordingly, man and the world are first and foremost in relation. Thus phenomenology is fundamentally about relationships and not about the subjective end of an encounter between a subject and an object. It is only at the subsequent, reflective level of logic that we divide them into separate entities.

With this orientation, phenomenology was conceived by Husserl as a foundational and far-reaching enterprise to secure the basics and methodologies of a rigorous 'scientific' investigation of the essential nature of consciousness and its generation of meaning in order to turn back to the world of living.

## **Return to Life-World**

Where science claims to establish facts based on empirical observation, phenomenology seeks to describe the structures of the "*life world*" (*Lebenswelt*), the world as it is lived and experienced by conscious subjects. The life-world is the world as it is lived by the person in her everyday life that is not a separate and independent entity. It is the realm where we share knowledge which is useful in its own way for "daily practices" (Husserliana = Hua. VI, 126), as well as "daily practical circumstantial truths" (Hua., VI, p. 135).

This life-world is also the unexamined foundation and matrix of scientific activity; and phenomenology makes these common-sense phenomena its object of investigation. "From a phenomenological viewpoint, the life-world is pre-theoretical and pre-scientific. . . . It is the foundation of all sciences" (Giorgi, 1997, p. 248). If science forgets the life-world as their foundation of meaning and base it "hang in the air groundlessly" (Hua., VI, pp. 48, 144). Furthermore, by presenting scientific images of the world as representing "reality," modern science conceals the life-world that is the origin of scientific re-presentations. Therefore a return to the life-world is proposed by Husserl, particularly in his later important writing on the "Crisis of European Sciences" (1970). Emphasizing the challenges presented by increasingly one-sidedly empirical and naturalistic orientation in modern science, Husserl is showing the need for linking the basic notions of science back to their conceptual roots in the pre-scientific regions of the life-world which is the background, horizon (framework of interpretation), and foundation of cognitive activities.

To elucidate and systematically understand the dynamics of experience related to the principle of correlation in the life-world is the task of phenomenology. This focus on life-worldly phenomena, which is also closely related to intersubjective and socio-cultural processes<sup>5</sup>, have become programmatic in the development of a more hermeneutically and existentially oriented phenomenology. It is a program, which aims at describing how phenomena present themselves in lived experience in human existence of what Heidegger (1962) calls “being in the world” (In-der-Welt-Sein). As the life-world is a social, political, historical, and cultural environment where human beings interpret, communicate, and socially engage in multiple communal spheres this opened up a series of questions and issues dealt with in further developments of phenomenology.

## Critique and Further Developments of Phenomenology

The following gives an introductory overview of basic limitations and criticisms of classical phenomenology and the development of various phenomenological movements. Husserl’s original inspiration of phenomenology has undergone significant development and change through the work of his successors. According to Ricoeur (1953, p. 836), phenomenology is the story of the deviations from Husserl; its history, as it were, is the history of Husserlian heresies. Various criticisms have been raised concerning the partly supposed implicit Cartesianism, transcendental idealism, essentialism, monism and supposed solipsism as retained problematic metaphysical assumptions in Husserl’s substance philosophy. Accordingly, Husserl’s work has been interpreted as a radicalized neo-Cartesian philosophy<sup>6</sup> and essentialistic neo-Idealism

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<sup>5</sup> In his later works Husserl showed that below the personal activity of the individual and transcendental ego there is a prior meaning-giving function, that of transcendental intersubjectivity. This one offers to each individual a set of prefabricated meanings handed down from history through the medium of language. We come to consciousness within a life-world, which has already been given meaning by a cultural originator of meaning, transcendental intersubjectivity. According to Husserl, intersubjective experience plays a fundamental role in our constitution of both ourselves as objectively existing subjects, other experiencing subjects, and the objective spatio-temporal world. Just as intentionality constitutes a self-identical object within the constantly changing flux of experience, so contingent intersubjective constitution can establish objects accessible to anyone able and willing to take on the scientific project.

<sup>6</sup> Although unlike Cartesian subjectivism, Husserl’s phenomenology is not based expressly on the pure interiority of the self-conscious ego but on the consciousness of the world taken strictly as one’s – the transcendental ego’s phenomena. On the Cartesian model, the reality and truth of objective being, including that of other selves, lie originally outside the essential structure of consciousness understood as “representation” (i.e., as the subject’s positing and securing of cogitations in self-certainty), and so against the presumed errors and uncertainties of everyday experience, philosophy must attempt to “recreate” this reality and truth on an absolute philosophical foundation. With the phenomenology of consciousness, in contrast, the reality and truth of objective being are in principle implicated originally in the essential structure of consciousness as intentional and so have only to be explicated more originally. By means of such explication, then, the human beings that exist for one in everyday lived experience are not, as it were, made to disappear, as they are in Cartesian doubt. Rather they are transformed into alter egos having the ontic meaning of *implicata*. Moreover, as such *implicata* these alter egos are not simply a particular, possible achievement of intentional life but an intrinsic, essential dimension of it. Within the vitally flowing intentionality in which the life of an ego-subject consists, every other ego is intentionally implied in advance, implied not as real particular persons in the flesh, but as others in general, that is, as a transcendental intersubjectivity that precedes and makes possible all relations to actual others within a monadic community. It is the exploration of this transcendence which in principle distinguishes all radical phenomenology from Cartesianism.

following basic form of intentionality in the experience: subject-act-content-object, and trying to discover ideal form of phenomena (eideia) and stressing a priori conditions of knowledge. However, the image of classical phenomenology as being one-sidedly conceived as an investigation of a detached transcendental ego from whom its own body, worldly things, and other subjects were but constituted objects appears as a pejorative caricature, underestimating Husserl's endeavor (Zahavi, 2008, p. 662).

Nevertheless, post-Husserlian phenomenology, including that developed by Husserl himself, is marked by attempts and self-critical moves towards over-coming classical phenomenology that is focusing primarily on the study of structures of subjective experience or consciousness in relation to phenomena as very base of research. Husserl's "identification of phenomenology with subjectivism [was] an unfortunate and unnecessary narrowing of its original objective, violating the ideal of freedom from the unexamined presuppositions" (Spiegelberg, 1975, p. xxiii).

Consequently, succeeding phenomenologists developed a resistance to Husserl's turn to transcendental idealism and problematized the methodological limitations of classical phenomenology. For such philosophers, phenomenology should not bracket questions of being or ontology, as the method of epoché would suggest. They have loosened Husserl's strict requirements by recognizing that it is impossible to interpret social action without relying upon prior knowledge and experience.

"In place of the Husserlian procedure which moves from the world of the natural attitude up to a higher, transcendental plane with a view to bring to light the transcendental structures constitutive of the objectivity of the entities encountered in the natural attitude, (starting with Heidegger) we find an alternative procedure which moves from the ontic level down to a deeper, ontological plane with a view to bringing to light the ontological structures constitutive of the being of the entities in question." (Macann, 1993, p. 63)

The basic pattern shift can be described as moving from value-free phenomenological reflective analysis operating under the self-imposed methodological disciplines to passionate value-engagement and existential commitment. This shift marks a move from the primacy of knowing to the primacy of enacted life praxis.

Both the subjects' descriptions and the researchers own characterizations of general meanings are socio-culturally embedded in articulated language. That is to say, they are already encrusted with the presuppositions and preconceptions of a culture. Being is always already embedded and related to a horizon of meaning, and therefore all approaches and findings are bound by historical and cultural perspectives. Researchers therefore cannot actually and totally bracket all they know or believe that they know about their phenomena of interest; hence the phenomenological reduction cannot be fully attained. According to Merleau-Ponty (1962, p. xv) "the most important lesson which the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of the complete reduction". A modified phenomenological suspension method is not, as in Husserl, to bracket off the world in order to discover the pure, worldless that is a-contextual structures of consciousness. It is rather, to use the distance supplied by the reduction as a heuristic device to reveal and interpret the genuine phenomena and the implicit pre-reflective background.

Husserl's original concept has taken flesh, in a variety of ways, some of which are hardly compatible with each other. With Heidegger (1962), phenomenology resolved into what he called "fundamental ontology" purging residue of Aristotelian and Kantian mentalism in Husserl's approach. Philosophising on "In-der-Welt-Sein (being-in-the-world), Befindlichkeit (attunement in mood) and Da-Sein (t/here-being) and the corresponding development towards a hermeneutical phenomenology endeavors to disclosure of unconcealed temporal and historical "Being." This attempt to overcome conventional metaphysical orientations of philosophical tradition and raising the question of the meaning of Being as well as reintegrating ontological dimensions and Heidegger's analysis of became influential for many subsequent philosophical views and approaches (Dreyfus, 1991).<sup>7</sup>

Related to this ontological phenomenological orientation further streams of phenomenologies emerged. Among others there are "existential" (e.g., Sartre, de Beauvoir, Marcel), "hermeneutical" (e.g., Gadamer, Ricoeur), "ethical" (e.g., Scheler, Levinas), and "experiential" or "practice-oriented" orientations (e.g., clinical psychology, medicine, education or pedagogy, nursing, counseling etc. An important application is also what has been named "eco-phenomenology" (e.g., Brown & Toadvine, 2003). This kind of phenomenology tries to develop a middle ground between phenomenology and naturalism, opening up an access to the Nature and the natural that is both independent of the conceptuality of the natural sciences, and of traditional metaphysics.

Schütz's social mundaned phenomenology of acting and the social world having various provinces of meaning (Schütz, 1972; Schütz & Luckmann, 1989) became important for application of phenomenology to social sciences, sociology, social psychology, but also economics and organization studies as well as and methodologies like ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. Furthermore, phenomenology has been a source or given rise to various related philosophical movements such as "linguistical" and "post-structuralist" postmodern, philosophy (e.g., Barthes, Blanchot, Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault, Kristeva Lyotard), but also feminism, (e.g., Langellier, 1994) or culture critique (e.g., Fay, 2003). More recently, there are new bridges been built between phenomenology and "techno-science" (Ihde, 1979, 1986) and cognitive science (Baumgartner et al., 1996; Gallagher, 1997, 2003, 2005, 2007) and neuro-

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<sup>7</sup> Heidegger became one of the most influential philosopher of the 20th century in continental philosophy, but has been exposed to radical criticism, including his priority of ontology, his neglect of ethics and the body and embodiment as well as sexual difference. For the later Heidegger the essence of being human is the maintenance of an authentic openness to Being. Relevant for economics and organization studies, interestingly the later Heidegger problematized the technological-scientific-industrial modes and what he calls "calculative thinking," – in contrast to a meditative one – restless thinking directed toward manipulation, toward obtaining some specific result. Meditative thinking, however, requires patience and silence, being as well as doing. It requires that we somehow stop and recollect ourselves. It requires conditions in which we can practice innocent looking and listening, the kind of awareness that we experience when we truly, unselfishly love someone or something – when we love the truth. For real thinking depends on openness, openness to whatever is in front of us. And it must start with what is closest – our own being. It is only then, when we are truly open to ourselves, that what is true can enter our perception and reveal itself fully to us. It is only then that we can go beyond the "stimulus-response" mode of living, a mode of living that is suited to machines not people. It would be important to investigate critically Wilber's interpretation of Heidegger's ontology and hermeneutics, which is insufficiently classified as subjectivist form of hermeneutics (Wilber, 2006, p. 188).

science i.e. “neuro-phenomenology” (Varela, 1996; Varela et al., 1991) as well as a naturalized phenomenology (Petitot et al., 1999; Petitot, 2000; Zahavi, 2004). The latter one is pursuing the integration of the disciplines, thus relating phenomenology and its refined accounts of consciousness with contemporary cognitive and natural science.

