

PHENOMENOLOGY AND INTEGRAL THEORY

Inter-Integralism ~~~

Critical Perspectives on Advanced and Adequate Phenomenology and “Pheno-Practice” for Integral Research

Or why Phenomenology is More and Different than an “Upper Left“ or “Zone #1” Affair

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Abstract:

This contribution investigates the status of phenomenology in integral theory. In particular it will problematise the classification of life-worldly phenomenology as a discipline located only in the interior upper-left quadrant or as a Zone 1 perspective in Wilber’s integral model and methodology.

Based on main ideas of classical (Husserlian) phenomenology and its various critiques and further developments, the treatment in integral (AQAL) theory is discussed critically. Especially the ordering of phenomenology into a separate field 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 are examined systematically.

Furthermore, then with regard to the more advanced form of phenomenology as developed by Merleau-Ponty its proto-integral potential will be outlined. It will be argued that activating this potential may contribute to correct some of the weaknesses and limitations of conventional integral theory.

Moreover, it will be proposed that advanced phenomenology provides the foundations for an “adequate phenomenology” in integral research. As part of this more adequate phenomenology and its ontological, epistemological, and methodological dimension some perspectives on what is called integral “pheno-practice” will be offered.

All in all, it is hoped that the critical exploration of phenomenology in its more proto-integral, adequate and pheno-practical forms might enrich integral research, improve its theory building and empirical testing by offering a more inclusive, coherent approach as part of an overarching holarchical ecology of integrative knowledge and practice

Introduction

What we are experiencing today seems to be a world of lasting confusions and hasting longings for fusions; appearing to be situated in both: an age of actual “endarkenment” (Ventura, 1993)¹ and potential enlightenment. Between scenarios of apocalyptic doom and creative new bloom some propose that we are living in the end times, seeing the horsemen of a coming apocalypse ridden by the worldwide ecological crisis; imbalances within the economic system; the biogenetic revolution; and exploding social divisions and ruptures in globalised capitalism (Zizek, 2010); while other see hopeful signs for a creative transformation in the service of human and ecological flourishing (Heron & Reason, 1997: 290).

At the same time as the instrumental logic and modalities of economics and markets of liberal and global capitalism encroach into all spheres of ecological life and human endeavours, the calls for leading moves, governance and an integral orientation and practice toward a more responsible and sustainable society and business are also intensifying (Küpers, 2010a).

The need for an integral orientation is evidenced by the current financial and economic crisis with its complex causes and individual, socio-cultural, legal, political and institutional failures and irresponsible non-sustainable business practices causing a worldwide contagion and far-reaching effects, which not only manifest insufficient practices but also flawed (economic) theories (Stiglitz, 2009: 35). “Regrettably, flawed economic theories aided and abetted both those in the public and in the private sector in pursuing policies that, almost inevitably, led to the current calamity. We need to do a better job of managing our economy, but this will require better research that is less framed by the flawed models of the past, less driven by simplistic ideas, and more attuned to the realities of today. There is a rich research agenda ahead“ (Stiglitz, 2009: 35).

The non-integral orientation in many disciplinary sciences, the lack of critical comprehensive paradigmatic reflection and increasing epistemological indeterminacies² and ambiguities in research call for *theoretical sophistication* and the avocation of a *re-evolutionary integral understanding*. This aspire to bring together and strategically linking of apparently contradictory or seemingly divergent worldviews, concepts, practices in an attempt to create a realistic, workable, fluid, and dynamic ‘meta-vision’.

Following multiple historical predecessors as developed and promoted inside and outside academia by avant-garde thinkers, integral approaches have emerged responding to different contemporary challenges. In a way the unfolding quest and further development of *integralism* manifests and provides a systematic and systemic answering (response) and guide to the complex environmental, economic, societal, religious, political, educational, as well as scientific crises the world is intensifying faced with individually and collectively. Among other ambitions integral orientations and corresponding theoretical pursuits attempt to build up a synthesis, which is grasping the major insights of pre-modern, modern and post-modern worldviews and re-integrating science, arts and spirituality as the three major realms of human beings’ expression and ‘construction’ of reality.

In this context, the all-encompassing, integral thinking and theory of Ken Wilber and research inspired by it, represents an elaborated conceptualization and meta-philosophical reflection. Moreover, among other initiatives, 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. This kind of integral theory has already achieved important insights and yielded relevant meta-knowledge as well as found extending developments, refinements and practices in various disciplines and applications.

Nonetheless, what is necessary is a *critical appraisal and evaluations* of this form of integral theorizing and practicing. Appreciating the tremendous achievement of integral research to date, the following critical analysis and discussion tries to contribute to a specific advancement and theory building. Accordingly, this chapter tries to provide a constructive critique, which is different than merely to criticize as stating that conventional integral thinking is not good (enough) or as good as it should be. The spirit of critique here pursues to show that integral theorizing and its ways of conceiving, especially related to the status of phenomenology (as an exemplar), are not what appears or claims to be respectively not interpreted and used phenomenology adequately.

Generally, phenomenology is discernible as a specific style mode of reasoning 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, questing for its essences and exploring its various and inexhaustible dimensions of meaning and ambiguities perspectively. Specifically, 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 Gestalt and 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 (Spiegelberg, 1982; Embree, 1997; Moran, 2000; Stewart & Mickunas, 1990). Based on outlining some selective but important issues out of a diverse scope, the following will argue that the status of phenomenology in a Wilber-oriented integral theorizing needs to be radically 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.³

After introducing specific ontological and epistemological positions and limitations of classical phenomenology, further developments and refinements are discussed. Based on this introductory understanding then the status and usage of phenomenology in integral research will be problematized critically. Especially this concerns: a) the “ordering” of phenomenology into one quadrant (upper left) or zone (#1), b) the status of consciousness, and the States/Structures Debate, c) inter-subjective dimensions in phenomenology, and d) the relation to contemplation and meditation.

In a second part, then the advanced phenomenology and ontology of Merleau-Ponty will be presented and its potential as a proto-integral philosophy fleshed out.

Finally perspectives on an adequate phenomenology and what will be called integral ‘pheno-practice’ are outlined. Without intending to be tediously prolix, the extended elaboration on intricacies’ of phenomenology and its further developments appears as necessary.

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

Part I: Understanding Phenomenology

I. 1. What is phenomenology? Basic ideas and aspirations of 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 assumptions, underpinnings, themes, methodologies, further developments and implications. It would be beyond the scope of this article to describe phenomenology in a detailed comprehensive way. The aim here only will be to discuss the status and showing the relevance and potency of phenomenology especially for re-thinking and advancing 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. Husserl's call *to the things themselves* ("Zu den Sachen selbst") as they are given in experience marks in a nutshell is the program and Leitmotiv of phenomenology. However, this call is not a demand for a realism or constructionism because the things at stake are the acts of consciousness and the objective entities that are constituted in them, both are forming together the realm of the phenomena. And according to Merleau-Ponty "to return to things themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always speaks and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign language, as is geography in relation to the country-side in which we have learnt beforehand what a forest, a prairie or a river is." (1962, ix) consequently the "real has to be described, not constructed or formed." (ibid. x).

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, which aspires 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, in Heidegger's re-formulation, phenomenology implies an attempt 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: 58).

Originally, the classical phenomenological approach focuses on the world appearing to us through our stream of consciousness as a configuration of meaning. Thus anything appearing to consciousness is a legitimate field of inquiry (Stewart & Mickunas, 1990, vii). For phenomenology different forms of consciousness, for example perceiving, willing, thinking, remembering, anticipating, etc. are our modalities of self-world relationship. These modes 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 we can have of experiences while living through or performing them.

The meaning-generating 'how' refers to a modality, which spreads itself in various forms of sensing, moving, feeling, listening, seeing, acting, producing, being-with. According to Husserl the manifestation of these modes realizes themselves as sedimentation of meaning and habitualisation of behavioural acts. 'Specific' here refers to a direct investigation and description of phenomena as they are consciously experienced, but importantly "without theories about their causal explanation and as free as possible from unexamined preconceptions and presuppositions" (Spiegelberg, 1975: 810). With this non-judgmental orientation, phenomenology is not only a philosophical inquiry, but serves also research purposes and methodological pursuits. Being a specific research methodology, it is striving to portray appearing phenomena from the 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. Importantly, "the psycho-cosm" (Eckartsberg, 1981), as a transcendental sphere is more and different than a private and personal stance.

As a distinct philosophical movement, phenomenology emerged largely from the philosophical views of Husserl, who was struggling against psychologism, historicism and scientism, and behaviorism, in so far as they reduce the life of men to a mere result of external conditions acting on him. Husserl 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 use. Critically, he dealt with the Cartesian philosophy and its ambition for a rational justification of knowledge. Instead of the Cartesian distinction between 'subject' and 'object' of thinking, he maintained that the two must be considered together (Husserl, 1963, 1964, 1989). Thus Husserl, like later Heidegger, early on understood that the phenomenology project could not exclude the 'objective' domain even though the starting point and approach was from a transcendental 'subjective' perspective. However, Husserl criticised the extension of scientific rationality to all domains of life, and problematised the danger to "mathematize" reality with a risk of losing contact with the experience of and intentional relation to the world and producing a lifeless activity.

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.

The concept of experience was used by Husserl 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 phenomenologically. 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 and aesthetic phenomena.

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: 5). For investigating the structures of consciousness and essences, a phenomenologist distinguishes between how phenomena are experienced from how they appear in a subject’s awareness.

I. 2. 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 those structures that enable consciousness to refer to objects outside itself. Thereby, phenomenology deals with phenomena that are in relation with objects as we experience them consciously 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, specifies directional 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 merely 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 not only into 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 and meaningful acts.

The meaning-generating 'how' phenomena appear refers to a modality, which spreads itself in various forms of sensing, moving, feeling, listening, seeing, acting, producing, or being-with. According to Husserl the manifestation of these modes realizes themselves then as sedimentation of meaning and habitualisation of behavioural acts.

Accordingly, transcendental phenomenology⁴ 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 an 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 on the hand 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. What is needed for this is an unassumptive and non-intervening study of personally or socially significant phenomena, which are investigated as an experience, rather than as a 'conceptualization'. By holding off pre-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 life 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.

I. 3. 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.⁵ These methodological concepts, although being often used synonymously, refer to the 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: 147) which he interestingly compared to a spiritual “Umkehr” i.e. turning or conversion, (Husserl, 1954: 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.⁶ 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, 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 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 (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 relational 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.

I. 4. 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 (*erlebt*) by conscious subjects. This world of the living everyday life is not a separate and independent entity. Rather it is a realm, where we share perception, knowledge and values which are important for "daily practices" (Husserliana = Hua. VI, 126), and its "practical circumstantial truths" (Hua. VI, 135). For Husserl, the life-world is a grand theatre of objects variously arranged in space and time relative to perceiving subjects, is already-always there, and is the "ground" for all shared human experience (Husserl 1970: 142).

This life-world is also the unexamined foundation and matrix of scientific activity. "From a phenomenological viewpoint, the life-world is pre-theoretical and pre-scientific. . . . It is the foundation of all sciences" (Giorgi, 1997: 248). If science forgets the life-world as their foundation of meaning and base it "hang in the air groundlessly" (Hua. VI, 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 showed the need for linking the basic notions of science back to their conceptual roots in the pre-scientific regions of the life-world as foundation of cognitive activities and dynamic horizon background which we live, and which "lives with and serves as a framework of interpretation.

To elucidate and systematically understand the dynamics of experience and context of meanings related to the principle of correlation in the life-world is the task of phenomenology. Husserl recognized that the life-world allows for a plurality of attitudes, which are possible experiential relations that all human beings can stand in with respect to the world, actualized by particular circumstances. For example, a special type of absolutization of the natural attitude that is particularly prominent and pernicious is the modern "technological calculating attitude" (Moran, 2005: 237).

The focus on life-worldly phenomena, which is also closely related to intersubjective and socio-cultural processes⁷, have become programmatic in the development of a more hermeneutically and existentially oriented phenomenology. It is a program, which aims at describing how common-sense phenomena present themselves in lived experience in human existence of what Heidegger (1962) calls "In-der-Welt-Sein", translated as "being in the world". As the life-world is an individual, social, political, historical, and cultural environment, where human beings live, feel, think, act and interpret as well as communicate, and engage in multiple communal spheres it opens up a series of questions and issues dealt with in further developments of phenomenology.

I. 5. 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: 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 philosophy⁸ and essentialistic neo-Idealism 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: 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: 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: 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 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: 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. Rather the distance supplied by the reduction can be used as a heuristic device to reveal and interpret genuine phenomena and its 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 with an existential analytic the “In-der-Welt-Sein” (being-in-the-world), “Befindlichkeit” (attunement in mood) and “Da-Sein” (t/here-being as a pragmatic, engaged, worldly agent), and the corresponding development towards a hermeneutical phenomenology endeavors to disclosure of unconcealed temporal and historical “Being.” This attempt to dismantle (Destruktion) conventional metaphysical orientations of philosophical tradition, raising the question of the meaning of Being and trying to reintegrate ontological dimensions and his later philosophy of “Ereignis” (event) as "openness to being" and “Gestell” (enframing of technology) became influential for many subsequent philosophical views and approaches (Dreyfus, 1991).⁹

Related to this form of 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 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-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; 2010). The latter one is pursuing the non-reductive integration of the disciplines, thus relating phenomenology and its refined accounts of consciousness with contemporary cognitive and natural science while rethinking the transcendental and status of nature.

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 and ontology 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.

I. 5. 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: 170).

Generally, Wilber recognizes phenomenology as an useful, if limited, aspect of a more integral methodology, respectively a methodological pluralism (Wilber, 2000d: 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, 583, Wilber 2000c note 21 for chap. 14 Wilber, 2000d, 152, and note 7; 2006 chapter 3, 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: 92).

Alleging that the phenomenological method is equivalent to subjectivism, and to slide from a method of reasoning to a particular ontological outlook is a kind of category-mistake. To criticise and dismiss as insufficient a mode of inference by demanding it meet the specific standards of another mode (instead on its own terms) is categorically problematic. Furthermore, such assertion ignores rigorous arguments of advanced phenomenology that disentangle phenomenological method from Husserl’s inclination to transcendental subjectivism.

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

this positioning of a supposed subjectivist stance and the corresponding interpretations need to be qualified and specifically discussed and contextualized. In the following I will do this by raising some important issues. In particular;

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

I. 5a) 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: 93). However, this supposedly clear assumed positioning is not valid for “classical phenomenology” and even less true for advanced phenomenology and inter-relational 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 pursue 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 to be found in the interiority of human being since for Heidegger (1962) as ‘Dasein’¹⁰ (literally meaning being-there/here) it is *in* the world and any 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: 664-665, 675).

I. 5b) 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 behaviour, Wilber usually refer to states as subjective phenomenological pattern of consciousness (Wilber, 2000d). These subjective states may comprise 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.¹¹ For example *peak experiences are a special kind and intensive states* like sensing in the nature, making tantric love, or listening to exquisite music.