In a second part of this article, I will outline in detail the important advancement of phenomenology by the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, who is emphasizing the neglected role of the living body and embodiment in human experience. I will try to show how his reformed phenomenology provides a base for a proto-integral interpretation. But before that, there is the need to critically reflect on the status of phenomenology in integral theory.

### **Status of Phenomenology in Integral AQAL Theory**

In the following I will discuss the status and usage of phenomenology in integral theorizing. This is not pursued in a spirit of fault-finding or narrow-minded judgmentalism, but scholarly, reasoned scientific critique for showing deficiencies and potentials of some ideas of the integral model as it has been developed by Ken Wilber. As a contribution for a discourse that aims at a critical appreciation, but also appraisal and evaluation of some propositions, assumptions and interpretations of integral theory. This kind of critical inquiry is motivated also by a quest for a true, good and perhaps more beautiful integration of phenomenology into the emerging body of integral theorizing. Hence it tries to contribute for the further development and refinement of the integral vision, by adding a voice to the integral adventure (Wilber, 2006, p. 170).

Generally, Wilber recognizes phenomenology as an useful, if limited, aspect of a more integral methodology, respectively a methodological pluralism (Wilber, 2000d, p. 153; 2000b, note 21 for chap. 14). However, the problematic status, which phenomenology gets in integral research is based on, what seems to me a highly selective reading and interpretation of “phenomenology” by Wilber. If a critical reader studies the definitions and understanding of Wilber’s interpretation of phenomenology, (e.g. 2000a, Vol. 6, note 28 for chap. 4, p. 583, Wilber 2000c not 21 for chap. 14 Wilber, 2000d, 152, and note 7; 2006 chapter 3, p. 64) it appears as only those aspects are brought into the front which fit into the constructed framework.

This does not do justice to phenomenology and to a truly integrated orientation. Focusing mainly on the classical phenomenology, variations are mentioned, though decisive further developments are ignored or underestimated. Although Wilber recognizes that the phenomenology of the I-space is a “rich and complex topic” the mentioned “short-cuts” and phaneroscopic ways taken (Wilber, 2003, Excerpt C, Endnote 28) in his quick introductory overview, are in danger of turning into aberrations. Furthermore the “liberties of simplification” (Wilber, 2003, Excerpt C, Endnote 29) may lead to distorting interpretations and complications, as only selective and fitting parts are chosen. Emphasizing merely partial or narrowed aspects could be misleading uniformed readers into an inadequate representation of phenomenology. In Wilber’s interpretation phenomenology is merely a “philosophy of the subject and subjective” (Wilber, 2006, p. 92).

It is true that (classical) phenomenology studies conscious experience as experienced from the (transcendental) subjective or first person point of view. But this positioning and the

interpretations given all need to be qualified and specifically discussed and contextualized. In the following I will do this by raising some important issues. In particular;

- the “ordering” of phenomenology into one quadrant (upper left) or zone (#1),
- the status of consciousness, and the states/structures debate,
- inter-subjective dimensions in phenomenology, and
- the relation to contemplation and meditation.

### **The “Ordering” of Phenomenology into Upper Left Quadrant and Zone #1**

For Wilber phenomenology stands as a “representative methodology” for the study of the occasions that arise in an I-Space” (Wilber, 2003, Excerpt C, II, 43ff). As a “general disposition” he puts phenomenology in line with human interest in consciousness like “introspection, meditation, contemplation, or simply feeling” (Wilber, 2003, Excerpt C, II, 43ff). For Wilber the phenomenological space is “an indigenous perspective that is embodied, embedded, enacted and enfolded in other spaces,” (Wilber, 2003, Excerpt C, II, 46): a nexus of inter-holonic occasions.

Like the classification of phenomenology into the upper left quadrant, Wilber assigns phenomenology – in his further developed approach (Wilber, V) – as a representative methodology for the Hori-Zone #1 (Wilber, 2003, Excerpt C, II, 48), that is an interior reality seen from within its own boundaries. Again, he equates for the singular form of the inside of an “I” phenomenology, introspection and meditation all together as classic paradigms or injunctions that bring forth, enact and disclose first-person singular dimensions of being-in-the-world (Wilber 2003, Excerpt D, 12). Wilber interprets indiscriminately all of those many forms of phenomenology as “variations on zone-#1 approaches, some of which investigate particular types of interior experiences known as phenomenal states” (Wilber, 2006, p. 93). However, this supposedly clear assumed positioning is neither valid for “classical phenomenology” and even less true for advanced phenomenology and interrelational pheno-practice as outlined in the second and third parts of this paper.

Methodologically, Wilber equates bracketing with the “non-exclusion principle applied to interior domains” (Wilber, 2003, Excerpt C, II, 45). Focusing on phenomenological methods of bracketing cannot only be applied or limited to interior domains. Such usage does not cover the full-range of phenomenological methodologies and their fields of empirical application. Furthermore, it is possible to use phenomenological methods as lenses to make distinctions and to ask different kinds of questions, develop research designs and pursuit empirical research related to phenomena in various quadrants or zones as they are holonically interrelated fields.

The emphasis that phenomenology lays on the importance of the first-person perspective should not be confused with the classical idealistic attempt to detach the mind from the world in order to let a worldless subject or pure consciousness constitute the richness and concreteness of the world. Phenomenologically, the truth is not be found in the interiority of human beings since for Heidegger (1962) as “Dasein”<sup>8</sup> (literally meaning being-there/here) it is *in* the world and any

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<sup>8</sup> Importantly for Heidegger (1962) Dasein must not be mistaken for a subject, that is something definable in terms of consciousness or a self. Being situated as Dasein is part of the being-structure of being human

knowing of phenomena can only be gained by means of inhabiting and being intentionally, actionally or otherwise related to and engaged in a world. Thus, the “subjectivity” disclosed by the phenomenological reflection is not a concealed interiority, but an open world relation; and phenomenology is interested in consciousness because it is world-disclosing (Zahavi, 2008, pp. 664-665, 675).

### **Status of Consciousness and the States/Structures Debate**

One important contentious issue of the role of phenomenology for integral research concerns the status, and in particular the states and stages of consciousness. Although states involve both consciousness and behavior, Wilber usually refers to states as subjective phenomenological patterns of consciousness (Wilber, 2000d). These subjective states may be comprised of feelings, thoughts, intentions and other experiential events, including subconscious or pre-conscious contents as well as occur as so called altered states of consciousness.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore corresponding to normal states there are transpersonal states of consciousness (psychic, subtle, causal, and non-dual), which in turn again are supported by a corresponding body (Wilber, 2000d, p. 151).

In order for temporary states to become permanent traits or structures, they must enter the stream of development. Thus, “any given broad state of consciousness (such as waking or dreaming) can contain several different structures (or levels) of consciousness” (Wilber, 2000d, p. 151). Within broad states of consciousness there are structures of consciousness, within which there are phenomenal states (joy, happiness, sadness, desire, etc.) (Wilber 2000c).

According to Wilber “phenomenology usually focuses on phenomenal states and thus fails to spot the existence structures of consciousness” (Wilber, 2000d, p. 152). As the structures of consciousness are not directly perceived by the subject they<sup>10</sup>

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and as such permeates every aspect of our pragmatic activities and our social relations. Thus, the fundamental mode of Being is not that of a subject or of the objective but of the coherence of Being-in-the-world.

<sup>9</sup> Edward notes:

Because they are often characterized as rather atypical occurrences, it might be added that altered states of consciousness (ASC) are usually defined as conditions where the self-system is temporarily transported into a non-normative condition. In this sense, states are often discussed as ASC in that they are different to the normative waking state of identification of the self-system. In terms of the AQAL framework, an ASC is one where the self-system temporarily identifies with a different level of consciousness, (and, in quadratic terms, with a different level of behavior, meaning/values system and social identity). An ASC can be naturally induced, self-induced or result from environmental factors. They can be consciously aimed for or accidentally stumbled on. They can result from behaviors, cognitions and images, social and interpersonal situations and cultural practices. They can be healthy for the development of the self-system and they can be harmful and inhibit growth. It all depends. (Edwards An Alternative View on States, in <http://www.integralworld.net/edwards14.html>)

Here Edwards criticizes that the integral theory model of states is committing the category error of falling into the Pre-trans Fallacy, when it proposes that individuals access transpersonal states and/or realms when they enter into the natural states of dream sleep and deep sleep.

<sup>10</sup> For Wilber consciousness (cont'd next page)

are almost never spotted by phenomenology, which inspects the present ongoing stream of consciousness and thus only finds phenomenal states. This appears to be a significant limitation of phenomenology. That is, phenomenology usually focuses on phenomenal states and thus fails to spot the existence structures of consciousness.... (Wilber, 2000d, 152, see also Footnote 7)

Wilber regards the phenomenon of states – in contrast to stages (Wilber, 2006, Chapters 2 and 3) – as one factor among many others that can be used to understand the nature of individual experience: Having a conscious awareness and mindfulness, everybody experiences various states of consciousness, and these states often provide profound motivation, meaning, and drives, in both yourself and others. In any particular situation, states of consciousness may not be a very important factor, or they may be the determining factor, but no integral approach can afford to ignore them (Wilber, 2005, p. 15). State-based explanations of subjective experience are closely allied, therefore, to stage-based models of development. Where stages account for the structures of consciousness, states provide the content. Accordingly, integral theory's system of phenomenal states provides a framework for interpreting, understanding and explaining phenomena associated with the dynamic and fluid nature of subjective aspects of the human life-world.

However, it is not correct to allege that structures of consciousness are not “spotted” by phenomenology. Phenomenology does not only inspect phenomenal states, but investigates *essences* as invariant structures also of consciousness. Based on a deliberate anti-psychologism it is an intrinsic characteristic of phenomenological analysis that inquiry strives to be eidetic, that is, to distinguish the essential from the accidental or incidental (states). It is not just any constituent, implicit dimension or relation among aspects, or pervasive orientation that phenomenological analysis seeks to discern, but those which constitute the essential structural being of experience. Thus, phenomenology seeks to describe the experiential structures in their phenomenal purity and does not psychologise them, that is, it does not objectify and naturalize them. Thus descriptive analysis of states is part of a more comprehensive project of phenomenological investigations, which also aims at examining structures of consciousness.

In addition to descriptive phenomenology, in which phenomena and states of consciousness are explored, scrutinized and described so as to enrich the awareness of the richness of experience, essential or eidetic phenomenology involves a more profound exploration of phenomena and consciousness, with the goal of uncovering the essential relationships, and meanings embedded within them. For phenomenology, particularly intentionality, describes a basic structures of consciousness. With this focus one of the most radical stances of phenomenology is its recognition of the relational structure and characteristic of consciousness.

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...is not a thing or a content or a phenomenon. It has no description. It is not worldviews, it is not values, it is not morals, not cognition, not value-MEMEs, mathematico-logico structures, adaptive intelligences, or multiple intelligences. In particular, consciousness is not itself a line among other lines, but the space in which lines arise. Consciousness is the emptiness, the openness, the clearing in which phenomena arise, and if those phenomena develop in stages, they constitute a developmental line (cognitive, moral, self, values, needs, memes, etc.). The more phenomena in that line that can arise in consciousness, the higher the level in that line. Again, consciousness itself is not a phenomenon, but the space in which phenomena arise. (Wilber, 2006, p. 87)

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Phenomenological inquiry posits that – as mentioned before – fundamentally consciousness is always structured and directed relationally, that is it is always consciousness “of” something or someone.

As phenomenal structures of experience are richly intentional, these involve not only sensory ideas and qualities of states, but complex representations of time, space, world, body, and the organized structures of lived reality in all its conceptual and non-conceptual forms. Thus conscious mental acts are not only about concrete appearances of material things such as trees, houses or computer hardware, but also past or future ideas like a conscious memory of the attack on the World Trade Center or a conscious anticipatory desire for a glass of clean and cold water. Thus the relational structure of consciousness to things encompasses also immaterial phenomena such as emotions, dreams, concepts or even seemingly unreal imaginations. By and through this recognition of relationality, the equal right of things towards which consciousness is directed is asserted. In other words, phenomenology has its starting point by assuming that consciousness cannot function independently of structural relations to “things” to be conscious of, which are interrelated to inter-subjective and objective spheres

Conscious experience presents us not with isolated properties or features but with objects and events situated in an ongoing world-contact, and it does so by embodying in its experiential organization and dynamics the dense network of relations and interconnections that collectively constitute the meaningful structures of a world of objects.

Phenomenologically, consciousness is a kind of medium through which various phenomena and dimensions appear and unfold.<sup>11</sup> Actually, this understanding is close to Wilber’s interpretation of consciousness: “Consciousness is not a phenomena but *the space in which phenomena appear*, and therefore “levels of consciousness” simply means levels of the phenomena appearing” (Wilber, 2003, Excerpt D 94, Wilber, 1997).<sup>12</sup> If consciousness is a such

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<sup>11</sup> Part of the nature or structure of conscious experience is the way it is being experienced, that is the way they are lived through or performed. The essential structures or forms of consciousness maintain a specific tension in relation to its contents: For example the forms of temporalizing consciousness, i.e., the living present with its primordial impression, retention, and protention, are essential structures of consciousness that remain ever constant. Meanwhile, however, the contents of conscious experience (which, in a way, are the conditions of possibility for these structures’ existence), are by definition continually passing away. Consciousness itself, therefore, is necessarily a stable force and a flowing away, a standing and streaming.

<sup>12</sup> Wilber states:

Rather, it appears that consciousness actually exists distributed across all four quadrants with all of their various levels and dimensions. There is no one quadrant (and certainly no one level) to which we can point and say: There is consciousness. Consciousness is in no way localized in that fashion....Rather, consciousness is a four-quadrant affair, and it exists, if it exists at all, distributed across all four quadrants, anchored equally in each. Neither consciousness, personality, individual agency, nor psychopathology can be located simply or solely in the individual organism. The subjective domain (Upper Left) is always already embedded in intersubjective (Lower Left), objective (Upper Right), and interobjective (Lower Right) realities, all of which are partly constitutive of subjective agency and its pathologies. It is true that the Upper Left quadrant is the locus of consciousness as it appears in an individual, but that’s the point: as it appears in an individual. Yet consciousness on the whole is anchored in, and distributed across, all of the

an “opening or clearing<sup>13</sup> in which things and events arise” (Wilber, 2003, Excerpt D 95) and if basic levels of consciousness are what all concrete streams have (or can have) in common (Wilber, 2003, Excerpt D 94), then this has far-reaching implications and consequences. Of course, like other scientific disciplines or analytic philosophy, phenomenology offers not one, but many accounts of consciousness (Kriegel, 2007; Thompson 2007; Thompson & Zahavi, 2007; Woodruff Smith & Thomasson, 2005).

Understanding that the irreducible consciousness is embedded and distributed across all quadrants with all of their various levels and dimensions, then the upper left quadrant cannot simply be the functional locus of a consciousness (quadrant), which then methodologically can be approached by phenomenology (Wilber, 1997). A genuinely integral theory of consciousness requires to be a radical decentred and processual approach. Only such a dynamic understanding allows us to realize that consciousness is not an interior anything, nor an exterior anything, but that it permeates both and that is the space or better medium from and through interior and exterior subjective and objective dimensions arise and process.

Consciousness is always what is seen and felt (psychic-intentional) and embodied and enacted (behavioral) within a socio-cultural (the other) and systemic nexus. If we see that the phenomenological space or medium of consciousness is inherently related to the entire AQAL-space, then we need considering further advanced phenomenological approaches to consciousness and mind (e.g., Gallagher, 2007; Gallagher & Zahavi, 2005, 2008) and with this, more inter-subjective and inter-relational perspectives (see part I, II).

### Inter-subjective Dimensions

Wilber alleges a general inadequacy of phenomenology for spotting intersubjective structure-stages. He states that phenomenological method cannot easily spot subjective structures (i.e., psychological structures in the Upper-Left quadrant, such as those discovered by Graves; Piaget; Loevinger; etc., *nor spot inter-subjective structures and inter-subjective stages* (in the Lower-Left quadrant, e.g., Gebser's worldviews, Habermas's stages of communicative competence, interpersonal moral stages, Foucault's interpretative-analytic side of the structures of power, etc.). As suggested in the main text, no amount of introspection by individuals will disclose social structures of oppressive power (e.g. Foucault), moral stages (e.g., Gilligan), linguistic structures (e.g., Chomsky), stages of ego development (e.g., Loevinger), stages of values (e.g.,

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quadrants – intentional, behavioral, cultural, and social. If you `erase' any quadrant, they all disappear, because each is intrinsically necessary for the existence of the others. (Wilber, 1997, pp. 71-92)

<sup>13</sup> Knowing about the problematic use of the metaphor of “space” which tends to be interpreted wrongly as container Wilber rightly uses – like the later Heidegger in a different way – the image of an opening or clearing:

Consciousness is not itself a stream, line, module, function, or intelligence—it is not any thing or event or process of any sort. Consciousness is rather the opening or clearing in which things and events arise. A ‘level of consciousness’ is simply a measure of the types of things and events that can arise in the first place; a measure of the spaciousness in which a world can appear; a degree of openness to the possibilities of the Kosmos; a sweep of the horizons within which phenomena can manifest; a measure of the awareness inhabiting each perspective, moment to moment to moment. (Wilber, 2003 Excerpt D 95)

Clare Graves), and so on – all of those are inherently invisible to mere phenomenology (Wilber, 2000d, 153, see also Footnote 7).

For Wilber “...phenomenological approaches tend to be strong in the “I” components but weak in the “we” components” (Wilber, 2000d, 153, Footnote 7). For him also the cultural phenomenologists (e.g. ethnomethodologists), although being relatively strong in the “we” or intersubjective components, do not cover sufficiently stages or structures of intersubjectivity, or when presented “phenomenology shades into neo-structuralism” (op.). According to Wilber phenomenological methods miss virtually all of the intersubjective structures and intersubjective stages (Wilber, 2000d, 153, Footnote 7; see also Wilber 1995, p. 771). Thus, for Wilber phenomenology has an “incapacity to comprehend *inter-subjective structures* not given in the immediacy of felt body meanings, and thus its incapacity to deal effectively with the *development* of consciousness and the social world” (Wilber, 2000c, p. 286, endnote 21. emphasis in the original). In Wilber’s interpretation “phenomenology failed to take into account the *cultural embeddedness* and the intersubjectivity of all awareness” (Wilber, 2006, p. 64). For Wilber phenomenology is merely a “philosophy of the subject and subjective” (Wilber, 2006, p. 92), which needs to be supplemented – not replaced – with the philosophy of intersubjectivity.

However, in contrast to this critique and positioning, intersubjectivity is one of the main themes already of transcendental phenomenology (see Husserl 5th of the Cartesian Meditations and Hua XIII-XV of Husserliana). According to Husserl, intersubjective experience plays a fundamental role in our constitution of both ourselves as objectively existing subjects, other experiencing subjects, and the objective spatio-temporal world. According to Husserl, the “I” becomes conscious and particularly aware of “myself” specifically as a human person only in intersubjective relations (Husserl, 1973b, p. 175; 1952, p. 204). Furthermore developing as a person depends heavily upon social interaction (Husserl, 1973b, pp. 170-171).<sup>14</sup>

I and we and world belong together and are intertwined, partly as they reciprocally illuminate one another, and can only be understood in their interconnection (Zahavi, 2008, p. 681). Thus phenomenology considers the very constitutive nature of the Lower-Left quadrant and even exterior quadrants. Husserl already suggested a theory of intersubjectivity or social cognition that was based on an embodied, inter-modal perception. For him the perceptual experience of the other person involved a kinaesthetic reverberation of the perceived action of the other in our own sensory-motor system. According to Gallagher,

Phenomenology tells us that our primary and usual way of being in the world is pragmatic interaction (characterized by action, involvement, and interaction based on environmental and contextual factors), rather than mentalistic or conceptual contemplation characterized as explanation or prediction based on mental contents. (Gallagher, 2005, p. 212)

The integration of inter-subjectivity shows that the social world has been systematically and methodologically considered in the development of the phenomenology project. Accordingly the

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<sup>14</sup> My experience of the world as objective is mediated by my experience of and interaction with other world- engaged subjects. Only insofar as I experience that others experience the same objects as myself do I really experience these objects as objective and real. To put this point in phenomenological language, the objectivity of the world is intersubjectively constituted (i.e., brought to awareness or dis-closed).

philosophy of the subject and subjectivity is always already supplemented with the philosophy of intersubjectivity. Related to the AQAL-framework, the upper left needs its lower left, not to mention its upper right and lower right spheres (Wilber, 2006, p. 64). A more adequate understanding of phenomenology recognizes that the subjective space itself develops via intersubjective patterns of dialogue and interpretive cognition (Wilber, 1995, pp. 28, 576ff, 583).

Accordingly, further developments of phenomenology and as we will see, particularly Merleau-Pontyan interpretations have deeply investigated the complex patterns and structures of inter-subjectivity and inter-relations between subjects as well as (inter-)objective dimensions and conditions, as outlined in the second and third parts of this paper.