States of consciousness are in a continual flux, as humans experience cycling every day and night at least through three different fundamental states, which are besides the ordinary waking consciousness also dreaming and deep dreamless sleep states.

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: 151).

Wilber regards the phenomenon of states – in contrast to stages (Wilber, 2006, Chapter 2 and 3)¹² – 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, like sense of self, external perception (exteroception), perception of internal body states (interoception), but also a sense of humor, flow states or ecstatic states that can erupt spontaneously and so on. 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: 15).

While states are a temporary, fleeting event, a level or structure by definition constitutes a permanent feature. Thus, in contrast to temporary states, stages are relatively stable and *permanent* structures of consciousness and the way the mind interprets its experience, for example Piaget's four categories of formal operational, concrete operational, preoperational, and sensory-motor orientations, and they are mirroring worldviews, such as Jean Gebser's Mental, Mythic, Magic and Archaic.

Importantly all of these structures are considered complimentary and equally legitimate. 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: 151). Within broad states of consciousness there are structures of consciousness, within which there are phenomenal states e.g. joy, happiness, sadness, desire, etc. (Wilber, 2000c).

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.

According to Wilber phenomenology concentrate only on phenomenal states and thus has no access to the structures of consciousness (Wilber, 2000d: 152). As the structures of consciousness are not directly perceived by the subject they:¹³

“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).

This alleged criticism that that structures of consciousness are not “spotted” or investigated by phenomenology is not accurate. On the contrary, it is one of the defining features of phenomenology that it 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 of consciousness. As mentioned before, phenomenological inquiry posits that 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 a 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.

Furthermore, perceptual consciousness is ekstasis that is based on a bodily openness upon and a relationship to a natural and public world (Low, 2009) as will be discussed in detail in the following subsection on Merleau-Ponty.

Thus, phenomenologically, consciousness is a kind of medium through which various phenomena and dimensions appear and unfold.¹⁴ It is a hollow of a non-coincidental Being, - within which events achieve a certain amount of autonomy, and where impressions from the outside can be repeatedly reflected and transformed through a horizontality and mediation - which is highly relevant for reinterpreting the science of consciousness (Allefeld, 2008: 8)

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).¹⁵ If consciousness is a such an "opening or clearing"¹⁶ 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.

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 being a radical decentred and processual approach. Only such a dynamic understanding allows to realize that consciousness is not an interior anything, nor an exterior something, but that it permeates both and that is the space or better medium from and through which what is conceptualized as 'interior' and 'exterior' as well as 'subjective' and 'objective' arise and process.

Consciousness is what is seen, felt and thought (psychic-intentional) and embodied and enacted (objective, behavioral) within a socio-cultural (inter-subjective, Others) and a systemic inter-objective sphere. For understanding the implication when we see that the phenomenological medium of consciousness is inherently related to the entire AQAL-space, what is needed is considering further advanced phenomenological approaches to consciousness and mind (e.g. Gallagher, 2007; Gallagher & Zahavi, 2005; 2008). And of course, like other scientific disciplines or analytic philosophy, phenomenology offers not one, but many accounts of consciousness (Woodruff Smith & Thomasson, 2005; Thompson 2007; Thompson & Zahavi, 2007; Kriegel, 2007).

I. 5c) Inter-subjective Dimensions in Phenomenology

Wilber's has developed a very differentiated understanding of the different dimensions of intersubjectivity and these relationship-as-difference (Hargens, 2001)¹⁷ In addition to an intersubjectivity-as-spirit/ as resonance/ as-relationship he describes a felt experienced intersubjectivity-as-phenomenology (which has implications for deeper shifts of consciousness, motivation and shared meaning evoking deep feeling of sacred connection with life and the cosmos (Wilber, 2006). Wilber alleges a general inadequacy of phenomenology for spotting intersubjective structure-stages. He states that phenomenological method can spot phenomenal states and phenomenal stages, but it "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., 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, 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, 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: 64). For Wilber phenomenology is merely a “philosophy of the subject and subjective” (Wilber, 2006: 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: 175; 1952: 204). Furthermore developing as a person depends heavily upon social interaction (Husserl, 1973b: 170-171).¹⁸

The I, 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: 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 (2005: 212):

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.

The integration of inter-subjectivity shows that the social world has been systematically and methodologically considered in phenomenology and its unfolding. Accordingly the 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: 64). A more adequate understanding of phenomenology recognizes that the subjective space itself develops via inter-subjective patterns of dialogue and interpretive cognition (Wilber, 1995: 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.

I. 5d) Phenomenology in Relation to Introspection and Meditation

Wilber equates for the singular form of the inside of and 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. Thus, phenomenology follows a kind of contemplative and in some ways even meditative attunement to the phenomenon in question. This is explicated in what Heidegger calls meditative thinking.¹⁹

The contemplative attitude in phenomenological approaches is also due to an orientation that is related to receptive and aesthetic forms of thinking and focusing attention, holding back from closure and from discriminatory analytic thinking in favor of a more musing-like process. With such orientation, 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 quest of phenomenology was developed for and has been used by researchers to serve a systematic and rigorous search for truth and reflective methodological practice. Accordingly, the outcomes of phenomenological reflection are not just “insights” or epiphanies’, but reasoned thoughts, lines of argument which are expressed in written texts and part of discourses, that is in forms of propositional interpretation. Moreover, although phenomenology maintains openness towards the possibility of a hermeneutically interpretative engaged approach to spiritual or religious experience, it keeps a detachment from any particular system of belief or theological dogmatism. Thus it remains agnostic about truth contents, allowing a non-confessional secular standing, which causes also methodological problems, e.g. the so called “insider-outsider problem” concerning approaching spiritual experiences

involved.

Phenomenology is contentiously used for investigating religious and mystic experiences (Steinbock, 2007) and there has been and is a *phenomenology of religion* (e.g. Bettis, 1969, Cox, 2006; Ekeke, 2010; Eliade, 1987; Moreau, 2001; Sharma 2001, Twiss, 1992; Van der Leeuw, 1963) developed, interpreting various ways in which the spiritual or sacred appear or are revealed to human beings in the world. Furthermore, this phenomenology inquires the essence of religious phenomena like experiences (e.g. mysticism, holiness, benediction, 'numinous', inspiration) and their expressions or actual spiritual practices. (e.g. prayer, ritual, myths, symbols, doctrines etc.).

The connection between phenomenology and religion has been an enduring one and recently a “theological turn” in phenomenology (e.g. Marion, Henry) can be observed including discussion about the claim that the phenomenological project itself, tout court, tacitly presupposes a religious or theological element (Reynolds 2008; Bendon & Wirzba, 2010). However, there is also the danger of a theophenomenological orientation is that of promoting a theological agenda under the guise of phenomenological scholarship.

Basically, 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.

Somehow misleading, 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 religious or spiritual practice. Rather Husserl saw it as a scientific contribution and introduced in it a genetic phenomenology. He defined this as the study of how meanings are built up in the course of experience, but not in an introspective and solipsist attitude. 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. Specifically it shows the significance of transcendental inter-subjectivity for overcoming solipsistic objections. Thus for not falling into solipsism already, classical phenomenology argued for a proper understanding of transcendence:

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: 154)

Methodologically, 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: 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: 678).

Therefore the methods of phenomenology do not rely on introspective peering internally at one’s passing stream of consciousness, but on redirecting the focus away from the entire empirical natural world. This includes real psychological and introspective attitudes and experiences, and aims at refocusing the study of the mind on essences of conscious experience of various kinds.

Experience is 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. Thus, at the heart of the phenomenological method lies in the assumption that human experience follows fundamental structural principles that express themselves differently and contingently.