### **Phenomenology in Relation to Introspection and Meditation**

Wilber equates for the singular form of the inside of an I likewise phenomenology, introspection and meditation as classic paradigms or injunctions that bring forth, enact and disclose first-person singular dimensions of being-in-the-world (Wilber, 2003, Excerpt D, 12). Putting phenomenology on a level with (non-methodical) introspection and meditation is to equalize approaches, which are different, incomparable and hence incommensurable. There is a tremendous difference between phenomenology, as a specific philosophical school and a “general movement” or “general disposition,” being “as old as the human interest in consciousness itself, whether we call it introspection, meditation, contemplation, or simply feeling” (Wilber, 2003, Excerpt C, 43).

Taking a step back, in order to better jump forwards in ways that otherwise would have been difficult to do, there is certainly a kind of parallel or common orientation between contemplative and phenomenological scientific research. By redirecting our attention to what is most directly given in experience, as (conscious) experience, phenomenology can help us overcome all kinds of mistaken identification. Phenomenology follows a kind of contemplative and in some ways even meditative attunement to the phenomenon in question. This is due to the orientation that it refers to more receptive and aesthetic forms of thinking and focusing attention, holding back from closure and from discriminatory analytic thinking in favor of a more contemplative-like process. In this form of thinking the mind does not “seize upon” the object to analyze and subdue it but attempts to behold it, to allow its reality, its beauty and its texture to become more and more present. But the stance and quest phenomenology was developed for and has been used by researchers, particularly social scientists, serves as a systematic, rigorous search for truth. Accordingly, the outcomes of phenomenological reflection are not just “insights” or epiphanies but thoughts, discourses and written texts, that is forms of interpretation of a processed and elevated experience.

Furthermore, phenomenology and introspection “enact, bring forth, and illumine the first-person singular dimensions of being-in-the-world” (Wilber, 2003, Excerpt C, 43) very differently than a spiritual revelation. Husserl called one of his originally speeches – which became later an important book – Cartesian Meditation (Husserl, 1960). However, this is not a meditation in the sense of a spiritual practice. Rather Husserl saw it as a scientific contribution and introduced in it a genetic phenomenology, which he defined as the study of how these meanings are built up in the course of experience. In particular, the sixth Cartesian Meditation deals with the question of

how a phenomenologist can explicate a subjectivity that both belongs in the world and yet constitutes objectivity and its world and deals with transcendental inter-subjectivity, to overcome the solipsistic objection.

Already, classical phenomenology argued for a proper understanding of transcendence, for not falling into solipsism:

Is phenomenological research therefore solipsistic research? Does it restrict the research to the individual ego and precisely to the province of its individual psychic phenomena? Not in the least. [A] misunderstanding of the particular meaning of transcendence and its exclusion leads to a confusion of psychological immanence (that which is precisely solipsistic) and phenomenological [immanence]. (Husserl, 1910-11, p. 154)

It is important to understand that phenomenological reduction is not an introspection, it is not “seeing inside,” but a tolerance concerning the suspension of conclusions that allows a new aspect or insight into the phenomenon to unfold (Varela, 1996, p. 339). “Phenomenology is not another name for a kind of psychological self-observation, nor is it simply to be identified with a first-person description of what the “what is it like” of experience is really like” (Zahavi, 2008, p. 678).

Therefore the methods of phenomenology do not rely on introspective peering internally at one’s passing stream of consciousness, but – as shown before – redirecting the focus away from the entire empirical natural world, including real psychological and introspective experiences, and to refocus the study of the mind on essences of conscious experience of various kinds.

At the heart of the phenomenological method is the assumption that human experience follows fundamental structural principles that express themselves differently and contingently. Experience is necessarily personal, but not necessarily private. Therefore, phenomenology is not a reiteration of introspective solipsism, for it assumes that the study of particular experience leads to the recognition of generative structures that are common to human beings more generally.

For this reason, the interpretation and radical designation of phenomenology as (solipsistic) introspectivism and equating it with contemplative literature is, if at all, only partially justified.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the supposed link to introspective orientation of phenomenology does not consider further and advanced phenomenological developments, which disclose and take inter-subjective and inter-objective patterns, structures and processes into systematic account.

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<sup>15</sup> In Husserl’s private letters one can find statements showing his struggle with a religious and spiritual quest. “The life is at all hard and I long much for that peace, which must form the natural conclusion of this terrestrial existence. However, I feel not yet enough religiously prepared and the end of my philosophical life longs for the last religion-philosophical completion” (Husserl, Brief IX, 93, 1917). Interestingly Husserl lived in the “solid faith of the divine meaning of the world and mankind.” (Husserl Brief III, 494). In a telling proclamation he stated: “Finally for me philosophy is my a-religious way to religion, as it were my atheistic way to God.” (Husserl, B IX, 124). “It is my conviction that intentional phenomenology has for the first time made spirit (Geist) qua spirit the field of systematic scientific experience, thus effecting a total reorientation of the task of knowledge” (Husserl, 1970, Pt. III).

Inherently, phenomenology is not only related to art and aesthetics, but also to morals and intersubjective ethics as well as to “objective” bodily states and structures and behavior and inter-objective realities, thus linked to behavioral and “objective” science. Particularly, advanced phenomenology as outlined in the following part is fundamentally concerned with socio-cultural life as well as objective and inter-objective spheres.

With this orientation, the status of phenomenology in relation to hermeneutics, anthropology and structuralism, but also to autopoieses, empiricism and system theory as described in integral theory is questionable. Again this positioning needs to be investigated and scrutinized more thoroughly to enable an adequate integral post-metaphysics and integral methodology.

## **Part II: Advanced Phenomenology – Merleau-Ponty**

The following outlines basic ideas of one of the most fascinating further developments and advancement of phenomenology, the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty (1960, 1962, 1988, 1995). He departs from the orthodox Husserlian conception of the purpose and scope of phenomenology. With him phenomenology realized particularly a *turn to the body and to embodiment* as a basic nexus of living meaning, as by virtue of being embodied we find ourselves always already situated to meaningful inter-relationships.

Correspondingly, Merleau-Ponty developed a rich variety of phenomenology emphasizing the neglected role of the body in human experience. Using Husserlian inspired methods of analysis Merleau-Ponty’s overall ambition was to disclose the roots of rationality and Being. Close to Husserl he tried this through philosophy’s efforts to reawaken an understanding of the original acts whereby humans come to awareness in the world. However, by extending Husserl’s account of the “lived body” that is the body as it is experienced and experiences as opposed to the merely physical body, Merleau-Ponty resisted the traditional Cartesian separation of mind and body. Instead he developed the idea of the body-mind as the basic connection to the life-world, ever adjusting and constituting in inseparable bond with the vastness of experience and existence as a being-in- and towards-the-world.

Taking the body and embodiment as “base” his existential form of phenomenology addresses a wide range of embodied phenomena and bodily experiences, from perception, spatiality and motility of the body, to the body in sexual being and in speech and other embodied relationships to others, up to questions regarding temporality, and freedom. Correspondingly, Merleau-Ponty advancement of phenomenology strived for overcoming (or perhaps better to say undermining) the de-corporealization of the body and the neglect of embodiment, by refocusing on an extended understanding of experience.

Experience for him was no longer given to a subject, mind or consciousness, which could then be appealed to as substance within the world. On the contrary, the world is originally given and it is from this pre-subjective givenness that concrete definitions of the subject are formulated. For Merleau-Ponty the *body itself is already lived, meaningful and relational and intentional*, thus no longer merely a matter of cognitive consciousness. The life of embodied existence and interactive communication precedes and is the foundation for explicit and thematic consciousness. Importantly, Wilber confirms this embodied perspective as also for him “each

state of consciousness is supported by a corresponding body, so that consciousness is never merely disembodied” (Wilber, 2000d, p. 151).<sup>16</sup>

Influenced and critically using insights by Heidegger and the Gestalt theorists, Merleau-Ponty is not only rejecting the modernist version of referentialist-representalism but critically refuting the dominating strands of Western philosophy and science; those being the empiricistic-objectivistic and the rationalistic-subjective paradigms. Both empiricistic realism and materialism as well as rationalistic idealism (intellectualism), are reductionistic as they reduce live-worldly phenomena either to matter or to an idea.

Focused instead on bodily experiences and embodiment not as objects or representations but as constitutive and “open” media led him to an anti-foundationalism, anti-essentialism and non-dualism, and philosophy of *ambiguities*,<sup>17</sup> which marks his groundbreaking post-Cartesian and non-reductionistic approach.

With this orientation, Merleau-Ponty sought to rearticulate the relationship *between* “subject” and “object,” self and world, mind and matter, culture and nature among various other dualisms through an account of the lived and existential body.

In terms of methodology, for Merleau-Ponty the phenomenological reduction remains incomplete or really incompletable. *Returning to things themselves* means for Merleau-Ponty going back to the way in which we experience the world before we begin to theorize about it. Returning to the life-world is to relate to the world in which an embodied knower meets in and co-creates with her *lived-in experience* the like-wise “embodied known” always already infused with meaning. Thus the program of the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty attempts to retrieve and integrate the experiential bodily processes and the embodiment as constitutive.

The embodied “subject” and his/her likewise embodied inter-subjective and “inter-objective” life-world are an extensive continuum, in which s/he is imbedded and actively and passively takes part. Therefore, neither subjective, inter-subjective nor objective dimension can be isolated

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<sup>16</sup> As for every state of consciousness, there is an ‘embodied feeling’ Wilber discusses gross, subtle and causal (formless) bodies as mode of experience or ‘energetic feeling’ which for him refer to supposed phenomenological realities as they present themselves to immediate awareness (Wilber, 2006, p. 25; 2000c).

<sup>17</sup> Because we are not capable of disembodied reflection on our activities but are a body-subject in an inexhaustible world we are living through, ambiguity is and remains as the heart of our experience. It prevails both in perception of things and all temporally situated forms of knowledge. We are always in the midst of the world and have no vantage point outside it. We can never achieve total clarity even in our reflective and critical orientation because we cannot fully penetrate the sources and origins of our meaning making, that is the primordial awareness in which meaning is always already constituted. Thus the irresolvable ambiguity is grounded in our bodily participation in being and on the paradox that we ourselves are constituted by the very being of which we become aware. As the world of lived experience is essentially indeterminate, ambiguous and opaque, it is not amenable to a complete and transparent analysis which is why for Merleau-Ponty, “ambiguity is of the essence of human existence [...] Existence is indeterminate in itself, by reason of its fundamental structure” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p.169). This orientation towards ambiguity and somewhat indeterminacy in Merleau-Ponty, leaves behind a philosophy of (self-)certain as classical phenomenology tend to be interpreted.

from the dynamic process of embodied being and becoming. Mediated by the body and embodiment, human beings and “Being” itself “makes sense” of the inter-related realities of becoming in an on-going processes of transition of reality. As an unruly, unpredictable and unmanageable reality, the body and embodiment are decentring. Both are not only “mastering” subject and collectives, but also disrupting, undermining and escaping the purposive and boundary-drawing processes. With this orientation, bodily and embodied forces underlie the processual, dynamic and unfinished nature of any perceiving, feeling, thinking and acting.