For this reason, the interpretation and designation of phenomenology as (solipsistic) introspectivism and equating it with contemplative literature is, if at all, only partially justified and the status of an inner spiritual quest only indirectly implied.²⁰ Moreover, the supposed approach to introspective orientation of phenomenology does not consider sufficiently further and advanced phenomenological developments. These elaborations disclose and take inter-subjective and inter-objective patterns, structures and processes into systematic account.

As we will learn from Merleau-Ponty in the next section (Part II) the reversible relationship between internal and external is constitutive for the creative operation of the genesis of sense and meaning within an “an-ex-interior” field of an incongruent being itself (Morris, 2010). “Anexinterior” designates a relationship, which is anterior and exterior, yet not really exterior, because it is inherent and interior to human being (ibid. 159). For Morris (2010: 159) “finding sense in the world and reflecting on that sense are not operations of consciousness purely, merely or only, but creative operations involving an anexinterior field. This field includes our being as a hollow, a [fold](#) in being. 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 can be linked to empirical, 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, open for inter- and transdisciplinary research.

With all these distinct orientations and qualities, the status of phenomenology in relation to exemplary methods of AQAL like hermeneutics, anthropology and structuralism, but also to autopoieses, empiricism and system theory as described in integral theory need to be reconsidered. All these positionings have to be investigated and scrutinized in more differentiated ways in order to enable an adequate integral post-metaphysics and integral methodology to unfold.

Part II: Advanced Phenomenology – Merleau-Ponty

The following outlines basic ideas of one of the most promising further development and advancement of phenomenology, the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty (1960; 1962; 1988; 1995, 2003). Despite its mid-20 century vintage, his sidelined neglect for a long time and its dense, complicated and at times elusive idiom, Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy continues to offer promising resources and insights for most contemporary concerns and thus for integral research.

His philosophy has a power to alleviate malingering problems not only in philosophy, but in integral science and opens new vistas and expressions for a more integral thinking and living and even “singing the world” (“chanter le monde”) (Merleau-Ponty, 1952: 187). It can serve as an inspirational source for a deepening interrogative inquiry and the need on-going work of renewing our connections to the world. It facilitates embracing our very being as flesh and nature, of remaining alive and sensitive to our being with the world and each other as well as celebrating the

creative, transformative powers of thought, language and philosophy (Hass, 2008: 9) and an integral life.

Bridging the divide between subject and objects, self and world without effacing the differences between these poles of perception, knowledge and living, Merleau-Ponty's post-phenomenology and relational ontology provide a dynamic base for a reinterpreted imminent integralism.

The textual space here does not allow providing a detailed presentation of his further advancement of phenomenology, fecund epistemology and wide-ranging ontology as well as its potential for an expressive and integral transformation. The subsequent sections outline first some basic thoughts and then discuss some of the proto-integral potential of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy.

Basically, Merleau-Ponty 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 perception body and embodiment in human experience. Using Husserlian inspired methods of analysis Merleau-Ponty's overall ambition was to disclose the roots of rationality and Being critically and existentially. 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 and rejected the traditional Cartesian representationalism and dualisms with its separation of matter and mind, body and spirit. Instead he developed the idea of an embodied perception and consciousness of a 'body-mind' as processing a living connection to the world. It is this incarnated perception and embodied reality and its interplay that is constituting responsively in an inseparable bond with the vastness of experience and existence as a being-in-and towards-the-world.

Embodiment and perception are the pre-reflexive opening onto a world that is not merely a screen of ideas or stage of Cartesian theatre, but an incarnated and thus living medium of intertwinement.

With this orientation, he aims at re-discovering and un-covering the *system of "self-other-things"* (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 57) that create experience together. The embodied self, other selves and the world are symbiotic, interwoven, entangle all contributing to the synergy of living experience and reality.

Taking the body and embodiment as a dynamic "base", his existential form of interrogating phenomenology and relational ontology addresses a wide range of bodily experiences and embodied phenomena, from perception, spatiality and motility of the body, to the body in sexual being and in speech, expression and other embodied relationships to others, up to questions regarding temporality, and freedom. Thereby, 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 and consciousness.

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 and embodiment are themselves 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: 151).²²

Influenced and critically using insights by Heidegger and the Gestalt theorists and psychologists, 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 empiristic realism and materialism as well as rationalistic idealism (intellectualism) are reductionistic as they reduce live-worldly phenomena, perception and sensation either to the realm of matter or to that of ideas.²³

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 ambiguities²⁴, which marks his non-reductionistic approach and non-metaphysical ontology. With these orientations, Merleau-Ponty sought to rearticulate the synergic relationship *between* “subject” and “object,” among various other dualisms through an account of the lived and existential body and encompassing-encompassed Being as embodiment.

The lived body as ‘Leib’ functions as a medium of crossing (what Husserl calls ‘Umschlagstelle’ Hua IV, 286), where mind (Geist) and matter, culture and nature, self and world as well as meaning and force meet and unfold.

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 likewise “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 can subjective, inter-subjective nor objective dimension be isolated 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.

Moreover, 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 purposive and boundary-drawing processes. Accordingly, bodily and embodied forces underlie the processual, dynamic and unfinished nature of any perceiving, feeling, thinking and acting.

By means of our bodily perceptive 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: 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.

Thus, for Merleau-Ponty embodied perception, consciousness, and the world are all intricately intertwined. All of them are mutually 'engaged' within an ever-present world frame and through the use of pre-conscious, pre-predicative understanding that is pre-objective and non-positing orientation understandings of our and other bodies and the world's make-up (Siewert, 2006: 88).

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 ongoing continuity between ourselves, others and the natural world that needs to be considered. The challenge is to understand the inextricable intertwining of the body-subject (embodied self) 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. For Merleau-Ponty humans are integrated into the natural order, not as mere 'objects', but as relations between humans and their world, which are intertwined or interwoven in what he calls the 'flesh' of the world.

For Merleau-Ponty, '[t]he flesh is not matter, is not mind, is not substance. To designate it, we should need the old term "element," in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth, and fire ...' (1995: 139).

Metaphorically, this nexus of mediating flesh refers to a textile or common connective tissue of exterior and interior horizons (Merleau-Ponty, 1995:131) and 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.

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. With this relational understanding it becomes possible to approach what does not appear, and yet which is the very condition for appearance.²⁵ Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of chiasmic flesh-in-betweenness with its reversibilities, criss-crossing and inter-corporeity provide the base for an ethos of relational and integral be(com)ing. This be(com)ing is processed through an *constitutive difference* (*ecart* = gap, spacing, rift, dehiscence) in the fabric of experience. It refers to an opening which is like a *separation-in-relation*, a kind of 'separation-difference' that as a generative possibility makes perception and experience possible. For Merleau-Ponty this is a difference beyond the traditional categories of identity and opposition. 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: 95).

Metaphorically it can be described as a folding over, and (coiling) back though divergence and overlap(ping) in constantly reversible flow. The chiasmic foldings (un-, inter-, and re-folding) are in need for a dynamic integration through difference, by which some form of 'unit' can hold, but as well diversities and open possibilities

can unfold. Merleau-Ponty's *post-dichotomous account of identity-within-difference* respectively 'identity-encompassing-difference' (Dillon, 1988: 159) provides a base for this dynamic integration. To think identities within differences is a radical and breakthrough ontological orientation, which disrupts the bifurcation of inside and outside or self and other, respectively individual and collective still present in the AQUAL-model that implies far-reaching [implication](#).

What Wilber's account of this quadrant does not properly and fully bring out is the fact that for it example the use of language itself presupposes a non-linguistic, experiential mutual understanding and exchange of meaning, as a necessary ground of agreeing about how to use language. This kind of infralinguistic understanding and agreement is prior to any distinction between interior and exterior, mental and sensory, or even between we and I, between social and individual. Because all these distinctions and separate categorizations of being are consequent on the use of language. They do not exist for infralinguistic understanding since they are created by language itself. But all the meanings created by language are latent, in solution, in mutual infralinguistic understanding, so that language use involves a continuous translation from infralinguistic to linguistic meaning.

Wilber hints at this deep level understanding when trying to explain his interior-social quadrant. He talks about '*interior harmonic resonance of depth*', about the 'depth' or 'lived experience' in me empathically aligning itself and intuitively feeling into the depth or lived experience in others; also about 'prelinguistically structured meanings and intersubjective exchanges that constitute the pre-understanding' of a culture (Wilber, 1995: 128). But he doesn't articulate these concepts in any depth and lumps them all in together with culture and language in the same quadrant.

There is, therefore, a fifth realm, which underpins and is the ground of all the others. It is a domain of tacit, mutual, participative knowing, out of which the knowing and the differentiation of all four quadrants emerge, and of which they are the linguistic and conceptual translations. Once language is in use, all four quadrants emerge together, created by the basic pronouns of language: we, our, I, it. But there is a sense in which the full articulation and occupancy of each quadrant follows a progression: from we (culture, interior-social) to our (exterior-social) to I (interior-individual) to it (exterior-individual). It is the fifth domain, the realm of mutual empathic depth and resonance, infralinguistic lived and shared experience, which, if we open to its deep priority, is the continuous ever-present grounding reference for everything that goes on within and between the quadrants translated out of it. By the omission of this underpinning, Wilber's four quadrant-scheme still lacks epistemological depth and foundation.

Understanding chiasm as operational move within medium of flesh and inter-mediating link between different sides or positions allows forming relational connections between different phenomena and "entities" in an opening and open way and manifestations within a continuum. Without falling into a pre-trans-fallacy²⁶, this orientation opens up for a post-dualistic ontology, as explicated in the unfinished later works of Merleau-Ponty (1995; 2003).

Ultimately, it this non-dual in-between, which is the mediating 'birth-place' and milieu of all dimensions for a perspectival "*integral being*" (Merleau-Ponty 1995: 84) and its investigation, including intertwined individual and collective identities, interior and exterior realities, subjective and inter-subjective as well as inter-objective spheres and its creative and potentially transformative relationships and expressions.

With this kind of relational, perspectival and expressive 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

Merleau-Ponty attempted to develop an integrated non-reductionistic philosophy, which sees human experience and realities as an integrated whole, from which much can be learned (Low 2009: 227), particularly for integral research and practice.

‘Proto-integral’ can be defined here 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.

Human consciousness is always to some extent *perceptual consciousness*, as it involves some perceptual contact with the world, even when it uses it to form abstract representations. Moreover, consciousness is an enabling potency (as ‘the productive condition of reversibility 1995: 174) and an opening.

The origin of the meaning of the world is our pre-reflective, bodily perceptual openness upon the world, a world that runs beyond the subjects acts of perception and refers back to them

Accordingly, for Merleau-Ponty consciousness is always *embodied consciousness* that as a “body consciousness” (read: perceived bodily meaning) it is constituted prior to reflection, and it is always already in a world that nevertheless goes beyond the embodied subject and includes it. Furthermore, perception and experience interpreted by humans who elicits meaning is embedded in a world that is not only physical, but also social and cultural.

Thus human experience and meaning is actualized in the life-worlds of space, time, body, and various relationships. Integrating the body and developing an elaborate understanding of embodiment, this kind of 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 limited consciousness-bounded understandings.

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. Thus human beings are an integrated composition of the physical and the mental, which are both crossing into one another.

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.

For avoiding of getting stucked in the somewhat implicit Cartesian dualisms in the heuristic analysis of the AQAL model, requires a radical inter-relational holonic perspective. Holonomically 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) or “*inter-being*” (Nhat Hanh, 1998) as known in the Asian spirituality and wisdom traditions²⁷ and which offers possibilities to link to what Wilber portrays as “agency-in-communion” and a place for occasions of interconnectedness and the co-constitution of shared meaning particularly relevant for second-person forms of contemplative education (Gunnlaugson, 2009).

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 an “Ineinander”. The German word “Ineinander” means “in one another” and is used by Merleau-Ponty (2003) (taken from Husserl), for describing “the inherence of the self in the world and of the world in the self, of the self in the other and the other in the self” (ibid. 306). Self and world and with that also selves (culture) and nature intertwine with each other in all perceptual and embodied relationships (which moves through them). For Merleau-Ponty “the concern is to grasp humanity . . . not as another substance, but as *interbeing* . . .” (2003: 208), which is chiasmically interrelated with nature and its plants, organisms and animals.

Processually expressed: *To be is to inter-be*. 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).

Importantly, 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-relationality 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).

Merleau-Ponty’s ontology approaches the central idea that the multitude of irreducible perspectives onto Being belongs to that Being, even more, like for Wilber, it is made up of them. For him “what merits the name of being (is) not the horizon of ‘pure’ being, but the system of perspectives that open into it” that the integral being (is) not before me, but at the intersection of my views and at the intersection of my views with those of the others, at the intersection of my acts and at the intersection of my actions with those of other (...). (Merleau-Ponty 1995: 84). Not particular perspective or a certain manifold of them, but a mediating system of perspectives constitutes being including all relations to self, others and things.

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: 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. 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: 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 opening medium for the manifested work of embodied sensation and consciousness as well as their integrative relation to the self, others and world. Therefore, instead of merely replacing perception with perspectives (Wilber 2006: 58) it seems important to recognize that both are mutually interdependent. Multidimensional, sensory, polymorphic and social 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: 59), a phenomenological and pheno-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). Not only are all perspectives embedded in bodies and cultures they need to be taken in embodied ways.

What is needed is an integral map of perspective taking (Fuhs, 2010), which considers Merleau-Pontyian insights into embodied perception more adequately.

As Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy provides a access to and processing of relational in-betweens with all its liminal and ambiguous qualities, it opens up the possibility of a proto-integral “*scientia media*” (Robbins, 2001) for an a-romantic rehabilitation of nature and post-dualistic ecology of knowledge and be(com)ing.

Against Retro-romanticism, but Differently! Embodied Ecology of Flesh ~~~

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.

The theory of the all-inclusive flesh and of its intensive, libidinal de-centred ‘Wild Being’ (Merleau-Ponty 1995)²⁸ with its primacy of the elemental and (feminine) earth may be related to the pre-philosophical, mythological notion of the Great Earth Mother/Nature, which is the foundational principle of numerous religion. As such it may be opposed to the Spirit, as the masculine realm of high-altitude thinking, which attempts to reduce the world to its essential structures, and thus to forego the entire existential significance of the lived-body. But not only do the symbols of the earth, mother, and flesh signify the ordinary differential a-structure of libidinal investment, they also symbolize the limit and the ultimate negation of the symbolic register itself. Insofar as earth symbolism is all-encompassing, insofar it subsumes all contradictions, it denies symbolic efficacy since it disavows the possibility of the oppositional structures whereby signs obtain their meaning within a system (Weiss, 1981: 92).