By means of our bodily insertion into reality, we are always already vitally responsive to the demands of our situation upon our body. This body moves in terms of pre-reflective “intelligence” and lived involvement, which exceeds our conscious awareness and control. Accordingly, there is a level of intentionality below that of explicit acts, which manifests itself in an active bodily engagement that is our primary rapport with the world.

For example “a movement is learned when the body has understood it, that is, when it has incorporated it into its “world”, and to move one’s body is to aim at things through it; it is to allow oneself to respond to their call” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, pp. 138-139). An operative intentionality establishes and utilizes secret bonds of correspondence and interdependency, which constitute our reciprocal involvements. In this way of thinking the intentional arrow of classical phenomenology has become a two-way street of “interaction” as an “inter-experience” and co-constitution.

For Merleau-Ponty consciousness, the world, and the perceiving body are intricately intertwined and mutually “engaged” within an ever-present world frame and through the use of pre-conscious, pre-predicative understandings of the world's make-up. In ordinary perception we as body-subjects have a kind of pre-predicate, pre-objective and non-positing consciousness of our surroundings and our own bodies (Siewert, 2006, p.88).

Without falling into a pre-trans-fallacy,<sup>18</sup> this orientation opens up for a post-dualistic ontology, as explicated in the unfinished later works of Merleau-Ponty. Referring to a chiasmic, incorporated intertwining and reversibility of pre-personal, personal and interpersonal dimensions, Merleau-Ponty’s indirect ontology of flesh, allows understanding phenomena more profoundly and relationally. For this understanding, we need to turn once again to the wonderment of this “eternal splitting open of Being into the touching and the touched, the seeing and the seen, the site of their differentiation as well as their union and intimacy” (Burk, 1990, p. 90). With this relational understanding it becomes possible to approach what does not appear, and yet which is the very condition for appearance.

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<sup>18</sup> According to Wilber an uncritical use of a two-stage model of psycho-spiritual development can lead to one or both of the versions of the 'pre/trans fallacy': either mistaking pre-personal material as spiritual (the elevationist fallacy), or mistaking the transpersonal for pre-personal (the reductionalist fallacy) (see Wilber 2000a, p. 211). Thus there are two types, which either reduce the world of the Trans- to the world of the Pre- (PTF 1) or elevate the world of the Pre- to the world of the Trans- (PTF 2). The fallacy of conflating pre- and transpersonal realms can be related to both ontogenetic and phylogenetic development dimensions proceeding from pre-conventional, pre-rational, pre-egoic stages via conventional, rational, egoic stages towards trans-conventional, trans-rational, trans-egoic stages.



The patterns of meaningful being and action exist neither in the mind nor in the external world. They are neither subjective nor objective, but constitute rather a kind of world *in-between*, an inter-relationality of individual, social and trans-subjective practices. It is this between within an ontological continuity between ourselves, others and the natural world that needs to be considered. For Merleau-Ponty humans are integrated into the natural order, not as mere objects, but relations between humans and their world are intertwined or interwoven in the flesh of the world.<sup>19</sup> Within this fleshly being the in-between is as “fullness of void,” understood as a creative and fulfilling emptiness.

Ultimately, it this in-between, which is the birth-place of intertwined individual identity, social and inter-objective knowledge, realities and creative relationships. With this kind of relational ontology advanced phenomenology is not only concerned with interiors, but provides a proto-integral interpretation, highly relevant for integral theory.

### **Advanced Phenomenology as Proto-Integral Philosophy**

“Proto-integral” can be defined as both showing integrative potential, being on the way to an integral thinking and having the potential to further develop even compensate for weaknesses and limitations of conventional integral theory. Proto-integral potential means here, that phenomenology as a living and reflective philosophy, carries chances for an ongoing development towards serving and advancing integral research. Being proto-integral does not imply that phenomenology is a primitive or underdeveloped integralism. Rather phenomenology is a proto-integral in that it tries to make intelligible and integrate factual and possible lived experiences and realities in all its complex holonic interweavements and perspectives.

Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology is also proto-integral in that has opened up its philosophical reasoning to other disciplines including empirical studies, like psychology, cognitive science, neuro-science, linguistics, anthropology, sociology, political theory, cultural, literary and aesthetic theory etc. (e.g., Weiss, 2008).

Characterizing Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy somewhat deprecatingly as “felt phenomenology” (Wilber, 2003, Excerpt C, Endnote 3) – which supposedly makes it seem difficult to cover intrinsic intersubjectivity as well as waves and streams – does not do justice, and even more is highly distorting and is undervaluing its proto-integral potential. Basically, advanced phenomenology does not (only) refer to the inner-world of transcendental consciousness and introspection. Merleau-Ponty utilized the phenomenological reduction espoused by Husserl, but without separating consciousness from the world, on the contrary he strives for re-integrating it as embodied. Accordingly, for Merleau-Ponty consciousness is always embodied consciousness. Furthermore, perception and experience interpreted by humans elicits meaning is embedded in a

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<sup>19</sup> Understanding “flesh, as a kind of originary absence” (Madison, 1992, p. 97) it is what makes the presentation of being-present possible, but which never presents itself as such. Thus, it is “non-space” of in-between, an “ecart,” the gap, the separation, the differentiation between the touching and the touched, the seeing and the seen, mind and world, self and others. That gap of ecart, that space of corporeal difference is the “there is” within “the Being that lies before the cleavage operated by reflection, about it, on its horizons, not outside of us and not in us, but there were the two movements cross. . .” (Merleau-Ponty, 1995, p. 95).

world that is physical as well as social. Thus human experience is actualized in the life-worlds of space, time, body, and human relation. Integrating the body and developing an elaborate understanding of embodiment this inclusive orientation provides the potential for reconnecting to the primordial origin, in a conscious and differentiated, yet reconciling way.

With this proto-integral move, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology offers a challenge to the internalism and mentalism of consciousness-bounded understanding. Integrally it shows, that consciousness exists only enmeshed in the world in which we do things and where we pursue social practices that facilitate our interaction with ourselves, each other and towards objects.

Particularly the aforementioned "inter-ontology" of a reversible chiasmic flesh-of-the-world, serves as basic constitutive and elemental medium of intertwined subjective, intersubjective and inter-objective processes. This relational and holonic orientation helps to overcome conventional subject-object dichotomy of retained Cartesian constructions. The danger of getting stuck in the somewhat implicit Cartesian dualisms in the heuristic analysis of the AQAL model requires a radical inter-relational holonic perspective.

Holonically the whole is being intimately entwined with its parts and vice versa that is the whole comes into being through the parts, while at the same time the parts come into being through the whole. This implies that the whole can be encountered through the part, as well as parts can be seen in light and relation of wholes. Furthermore the whole can be qualified as which holds the parts together; or the way the parts belong together.

By going back to our actual lived bodily experience, we can (re-)discover the process of a holonomic inter-relating; a relational nexus of an "in-betweenism" (Kimura, 1988). Merleau-Ponty's indirect ontology of primordial *flesh* refers to a formative medium or milieu anterior to the conceptual bifurcation into the "subjective" and the "objective." It implies a chiasmic intertwining and reversibility, that allows for understand the holonomic process of what could be called inter-being (see also Nhat Hanh, 1998).

Merleau-Ponty's indirect, ontology of reversible flesh reflects the inextricable intertwining of the body-subject with the world it inhabits – the inseparability of self-knowledge and object-knowledge in the midst of fields of situated, relational inter-corporeal in-betweenness at the brink of non-dual being. Metaphorically, this nexus refers to a textile or common tissue of meaning that is woven through all levels of experience, preceding and making possible all particular horizons and contexts. This elemental being manifests as a kind of silent and invisible ontological fond - out of which self, others, and things arise in reciprocal relations.

All inter-relational processes are always on the move between order and disorder that is always becoming; and never complete. As such it implies an active and ambiguous "immanent transcendence," carrying an utopian movement (Johnson, 2003).

With Merleau-Ponty, we can acknowledge the in-between of this becoming as a processual gap, as a corporeal difference (Weiss, 2000). Within this difference Being "lies before the cleavage operated by reflection, about it, on its horizons, not outside of us and not in us, but there where the two movements cross..." (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 95). This living in-between,

understood as creative and fulfilling emptiness is the speaking and knowing silence, pregnant with meaning.

Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the relational constitution of becoming fosters a more processual integral perspective. Correspondingly, advanced phenomenology is helpful for the challenging undertaking to approach the inter-relatedness and dynamics of all spheres and entities within the integral framework. This implies for example a systematic up-grading of exteriors by holonomically interrelating internal, external, individual and collective interior meaning and exterior behavior as complementary. By this then behavior and acting as well as system exteriors co-create interior levels and states of consciousness as much as intentions and cultural dimensions among other interior co-create behavioral and systemic realities. Accordingly, from an advanced phenomenological perspective, we need to see developmental values, depths and qualities also in the exteriors and in relation to the interior.

As Edwards (2004, 2005, 2009) has proposed, the right sides ("It" and "Its") are not only an ongoing complexification of simple material and physical forms, but are multidimensional and an ongoing and dynamic process of creative emergence. Instead of the tendency to privileging interior (and individual) quadrants, and hence underestimating the relevance of the exterior (and collective) quadrants, what is needed is valuing the co-constitutive and co-creational inter-relatedness of both and all. That is all forms of development and transformations are starting and are processed equi-primordially ("gleichursprünglich") with both the interior and the exteriors as well as always already in-between both! Correspondingly, individual and social realities and processes are mutually inter-related and unfolding. Epistemologically and methodologically, this leads towards a kind of "inter-standing" (Taylor & Saarinen, 1994) the holonic "inter-be(com)ing" (Küpers, 2009). (Inter-)Being and Becoming thus "be(com)ing" takes places and realizes itself as an all encompassing "processual embodiment" which is more and different than a merely somatic interpretation, but refers to the very being *in* and becoming *towards* the world.

Actually, Wilber is using the very phenomenological term "being-in-the-world" for qualifying the major perspectives (I, We, It, Its) and the native or primordial perspectives (zones) as the inside and outside of interiors and exteriors in singular and plural. As he stated: "being-in-the-world is adequately nestled in endless networks of other beings in the world." (Wilber, 2003, Excerpt C 45). With Merleau-Ponty's radicalized proto-integral phenomenology and relational ontology integral theorizing can even further and deeper consider the embodied relationality of its perspectivism.