As the flesh is founded upon and reverberates with, the ontologisation of the phenomenological notion of the lived-body, it is not a new philosophical monism, but rather a process without end or closures. The flesh is the nexus of the historical (semiotic) and the natural (libidinal) processes: it is the medium of all structures of significative exchange. It is encompassing, yet not isolable or distant: it is simultaneously before us (but not transcendent) and foundational of consciousness (but not immanent) (Weiss, 1981: 95). Advanced phenomenology shares the well-founded criticism of integral theory related to retro-romantic approaches of questionable re-enchantment, which can be problematised as a single-boundary fallacy concerning the status of the somatic body (Wilber, 1995: 697ff, 708). Conversely, advanced phenomenology does not make the somatic-sensory body mean experience in general or only a pre-conventional body. Therefore, this phenomenology 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 to 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: 147) and relations to nature are always already culturally mediated.²⁹ 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: 472). A non-regressive phenomenological practice serves a non-sentimental return towards actively developing our powers of a lived reflective somatic or body 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: 176). Shusterman’s 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 experiences for the future rather than trying to recapture the lost perceptual unity of a primordial past (Shusterman, 2005: 177). As Shusterman argues for descriptions and theories of the body and embodied consciousness as positive, proactive forces that

engage in powerful individual and social transformations as well as ethics, politics and art of living through health-minded and holistic bodily practices, these ideas are highly relevant for integral practice. Shusterman's somaesthetics with its ameliorative orientation in concert with advanced phenomenology and pheno-pragma practice (Küpers, 2009) may contribute for a reconstructive pragmatist ecological orientation (Browne, 2007).³⁰ 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. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and a corresponding elemental philosophy (Macauley, 2010)³¹, responsible ecology (Cataldi & Hamrick, 2007; Kleinberg-Levin, 2008) and affective eco-phenomenology" (Brown & Toadvine, 2003) helping rediscovering our planetary senses and their role for a revived dancing of interconnected 'Earth-bodies' (Mazis, 2002). The outlined advanced phenomenological ideas and interpretation of an a-romantic understanding of nature may also be linked to an *integral interpretation of ecology* (Esbjörn-Hargens & Zimmerman, 2009), particularly in relation to rethinking a Heideggerian deep ecology. Part of an integral ecological orientation is a critical consideration of the status of the Other and of what Merleau-Ponty calls inter-corporeality.

The Status of the Other – Inter-Corporeity in the fabric of social becoming

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: 771). As this was not doing justice to Husserl, as shown before, his criticism of intersubjectivity in relation Merleau-Ponty is even more misplaced, who remained further radicalised the Husserlian concept of transcendental intersubjectivity as part of an relational embodiment (inter-corporeity). By this radicalization the experience of the other has an integrative place in Merleau-Pontyan phenomenology and ontology.

From the perspective of his advanced interpretation it is not only that through others 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 a pre-mordial *inter-corporeality* within the caring sensible.

Based on his understanding of inter-corporeality Merleau-Ponty offers an inter-subjectivist account from which an interconnection of communicative expression and empathic engagement between self, other, and the world can be extrapolated. As an embodied being the self is constituted in relation to the other within an event of intersubjectivity that is more and different than the co-presence of alter egos, but part of the fabric of social becoming (Crossely, 1996). Being embedded in a primordial inter-corporeality within a chiasmic intertwining of shared reversible flesh this embodied intersubjectivity preserves asymmetry, heteronomy and alterity of the other, while situating them also in a socio-cultural context.

Accordingly the cultural and historical world of inter-subjects cannot be understood in a way that is separate from the sensible and empathetic.

'Einführung' that is fellow feeling, compassion or empathy (e.g. for suffering or happiness as part of forming a community of solidarity), 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, ontologically and 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 is not a monological edifice or lower-order abstraction, but recognizes that the "subjective space" itself develops via inter-subjective patterns of dialogue and interpretive cognition (Wilber, 1995: 28, 576ff, 583). In Merleau-Ponty's phenomenologico-ethical space of embodied proximity, the others are my twins in flesh, "flesh of my flesh" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 15), through our situatedness in embodiment and processes of bodily perception and related intercorporeality, emotional and ethical life is constituted, and sustained, or metaphorically expressed: through our breathing, through in- and expiration as cultivated in somatic contemplative praxis like in yoga (Morley, 2001; 2008), we always already communicate with the constituting surrounding inter-world and its incarnated Others in a solidaristic communal life (Skof, 2010).

Indeed, it is through the vital, cosmico-atmospheric breath/wind/air as a rhythm of in-takings and out-givings that human life is not only sustained, but it is through our basically pre-reflective and bodily and embodied acts of ex- and inspiration that humans enter into and process their basic experiential and communicational relations with Others and the world.

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. This implies that they all co-create and communicate to each other and unfold

together in a responsive and thus dialogical way. Accordingly, a first-person (perspective) 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” as a form of “adequate phenomenology”.

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 which lives up to its name 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: 49).

Following the anti-essentialists critique against classical transcendental phenomenology, instead of reifying phenomena into external “objects,” pheno-practice aims not to grasp simply 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 ways of encountering and relating before and while we understand or think them in conceptual thought or represent them in propositional language. Accordingly, a pheno-practical approach informs us that our primary and usual way of being-in-the-world is a pragmatic inter- and trans-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 aids dealing with inherent problems and limits of atomistic, mechanistic and substantialist approaches, and simultaneously provides access to ‘inter-stand’ relevant phenomena in the life-worldly practice.

Pheno-practice represents a specific integrally informed research framework and methodology. It understand re-search as a practice of researchers, who are striving to portray phenomena from the individual, social or communal and contextual perspectives of those who experience them and how they are embodied, while

considering also the experiential involvement of the researcher. More than just applying specific methodological approaches 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) for conducting research 'with' rather than 'on' people as co-researchers and creating a research cycle iterating through different types of knowledge, namely experiential, presentational, propositional and practical, knowing for deepening experience and knowledge.

With all these foci 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 a 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: 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 pheno-practice

Holonomically, 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.

John Heron (2003/2005) problematizes the status of contemplative and spiritual lines in Wilber’s conceptualization and suggests that a multi-line integral development needs to be explored by persons in relation through mutual co-inquiry. Such participative peer-to-peer approach of cooperative inquiry (Heron, 1996) and relational forms of spiritual practice (Heron, 2006) are meaningful as according to him many basic developmental lines - e.g. those to do with gender, psychosexuality, emotional and interpersonal skills, communicative competence, morality - unfold through engagement with other people. Correspondingly, for Heron (2003/2005) “spirituality is located in the interpersonal heart of the human condition where people co-operate to explore meaning, build relationship and manifest creativity through collaborative action inquiry into multi-line integration and consummation” and he specifies distinguishing characteristics of such collegial applied spirituality.”³² For Heron (2003/2005) “unless spirituality is authenticated by those who co-create it and practise it, it is questionable. Anyone who hasn’t grasped this radical and simple principle, in thought and deed, may be colluding with and promoting some form of indoctrination.”

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 develop an appropriate a sense of what ultimately has already been understood and practiced (Küpers, 2009). As being always a 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 pathway that pheno-practical thinking and acting itself tentatively inscribes in attempting to disclose and come intelligibly close to phenomena. Correspondingly, the actual course of pheno-practical research is itself a lived experience, notwithstanding following specific qualitative criteria of research for ensuring scientific rigor.

Not only may we situate lived experiences pheno-practically, we may also situate pheno-practical theorizing and ask ourselves where and how we are when we feel, think and act. With this orientation, we are concerned and can reflect about the experience including our involvement, hence about where we stand and who we are in the very process of adequate phenomenological research and pheno-practical theorizing.

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

interconnections. Accordingly, the central task in pheno-practical research is to demonstrate and make approachable the reciprocal 'inter-passions', inter-actions and inter-objections 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 research orientation suits and advances integral studies, as phenomena are constituted by inter-beings in a variety of situations, events and activities.

Furthermore, as a genuine process-oriented research framework, 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. This disclosure corresponds to the processual, inter-relational nature of the phenomenal world.

The advantage of such pheno-practice is that it provides a useful approach to critic and counter-balance (gross and subtle) reductionist 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 help 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 transgressive?

On the one hand, phenomenology "seeks to recover a naive contact with the world" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 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: xx), transfiguring lived experience in the act of comprehending it essentially!

Although pheno-practice relates and interprets meanings as already implicit in lived experience, it does not simply reiterate 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 transform lived experience with new interpretation and meaning. This is possible, because pheno-practice is concerned with and relates respectively returns forward to already lived experience as the place where meaning originates.

Moreover, there is a transcending and transformative dimension already existed 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: 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.

Importantly, integral theory can facilitate a deeper integration of the insights

of transcendent and immanent orientations to direct experience, while recognizing the paradoxical nature of embodiment as the integration of horizontal and vertical movements in ascending and descending (Silow, 2010).

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: 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: 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. This is 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 while 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 this is a meaning which recedes from an abstracting focus in favor of life-worldly involvements which constitutes and transforms the same.

Herein lies the *paradox of expression* (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 389 1995: 144), which lay in the tension between expression that draws on (and responds) sedimented meanings that have already been expressed (transition leading to repetition), and a pure creation of new meanings spontaneously generated (transgression and generation leading mute utterance or private language). (Waldenfels, 2000: 92). Accordingly, expression lies *between* the reproduction of the already expressed and the creative process of innovative meanings, in the transition between old and new between past and present, between the already spoken and the speaking of the yet to be expressed.

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, we as embodied agents, dwell, and in which as spheres of meaning we always already understand, arise, and differentiate. One of the chief practical benefits of pheno-practice then lies in a re-form of and re-formulating of our understanding of meaning, which thereby in-forms as well as trans-forms the courses of living.

With all these qualities pheno-practical research initiates and carries forward, enables and situates what is or can be done in a more encompassing context of meaning. It thereby opens the possibility of acting more sensitively and thoughtfully with a view to an integral practice of [wise conduct in life](#) (Küpers 2007). Realizing transcendent meaning in immanent living experience, pheno-practice effects possible transformations 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 "fundamentals" 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 and 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 structures with their complex inter-relationships. By purporting a return to the life-worldly experience and phenomenality 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 and reality.

In this sense phenomenology and pheno-practice are radical; which refers to a radicalism understood in the etymological sense of 'going to the roots'. They are philosophically radical insofar as they seek 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, both are also socially and political radical, since they challenge the hegemony of science and 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: 5) phenomenology and likewise pheno-practice pursue a tentative orientation which demands not only necessarily appropriating and re-appropriating respectively letting go consciously its own beginning and the previous course of its thought.

Moreover, they call for re-learning to sense and look at the life-world as we encounter the same in immediate experience; gaining fresh perceptions and 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. This means they are neither one-sidedly revolutionarily destructive nor evolutionarily conservative, but re-constellating radically the evolutionary enfoldment. Accordingly, both contribute to possible attempts for finding better and more adequate interpretations or alternative metaphors and stories for experiences and processes 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, especially 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, 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 differently embodied and enacted realities.

In a way, advanced and adequate phenomenology and integral pheno-practice are themselves answers to the question of finding methods which enable to think and interrelate at the same time the externality and internality their holonic interrelationship. From a post-Husserlian and integral perspective, the discussed phenomenologies and practices 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. 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 re-appropriated permanently and re-newed in continued questioning and interpretation.

Nevertheless, advanced 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). The phenomenological and -practical quest for this inte-graal is part of the search for developing a post-metaphysical stance and understanding of holonic integral inter-connections and scientific and life-worldly integral 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 of integral research to be explored further. Both offer a map to orientate in the vast territories of an integral ‘be(com)ing-in-the-world’. 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 phenomena and events in more integral ways, navigating a journey through and towards unknown terrains.

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 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 research 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 complements illustrate, highlight, interpret, deconstruct or re-conceive the experiential, structural, and processual dimensions of phenomenal processes in investigating integral science. 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 phenomena and dimensions of “lived experiences” (van Maanen, 1990) in its complex holonic interplay is a challenging endeavor. But pursuing this undertaking and actualizing its multiple, creative transpositional potential is a worthwhile endeavour as it contributes not only for the contemporary epistemic and ontic odysseys in research and practice.

Metaphorically speaking, integral pheno-practical research provides bridges to pre-reflective dimensions of experience and realities without getting lost in pre-modern swamps of regression. Furthermore, it offers passages 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 allows to a better equipped and more critical journeying into the landscapes of integral research. Thus, offering enriching nourishment and guidance advanced phenomenological and -practical philosophy encourage and foster travelling into the somewhat enigmatic spheres and elusive and ambiguous issues of yet unknown possibilities emerging in a encompassing integral research and practice.

Thus all in all, not only are phenomenology and pheno-practice more and different than an “Upper Left“ or “Zone #1” affair, they also open up access to a significant proto-integral potential to be actualized. Truly integrated in integral research together they invite entering the in-between of embodied selves, groups and communities their local cultures, institutions, 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.

Post Scriptum

What next?

With the poet Antonio Machado (in his *Campos de Castilla*, 1912) we might respond to the question:

“What to do then?

“Weave the thread given to us, dream our dream and live; it is the only way we can achieve the miracle of a growing life.”

This implies acknowledging and following the Wisdom of path-co-creation as expressed poetically by Machado:

Caminante, son tus huellas
el camino y nada más;
Caminante, no hay camino,
se hace camino al andar.
Al andar se hace el camino,
y al volver la vista atrás
se ve la senda que nunca
se ha de volver a pisar.
Caminante no hay camino
sino estelas en la mar

Walker, your footsteps (traces) are the path, and nothing more.
Walker, there is no path, the *path is made by walking*.
Walking you make the path, and turning you look back
you see the path you never again will step upon/tread again.
Walker, there is no path, only wakes (ups) on the sea.

Todo pasa y todo queda,
pero lo nuestro es pasar
pasar haciendo caminos,
caminos sobre la mar viviendo.

All things die and all things live forever,
but our task is to die,
to die making paths,
paths over the living sea.

When moving over the sea we may follow Cavafy's recommendation in his poem Ithaca:

When you set sail for Ithaca,
pray for the road to be long,
full of adventures, full of knowledge.

...

Pray that the road is long.
That the summer mornings are many, when,
with such pleasure, with such joy
you will enter ports seen for the first time;

...

Always keep Ithaca on your mind.
To arrive there is your ultimate goal.
But do not hurry the voyage at all.
It is better to let it last for many years;
and to anchor at the island when you are old,
rich with all you have gained on the way,
not expecting that Ithaca will offer you riches.
Ithaca has given you the beautiful voyage.
Without her you would have never set out on the road.
She has nothing more to give you.
And if you find her poor, Ithaca has not deceived you.
Wise as you have become, with so much experience,
you must already have understood what these Ithacas mean.