For Merleau-Ponty's advanced phenomenology the phenomenological space is an indigenous perspective that is embodied, embedded, enacted, and enfolded in other spaces, which for Wilber "makes the sum total of what is represented as the AQAL matrix" (Wilber, 2003, Excerpt C 46). Similarly, as for Wilber also for the later Merleau-Ponty "every perception of a sentient being is always already situated in relation to other sentient beings, and therefore every perception is actually housed in an indigenous perspective. Perception, awareness, consciousness, feeling--none of those items exist per se..." (Wilber 2003, Excerpt C 46). In other words advanced phenomenology presents and situates perceptions and "knowledge of essences" and "universals," never outside of a perspective. Like AQAL meta-theory, also according to the advanced later

phenomenology and ontology of Merleau-Ponty, the Kosmos is built of perspectives, not only perceptions (Wilber 2003, Excerpt C 47).

As Wilber stated: “Integral Post-Meta-physics replaces perception with perspectives . . . all perceptions are actually perspectives, and all perspectives are embedded in bodies and in cultures” (Wilber, 2006, p. 58-59). Thus, sentient beings and perspectives, not consciousness and phenomena, are the “stuff” of the Kosmos (Wilber, 2003, Excerpt D). For Wilber (2006) there is no pre-given world awaiting perception only mutually disclosing perspectives awaiting (meaning creating) enactment that only exist relative to a sentient being; relative, to the subject that is doing the perceiving. And these subjects perceive corresponding to language systems consisting of signifiers that have specific referents, accessible only if those who are perceiving have developed to the level that contains the correct signified. In a process that Wilber (2006, p. 303) calls “mega-phenomenology” he outlines a schematic and generalized “GigaGlossary” that indicates world-spaces (on different altitudes) in which the referents of the major signifiers used by humans and capable of being “seen” by humans who possess the corresponding degree of consciousness to bring forth the correct signified.

However, embodied perceptions remain important as pre-reflexive way in and medium for manifested work of embodied consciousness. Therefore instead of merely replacing perception with perspectives (Wilber, 2006, p. 58) it seems important to recognize that both are mutually interdependent. Multidimensional, sensory, polymorphic and cultural perception, entrenched in historico-linguistic contexts and perspectives both are enacted as well as to take perspectives, requires perceiving them. In addition to emphasizing that all perspectives are embedded in bodies and in cultures (Wilber, 2006, p. 59), a phenomenological and phenp-practical approach integrates embodied perception with a perspectivism, that is perspectives are co-constituted and on-goingly co-created in a sensuous perceptual way, which hence make sense (Küpers, 2009a).

### **Against Retro-romanticism, but Differently!**

Merleau-Ponty’s critique against Cartesian dualism, separating subjects and objects, culture and nature, mind and matter, and his continuous emphasis on the relational flesh of the world, seems to suggest a revived romantic unity holism, similar to what some deep ecology approaches follow when they favour an all-encompassing identification of self with other species.

However, advanced phenomenology shares the well-founded criticism of integral theory related to retro-romantic approaches of questionable re-enchantment, which can be problematized as a single-boundary fallacy concerning the status of the somatic body (Wilber, 1995, pp. 697ff, 708). Conversely, advanced phenomenology does not make the somatic-sensory body mean experience in general or only a pre-conventional body. Therefore it is not falling into any descending one-sidedness nor regressive slides and fallacies re-contacting of body-id-in Gaia-approaches like Roszak et al. (1995) and other re-enchanting eco-philosophers tend do.

As understandable as a yearning for returning to a pre-reflective unity for the disembodied, alienated, rational modern and fragmented, relativistic postmodernism consciousness appears, there is no way back to a retro-regressive coincidence with nature or supposed pre-existing given Truths. Because the reversibility of being is always imminent and never realized in fact ...“ the

coincidence eclipses at the moment of realization ... “ (Merleau-Ponty, 1995, p. 147) and relations to nature are always already culturally mediated.<sup>20</sup>

Rejecting any absolute claims on a specific, pure and authentic relation with “nature”, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology encourages an *a-Romantic* orientation and perspective on what nature is and mean. This does not exclude using Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology for investigating concrete, emotional and spiritual experiences people can have of the natural world, i.e. unbiased by either Romantic or dualistic worldviews (de Jonge, 2002).

Merleau-Pontyian ontology and epistemology provides indirect directions and approaches for example into the structures of relations between animals and humans, that go beyond an abstract division or mere utilitarian relations between the two. Accordingly, with Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology it is possible to discover many more ways and many more levels in which natural, humans and the “spiritual” world are related than traditional science or traditional philosophy could ever illustrate. Moreover, his phenomenology allows and embodies the development of sensitivities and senses of and for natural, human and “spiritual” qualities in their embodied incorporatedness and interconnectedness.

As referred to before, for this it will be imperative not to get lost in the pre/trans-confusion or supposed holistic but sub-complex unionism, and thus for advanced phenomenology and integral phenomenology differentiation is the necessary prelude to a deeper/higher and emergent integration (Wilber 1995, p. 472).

Here is not the space to discuss the complex status and application of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology and his late ontology of flesh and environmental ethics and ecologies as for example outlined in the much discussed work of Abram’s (1997) spell of the sensuous or Toadvine’s recent book (2009) on Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy of Nature.

But, what makes sense with regard to realizing a non-regressive phenomenological practice is a non-sentimental return towards actively developing our powers of reflective somatic consciousness (Shusterman, 2008) “so that we can achieve a higher unity of experience on the reflective level and thus acquire better means to correct inadequacies of our unreflective bodily habits” (Shusterman, 2005, p. 176). With Shusterman somaesthetic pragmatism offers a complementary perspective to phenomenological approaches, in that it provides more adequately a “full-bodied engagement in practical efforts of somantic awareness... generating better

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<sup>20</sup> Already classical, transcendental phenomenology does not restrict empirical data to the range of sense experience, but admits on equal terms such non-sensory categorical data as conceptual relations and values. Phenomenology recognizes knowledge of the synthetic a priori, a proposition whose subject does not logically imply the predicate but one in which the truth is independent of experience, based on insight into essential relationships within the empirically given. In contrast to phenomenalism, it a position in the theory of knowledge (epistemology) with which it is often confused, Phenomenology – which is not primarily an epistemological theory – accepts neither the rigid division between appearance and reality nor the narrower view that phenomena are all that there is (sensations or permanent possibilities of sensations). These are questions on which phenomenology as such keeps an open mind – pointing out, however, that phenomenalism overlooks the complexities of the intentional structure of man's consciousness of the phenomena.

experiences for the future rather than trying to recapture the lost perceptual unity of a primordial past (Shusterman, 2005, p. 177).

## The Status of the Other

Discussing Groffian transpersonal experiences Wilber states: “all phenomenology fails: it takes the subjective and inter-subjective patterns doing the phenomenology for granted, and thus fails to disclose the processes and inter-subjective structures necessary for the experience to be able to unfold at all.” (Wilber, 1995, p. 771). As this was not correct in relation to Husserl, as shown before, this is neither correct to Merleau-Ponty, who remained close to and further radicalised the Husserlian concept of transcendental intersubjectivity. By this orientation the experience of the other has an integrative place in Merleau-Pontyan phenomenology.

From the perspective of advanced phenomenology it is through others that we develop into ourselves. Even more, it is through encountering the other that transformation as a holonic affair happens. There is always already a responsive inter-relational at work as an embodied social practice. Moreover, intersubjectivity is possible only because there is established an (pre-mordial) intercorporeality within the caring sensible.

Thus the cultural and historical world cannot be understood in a way that is separate from the sensible and empathetic. Empathy, and dialogue as part of ongoing conversations are means of relating and articulating a sensible world that is “written” and “authored” already in human perception and expressed in language. Language in particular serves as a social medium that brings to full expression the mute inter-corporeal perception of the sensible, and, through this mediation, both are in a constant structuration, constant reversibility and interchange within the human experience of the lived world. We can enter the world of other human beings precisely because we are all part of a sensible and social world; a belonging that makes me believe that what another is seeing is but one more perspective on what I see, a variant of a common world rather than constituting another private world. Therefore, the reproach of a monological apprehension or prejudice is not justified. Wilber criticizes: “Rather, phenomenology (especially of the Merleau-Ponty variety) forms a type of foundational edifice ... but its monological apprehension need to be supplemented with dialogical recognitions...” (Wilber, 1995, Endnote 738). He also stated:

Thus, phenomenologists who claim that consciousness is always intentional (or always a consciousness of something), are still caught in a monological prejudice that abstract subjects perceive abstracted objects. They are “half-way” right, so to speak, which is that all manifest consciousness is always consciousness of. But that is still a low-order abstraction mistaken for the reality of the situation, which is that a first person is always already in a series of relationships with other first, second, and third persons, and awareness, consciousness, and feelings arise within those networks, not outside of them. (Wilber, 2003, Excerpt D Endnote 1)

However, an *adequate phenomenology*, as outlined in the following part, constitutively relates to dialogical and systemic perspectives, on second and third person levels. Analogue to an “adequate structuralism,” such an adequate phenomenology needs to be based on the insight that

various phenomena follow patterns that do not themselves show up as phenomena, in naive immediate lived or even bracketed experience. An adequate form of phenomenology recognizes that the “subjective space” itself develops via inter-subjective patterns of dialogue and interpretive cognition (Wilber, 1995, pp. 28, 576ff, 583).

As discussed before, from the perspective of advance phenomenology the interior and the exterior, the individual and the collective are mutually interwoven with each other, they all co-create and communicate to each other and unfold together in a responsive and thus dialogical way. Accordingly a first person is seen as always already in a processual nexus of relationships with other first-, second-, and third- persons, which all are considered systematically in an integral “pheno-practice.”

### **Part III: Perspectives on Adequate Phenomenology of an Integral “Pheno-Practice”**

Pheno-practice here is understood as a special employment and application of (advanced) phenomenology, offering important perspectives on integral research and practice. Basically pheno-practice aims at further advancing classical phenomenology and its underlying, but limited ontological and epistemological assumptions and methodologies.

Like classical phenomenology, pheno-practice is driven by the intention to clarify and understand what is at issue; that is what appears as live-worldly phenomena and its various meanings as a complex inter-relating process. Pheno-practice is “practicable” as a style of concrete thinking and way to understand dealings with phenomenal reality. Thus, the practice of the pheno-practice refers to the ways in which human beings engage, individually or collectively, in grasping, holding, shaping, and forming the world in which they live, thus it is about meaning as an experience of everyday-life-world. With this orientation, situated practice is co-constituted in interaction of the embodied agents among each other and with the surrounding physical and socio-cultural environment. What kind of and how practices are realized is connected to the embodied conditions in which they emerge. Correspondingly, practice is an embodied, social, negotiated, complex process of participation (Wenger, 1998, p. 49).

Following the anti-essentialists critique against classical transcendental phenomenology, instead of reifying phenomena into external “objects,” pheno-practice aims not to grasp the whatness of a phenomenon, but approaching the complex meaning relations involved. Pheno-practically, “essence” is a relational term that refers to intentionalities and responsiveness; that is to possible ways of encountering and relating before and while we understand or think them in conceptual thought or express them in language. Accordingly, a pheno-practical approach informs us that our primary and usual way of being-in-the-world is a pragmatic inter-action based on embodied personal, inter-personal as well as environmental and contextual dimensions.

Methodologically, a pheno-practical research approach takes a shift of mind to see interrelationships in their connections rather than linear cause-effect chains, and seeing processes of non-linear change rather than regarding snapshots for control and predictability. With this methodological focus, it emphasizes conditions of possibility and recognizes the multiplicity and interdependencies of poly-causal forces rather than simple causal explanation. This genealogical

and processual orientation may then help to deal with the inherent problems and limits of atomistic, mechanistic and substantialist approaches, and simultaneously provides access to interstand relevant phenomena in the life-worldly practice.

Pheno-practice represents a specific integrally informed research framework and methodology, understood as a practice of researchers, striving to portray phenomena from the individual, communal and contextual perspectives of those who experience them and how they are embodied, while considering also the experiential involvement of the researcher. Thus, the primary focus, of pheno-practice, as a research methodology, is the understanding of the inter-relational structures, processes and meanings of lived experiential phenomena and perspectives. More than just applying specific methods of (classical) phenomenology and conventional qualitative research methods, pheno-practice provides also a base for a genuine integrative methodology of inter-relational practices for example for knowing and organization (Küpers, 2005, 2009). Pheno-practical methodology uses approved forms of co-operative inquiry (Heron, 1992, 1996) conducting research “with” rather than “on” people as co-researchers and creating a research cycle iterating through different types of knowledge, namely propositional, practical, experiential and presentational knowing for deepening experience and knowledge.

With all this an integral oriented pheno-practice provides a base for an extension of the conventional integral framework of Wilber (1999, 2000a, b), particularly concerning a more inter-relational understanding of developmental stages and lines in an holonic integral cycle, co-constituted by pre-subjective, pre-objective, pre-collective and pre-inter-objective dimensions

## **Developmental Stages and Lines in an Holonic Integral Cycle – H-AQAL**

As known to the reader of integral theorists, the AQAL quadrant model uses a series of different developmental stages or levels and lines of development (Wilber, 2000c, d). Both levels and lines of development are essential aspects of personality with which people, but also “entities” need to understand themselves as well as for functioning and evolving properly further.

The *levels of development* refer to what is being developed (matter, body, mind, soul and “spirit”) as generalized “waves” of existence. Thus, the levels are stages of development through which human beings proceed via a transcending, but also including, embracement and enfoldment (Torbert & Associates, 2004). With this facility the levels mark out new capacities and emergent qualities. Furthermore, these basic levels of consciousness unfold at different rates and can be seen as overlapping waves in a spectrum of consciousness.

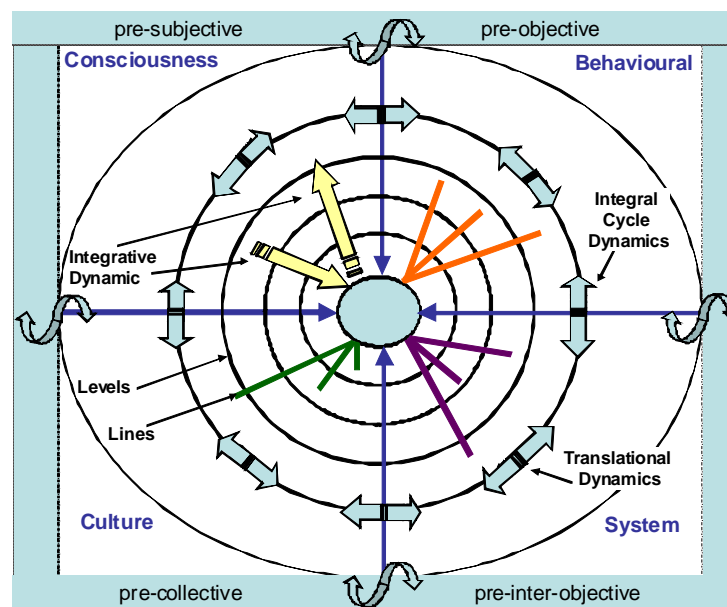
The “*lines of development*” reflect innate capacities and functions within the stages. As such, they co-determine a person’s ability to learn and perform successfully in various circumstances. The developmental lines concern complex developments, such as cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, behavioural, knowledge and learning developments or ethical/moral lines. Moreover, aesthetic competencies (musical, artistic, bodily-kinesthetic), among many others (Wilber, 2001, p. 246) are also part of this developmental process.

Lines develop over time through increasing complex levels of maturity, education and skill. But there are also “lagging lines” of development that represent specific areas of weaknesses or



non-strengths. These under-developed capacities may be a limiting factor for the effectiveness of human functioning. Most of these lines develop in a relatively independent fashion at their own rate with their own dynamics. Some lines are necessary but not sufficient for the development of others; while some develop closely together (Wilber, 2000a).

Holonically both levels and lines of development are not only part of the upper left and right individual quadrants, but alike part of all collective spheres of cultures and systems. Moreover they develop simultaneously through all four quadrants. Inversely, quadrants exist in each and every personal, social or structural holon and show the relationships that exists within each holon. The inner and the outer as well as the individual and the collective co-evolve in an intimate cycle of mutual holonic interpenetration. That is a holonic identity arises as a result of the quadratic mutuality of both interior and exterior aspects of the holon. Such understanding allows an appreciation of the dynamic interpenetration of the inner/outer and individual/communal aspects, which occurs at each level of development for each and every holon. A holon brings these dimensions together in as a differentiating and unifying field of dynamic interdependence. The four perspectives of holonic reality do not merely co-relate or interact, they *co-create each other and co-evolve together*. Consequently, all reductionism via quadrant partiality needs to be thoroughly bracketed.



**Figure 1. Levels and Lines of Development and Integral Cycle of Holonomic Phenomenology**

Holonically, quadrants, levels and lines are energized by the dynamics of growth and integration and by what can rightly be called an “integral cycle” (Edwards, 2000, 2004, 2005, 2009). It is this cycle, which keeps all these elements hanging together in a coherent and dynamic system and co-ordinates the interaction between the four-quadrants and the holonic developmental levels and lines by an integral cycling and spiraling.

In addition to translational dynamics within each sphere and integrative dynamics, the integral cycle keeps all elements hanging together in a coherent and dynamic system. This capacity to analyze, categorize and synthesize the concept of an integral cycle in a pheno-practice a way of representing the mutual interpenetration of the quadrants and their constituent structures and the integrative and growth dynamic relationship that exists between the domains and its holarchic involutory and evolutionary pathways. Moreover, being part of a comprehensive holonomic process, all quadrants stages and lines are also related pheno-practically to the constitutive *pre-subjective, pre-objective and pre-collective and pre-inter-objective dimensions*. These primordial pre-reflexive dimensions as described by Merleau-Ponty refer to the ways that pheno-practices are processed by pre-discursive capacities and experiential processes in a complex nexus of inter-relationships.

Based on this dynamic and holonomic understanding and as an integrative orientation pheno-practices gives equal attention to pre-personal, personal, interpersonal and transpersonal dimensions. It covers all, first-, second- and third-person perspectives of phenomena and its inter-relations and inter-dependencies. Rather than contending that any aspect or dimension is a (mono-) causal factor, an integral pheno-practice views all dimensions as constitutive of all others and accommodates them holistically in their inter-connectedness. Each of the four quadrants and the levels and lines of development would be incomplete without the others, and each depends on the others for its basic existence and sustenance. What is therefore needed is an approach that considers *Holonical(ly) All Quadrant, All Level, All Lines: (H-AQAL)*. In these holonically intertwined spheres and through all its interrelations, the “be(com)ing-in-the-world” is energized, taking place and finding its time as embodied and enacted pheno-practice.

A critical pheno-practical reflection and practice is very much aware of the limitations and dangers of constructing or inventing a unifying representational scheme in relation to lived experiences, which are always more and different than what can be conceptualized. Therefore, the framework of pheno-practice, like the integral and other models, is just a perspective map, not to be confused with any ontological territory. But as a heuristic means pheno-practice might be helpful to appropriate a sense from what ultimately has already been understood and practiced. As as always preliminarily merely heuristic methodology it does not refer to an epistemically prior, unerring recipe that ensures compelling propositional results. Rather it understands method more literally as “following along a way” (i.e., “meta ton hodon”), thus it is a path that pheno-practical thinking and acting itself tentatively inscribes in attempting to disclose and come intelligibly close to the phenomena. Thus, the actual course of pheno-practical research is itself a lived experience notwithstanding following specific qualitative criteria of research for ensuring scientific rigor.

Thus not only may we situate lived experiences pheno-practically, we may also situate pheno-practical theorizing and ask ourselves where are we when we think? With this question, we are concerned about the experience of thinking itself and hence about where we stand and who we are in the very process of our pheno-practical theorizing.

Following a post-Husserlian orientation and a radicalized processual turn pheno-practical research investigates the influence that particular facts have on the emergence of (inter-)objects and of subjects and inter-subjective relations in their mutual interconnection. Accordingly, the

central task in pheno-practical research is to demonstrate and makes approachable the reciprocal inter-actions and “inter-passions” among the inter-relational processes of reality constitution and situational practices within various modes of incessant tangled be(com)ing-in-/towards the-world. This suits and advances integral studies as phenomena are constituted by inter-beings in a variety of situations, and events and activities.

As a genuine research frame-work, pheno-practice provides appropriate means for capturing and interpreting the dynamics of phenomena. In this sense, it strives to make accessible, describable, interpretable and practical the implicit and explicit settings and meanings of phenomena corresponding to the practical, processual, inter-relational understanding of and decentered perspective of phenomena.

The advantage of such pheno-practice is that it provides a useful approach to critic and counter-balance (gross and subtle) reductionistic approaches. Moreover, by offering integral and practical perspectives it also contributes to bridging the gap between theory and practice. Practically, each of the aforementioned elements of the integral framework (quadrant, level, lines, cycles) carries and demands various practical implications. These implications – not further elaborated here – are crucial for being realizing an integral pheno-practice in specific areas of application (Küpers, 2009).

Additionally, the practical implications helps also to respond to the conundrum of the entire phenomenological project: How can phenomenology be at once grounded in lived experience and faithful to it, yet transcend lived experience only to comprehend it, and in comprehending it, alter it essentially? How can phenomenology be simultaneously affirmative and transgressiv? On the one hand, phenomenology "seeks to recover a naive contact with the world" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. vii) and to find truth essentially prefigured in lived experience itself. On the other hand, it "is not the reflection of a previous truth, but like art, brings a truth into being" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. xx), transfiguring lived experience in the act of comprehending it essentially!

Although it relates and interprets meanings as already implicit in lived experience, pheno-practice does not simply iterate what is already given and understood in lived experience in the way that it is given and understood. Rather it seeks a transcending the understanding of the immanent, that is, it goes beyond lived experience to situate it, to conceive it more comprehensively, to judge it discriminatingly, and thus endow and transforms lived experience with new interpretation and meaning. This is possible, because pheno-practice is concerned with and relates respectively returns to already lived experience as the place where meaning originates.

Moreover, there is a transcending and transformative dimension already in lived experience itself, a dimension neither simply subjective nor objective yet in some sense always already understood. With this orientation, pheno-practice is more than simply describing things as they are given in themselves, neither as subjects nor as “objects.” Rather it strives for deciphering the origins of things in the whole system of experience, in order, as with art, "to show how things become things" (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 181). In this respect, pheno-practice never purely coincides with lived experience in itself, but, by probing its ultimate horizons and seeking to

grasp the englobing sense of what appears within them, renders lived experience anew and thus makes a transformative practice possible.

Though being faithful to lived experience, pheno-practice does not attempt to recover an experiential purity, as "one never returns to immediate experience" (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 30). However, pheno-practice acknowledges that the intelligibility of the truth of lived experience precedes *a priori* the specific meanings realized within lived experience itself. Pursuing, pheno-practice constitutes a truth not yet realized, but within lived experience, thus altering the same: Expressed poetically: "We had the experience but missed the meaning / And approach to the meaning restores the experience in a different form" (Eliot, 1963, p. 208).

Accordingly, pheno-practice does not simply make clearer what is already known in lived experience. Nor does it simply abstract transcendental structures that account for the consciousness of "objects" in general nor for any actual "subjective" meanings within lived experience. Rather, pheno-practice elaborates fundamental possibilities of lived meaning inscribed as possibilities in the intelligibility of lived experience, as personal, interpersonal and "transpersonal" field of meaning. Neither simply copying nor complying with the realm of ordinary practical knowledge and ends, it seeks to discover an underlying "truth" ordinarily concealed or distorted in that realm; a truth in terms of which the essential meaning of the practical has itself to be determined. In this way, it neither repeats nor negates lived experience but reinstates it in its truth carrying its "immanent transcendence." Through pheno-practical interpretation, lived experience comes, as it were, into its own for the first time as a conscious and transformative one.

Everyday dealings always have a prior context of meaning that situates and directs them, yet a meaning which recedes from focus in favor of involvements of members of organizations with the immediate objects of experience, cognition, and action. Presupposing a meaning already implicit in lived experience, yet that meaning is accessible and intelligible only by constituting it anew and thus transforming it. Consequently, pheno-practice locates transcendental truth in the original event of an immanent transcendence, the coming to be of the world as the integral context of lived meaning wherein, as embodied agents, we dwell, as spheres of meaning always already understood, arise, and differentiated in and through our human essence. One of the chief practical benefits of pheno-practice then lies in a re-form of and re-formulating of our understanding, which thereby in-forms as well as trans-forms the course of living.

The understanding that pheno-practical theorizing and research initiates and carries forward enables and situates what is done (or not done) in a more encompassing context of meaning. It thereby opens the possibility of acting more thoughtfully with a view to a more integral practice of wise conduct in life. Realizing transcendent meaning in immanent living experience effects a possible transformation, making possible well-founded and sustainable commitments.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to situate in principle the "whither" and "whereabouts" of phenomenological theorizing in relation to integral theory and to develop perspectives and providing (ad)vantage points for further investigating integral dimensions.

The outlined advanced phenomenological and pheno-practical approach offers an important response to the following question: How can integral researchers situate themselves vis a vis their phenomena of interest in such a way that these most fully show themselves in and from themselves, and in their own ways of showing themselves in relation to the researcher? As described, the main purpose of phenomenology is a return to the “fundaments” of living experience as it happens, that is experienced space, time, body, and human relations as they are lived. Its aim is to relocate the primary point of contact between man and the world, to redirect philosophical attention to the primordial ways we perceive and enact the world.

Investigating the intelligibility of lived experience, phenomenology works systematically to recover the forgotten origins of scientific knowledge, to retrace a pre-objective intuition of “things themselves” and in their flesh and blood presence. A phenomenological and pheno-practical quest invites to rediscover the hidden intentionalities and meanings to examine their “essential” structures and potentials in an alter-native; proto-transformative manner. As a style of thinking, researching and enacting, phenomenology and pheno-practice can contribute to approach, re-conceive and interpret the experiential processes and practices within its complex inter-relationships. By purporting a return to the life-worldly experience pheno-practically, we can embark upon travelling “back forward” to what and how something appears, that is to the irreducibly relational and act-driven structure of experience.

In this sense phenomenology and pheno-practice are radical; a radicalism understood in the etymological sense of “going to the roots.” Phenomenology is philosophical radical insofar as it seeks to penetrate beneath the abstractions and generalizations of science and practices and a culture dominated by science to reveal a underlying much richer world of lived experiences. In doing so, phenomenology is also socially and political radical, since it necessarily challenges both the hegemony of science and details of predominant scientific world views. While relating to lived experience, as a critical force, advanced phenomenology and pheno-practice are questioning what goes beyond everyday phenomena and conversations and concerns to comprehend them radically. By being a perpetually critical (self-)reflection and unfinished, and thus a continuous provisional “science of beginnings” (Stewart & Mukunas, 1990, p. 5) phenomenology pursues a tentative orientation which demands not only necessarily appropriating and reappropriating respectively letting go consciously its own beginning and the previous course of its thought.

Moreover, it calls us for re-learning to sense and look at the life-world as we encounter it in immediate experience; gaining fresh perspectives in seemingly familiar situations. Like all solutions in science, which radically reframe an open problem instead of trying to solve it within its original setting, phenomenology and pheno-practice have a “re-evolutionary” potential that is neither revolutionarily destructive nor evolutionarily conservative, but re-constellating radically the evolutionary enfoldment. Accordingly, it can contribute to possible attempts for finding better and more adequate interpretations or alternative metaphors for experiences in a different and more creative way. Oscillating in the between of being and becoming, the stable and the fluid, the structures and the processes, established and emerging patterns, routines and creative action pheno-practice becomes an transformative inter-practice (Küpers, 2009).

Venturing “pheno-practically” into embodied, and with this emotional, cognitive as well as cultural and systemic dimensions of life-worlds, may be critically not only inquiring into, but also changing predominant practices and habits. With this transformational potential, it may provide viable means for researchers and other practitioners to generate theoretical and practice-related relevant insights and realizations for different embodied realities.

In a way, advanced and adequate phenomenology and integral pheno-practice are themselves answers to the question of finding methods which enable us to think and interrelate at the same time the externality and internality and their holonic interrelationship. From a post-Husserlian and integral perspective, the discussed phenomenologies are of course only *one* among others of the possible and philosophical and methodological approaches. In contrast to what Husserl sought, phenomenology does not have privileged foundational status. A self-critical phenomenology and pheno-practice must explore crucially its own phenomenality and relativity as one form of gaining knowledge and truth among others. Part of this necessary reflection is the effort to examine critically its own scope and limits and determine its meaning and ground. Accordingly, the "results" of phenomenology and pheno-practice have their force, not as a set of fixed claims passed on as correct doctrine, but as an interpretation of meaning appropriated and renewed in continued questioning and interpretation.

Nevertheless, advanced and adequate phenomenology and pheno-practice provide a highly significant potential for furthering integral research and practice. This kind of matured phenomenology and its pheno-practice are ready to take its “true-but-partial seat at the integral round table” (Wilber, 2003, Excerpt C 47). Facing the limitations of the classical phenomenology bound to a philosophy of (monological) consciousness and of transcendental subjectivity, the discussed phenomenological and pheno-practical quest is part of the search for developing a post-metaphysical stance and understanding of holonic integral inter-connections and scientific and life-worldly practices.

As part of this quest, advanced, adequate phenomenology and a corresponding pheno-practice point to and invite to enter and pass through the gates into landscapes to be explored further. Both offer a map to orientate in the vast territories of be(com)ing-in-the-world. They help to navigate the journey through and towards unknown terrains. In their adequate forms, they hold considerable potential for guiding conventional integral studies out of its conceptual enclosures, methodological devices and habit-routines that often bind and unnecessarily constraints its approaches explanatory and interpretative power. By fostering an investigative questing for inter-standing phenomenal and relational ways of emergence, a phenomenological and pheno-practical philosophy and methodology offers supplementing and innovative research and practice options for approaching and relating to phenomena and events in more integral ways.

Correspondingly, there is a need for more rigorous theory building, further analysis and of course empirical testing. For example the combined use of phenomenology and pheno-practice may be used for additional research on various practices and processes for example related to embodied knowing and learning, aesthetics as well as organizing and managing respectively leaders and followership (Küpers, 2002, 2004, 2005; Küpers & Edwards, 2008; Küpers & Weibler, 2005, 2008).

Furthermore, combination invites further research on developing an integral methodology and integral methodological pluralism which recognizes and investigates embodied multiple realities, while acknowledging and incorporating different ways of knowing, and holonomic inter-relations, valuing dynamic balances at many stages, levels and cycles. The integral methodological pluralism linked with advanced phenomenology and pheno-practice provides an even more refined epistemological orientation, which allows developing innovative conceptions of scientific research, and a more inclusive understanding of knowledge. Complementarily, the proposed pheno-practice contributes to corresponding meta-paradigmatic practice following the regulative principles of non-exclusion, unfoldment and enactment for conducting holonic research and integrating experiences as well as knowledge for achieving a post-relativistic multi-level inquiry, which is capable of taking different perspectives in an integral fashion.

It is hoped that the advanced phenomenological and pheno-practical research approach as discussed here provide actual possibilities to re-assess and investigate the deeper relevance and put in to a further developed integral research and practice. As such it can be used to supplement illustrate, highlight, interpret, deconstruct or re-conceive the experiential, structural, and processual dimensions of phenomenal processes. Even more, it partakes in and advances also more integral, creative and sustainable practices and well-be(com)ings (Küpers, 2005a).

Leaving behind the reductionistic “flatland ontologies” (Wilber, 1995) and researching phenomenologically and pheno-practically embodied personal, inter- and transpersonal dimensions and “lived experience” (van Maanen, 1990) in its complex holonic interplay is a challenging endeavor. But a worthwhile one, as it may contribute not only for the contemporary epistemic odyssey in research and practice as a passage out of pre-modern swamps of regression and between Scylla – the rocks of dogmatic modernity – and Caribdis – the whirlpool of dispersed post-modernity. Incorporating an adequate phenomenology and embodied pheno-practice into integral research may contribute to a better equipped and more critical journeying of this important endeavor. Offering important and enriching orientations both encourage and foster travelling into the enigmatic spheres of yet unknown possibilities of realising integral research and practice.

Not only are phenomenology and pheno-practice more and different than an “Upper Left“ or “Zone #1” affair, they also provide a tremendous proto-integral potential ready to be actualized. Truly integrated in integral research together they invite entering the within and the in-between of embodied selves, groups and communities their local cultures, regional realities and societies, natural environment and ecologies and even beyond those for realizing world-centric futures and unfold spiraling moments of our up-and-coming aborning cosmos.

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