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¹ Ventura describes the age, "endarkenment" we are living in today non-negatively as one "in which, for reasons we can't comprehend, everything's being turned inside out, everything's imploding and exploding at once, and we can't stop it. And it's going to continue, it'll go on for a long, long time, longer than we're going to be alive. So we can't find peace, we can't "win," it's *not* going to be all right. Not for us. But that doesn't have to rob us of purpose; in fact it's the opposite, it implies a great purpose: That what each of us must do is cleave to what we find most beautiful in the human heritage — and pass it on. So that one day, one day when this endarkenment exhausts itself, those precious things we've passed on will still be alive, stained perhaps but functional, still present in some form, and it will be possible for the people of that day to make use of them to construct a life that is a life — the life of freedom *and* variety *and* order *and* light *and* dark, in their proper proportions (whatever they may be). The life that we'd choose now if we could. And that to pass these precious fragments on is our mission, a dangerous mission — that if you were going to volunteer for crucial, hazardous work, work of great importance and risk, this might be the job you drew. And it isn't a bad job at all. Actually, it's the best job." For other sources and uses of the term endarkenment see

<http://www.laetusinpraesens.org/musings/endarken.php>

² Epistemological indeterminacy is a term that specifically refers to "uncertainties, ambiguities, and paradoxes in knowledge and its communication and validation" (Murray, 2006, p. 212). Murray (2006) proposed that the validity of a model or theoretical framework rests in its usefulness and usability.

³ 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).

⁴ 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

⁵ Epoché, (literally: attention) 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 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. In this context it is important not to conflate introspection and intuition (Thomasson, 2003).

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ 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 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. According to Heidegger, human being comprises of concern, being-toward-death, existence, and attuned moods as components. Concern, or *Sorge*, is the ability to care about the self, in relation to phenomena. Being-toward-death represents the finite nature of life. Existence, or *Existenz*, represents knowing one 'is' and is changing. Finally, attuned moods, or *Stimmungen*, refer to an emotional situatedness and responses to other beings, further allowing one to define the self.

¹¹ These states that are accessible through meditation, the shamanic trance, hypnosis, and myriad drug induced states. "Because they are often characterised 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 behaviour, 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 behaviours, 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 criticises 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.

¹² The three-stage conceptions of development in different lines can be distinguished as follows:

Cognitive
 Advanced-----Trans-rational
 Intermediate-----Rational
 Beginning-----Pre-rational
 Affective (Emotional)
 Advanced-----Universal
 Intermediate-----Relational/Caring
 Beginning-----Selfish
 Self/Ego
 Advanced-----Trans-personal
 Intermediate-----Personal
 Beginning-----Pre-personal
 Interpersonal
 Advanced-----Worldcentric
 Intermediate-----Ethnocentric
 Beginning-----Egocentric
 Moral
 Advanced-----Post-Conventional
 Intermediate-----Conventional
 Beginning-----Pre-Conventional
 Needs
 Advanced-----Self-transcendence
 Intermediate-----Emotional/psychological
 Beginning-----Physical

¹³ For Wilber consciousness “...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).

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ “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 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).

¹⁶ 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).

¹⁷ 1. *Intersubjectivity-as-spirit*: the transcendental quality of all relationships that allows for any dimension of intersubjectivity to manifest. The only reason that two subjectivities can touch simultaneously (co-presence) is that they are ultimately only one Subject.

2. *intersubjectivity-as-context*: the context created by multiple intersubjective structures (i.e., meshworks) which are constitutive of the subject and create the space in which both subjects and objects arise (e.g., physical laws, morphic fields, linguistic, moral, cultural, biological, and aesthetic structures). These cultural contexts, backgrounds, and practices are nondiscursive and inaccessible via direct experience.

3. *Intersubjectivity-as-resonance*: the occurrence of "mutual recognition" and "mutual understanding" between two holons of similar depth. Within this dimension there are Worldspaces and Worldviews.

a. *Worldspaces*: ontological resonance between two subjects who share emergent domains (e.g., physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual). Here, mutual recognition is simple co-presence prior to reflection (precognitive).

b. *Worldviews*: epistemological resonance between two subjects who share a level of psychological development (e.g., archaic, magic, mythic, rational, and centauric). Here mutual understanding is co-presence via cognition, which complexifies with development. This is the cognitive component of a shared worldspace.

4. *Intersubjectivity-as-relationship*: the way we identify with and have relationship with other subjects and objects. Within this dimension there are at least three types of relationships.

a. *It-It relationships*: an objective subject in relation with an objective object.

b. *I-It relationships*: a subject in relationship with an object (or a subject seen as an object).

c. *I-I relationships*: a subject in relationship with a subject. This last subdivision has two general forms, either solidarity or difference.

1. *Relationship-as-solidarity*: relating to another subject because they mirror your values, ethnicity, gender, or nationality etc.

2. *Relationship-as-difference*: relating to another subject as a subject despite the fact that they are different from you in important ways.

It is also helpful to keep in mind a related quality to intersubjectivity, namely:

5. *Intersubjectivity-as-phenomenology*: the felt-experience of different dimensions of intersubjectivity, including: spirit, resonance, and relationships. Note that intersubjectivity-as-context is not available as "felt-experience" by its very nature of constituting the subject prior to experience.

¹⁸ 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 disclosed).

¹⁹ In contrast to “*calculative thinking*” [*das rechnende Denken*] (1966b, p. 46), Heidegger describes a meditative thinking [*das besinnliche Denken*], as means to notice, to observe, to ponder, to awaken an awareness, an innocent looking and listening of what is actually taking place around us and in us. This requires patience and silence in relation to being as well as doing. Meditative thinking implies effort, commitment, determination, care, and practice, but at the same time, it must “be able to bide its time, to await as does the farmer, whether the seed will come up and ripen” (Heidegger 1966, p. 47). As such it is keeping awake for releasement” [*Wachbleiben für die Gelassenheit*] (1966, p. 61). <http://www.mic.ul.ie/stephen/vol10/Heidegger.pdf>

²⁰ 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).

²¹ Although stressing this givenness phenomenology does not simply can be equated with the "Myth of the given" as Wilber states when saying: "The myth of the given is essentially another name for phenomenology and mere empiricism in any of a hundred guises—whether regular empiricism, radical empiricism, interior empiricism, transpersonal empiricism, empirical phenomenology, transcendental phenomenology, radical phenomenology, and so forth. (Wilber, 2006, p. 176). For Merleau-Ponty there is no direct, unmediated knowledge of reality given; rather all knowledge and all human experience are structured and culturally mediated.

Furthermore as Saiter (2009: 314) stated: "What Wilber's critique of phenomenology omits (or fails to consider) is that what was given for him was the essential postmodern insight concerning intersubjectivity: Everything that Wilber includes in his AQAL model was given to his awareness regardless of how it was achieved or how difficult the inquiry may have been. Therefore, his AQAL model is not greater than, or necessarily more inclusive than, phenomenology. In fact, the AQAL model owes Husserl and the tradition(s) he inspired (existential, humanistic, transpersonal, social constructionism), a debt of gratitude..... Phenomenology never ignored the problems of intersubjectivity, as Wilber claims. In fact, in many ways, it is the origin of postmodernism in all of its healthy as well as its pathological forms."

²² 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, 25; 2000c).

²³ While empiricism regards perception as grounded in sensation; intellectualism sees it as a function of judgment. "What both empiricism and intellectualism lose sight of is the phenomenal field itself, the givenness of the world to a situated bodily perspective, that is neither merely sensory nor intellectual" (Carman, 2008, 76). Behaviouristic-Empiricist and mentalistic-idealistic explanation fail to explain the body because they assume the body must be understood as object (physiological corpus, and passive receiver of sense impression respectively neuro-physiological mechanisms) or as subject, (or controlled by or treated as extension of mind). Rather for a proper understanding Merleau-Ponty stresses that the body has both subjective and objective dimensions and it is (neither subjective nor objective as it is constituted in) the interchange between the two, which constitute the phenomenal and living body and living experiences!

Phenomenologically, perception is not simply the result of the impact of the external world (sensory experiences (empiricist data gathering) on the body; for even if the body is distinct from the life-world it inhabits, it is not separate from it. Rather, there is only perception as it is *lived* in the world. Metaphorically speaking, there is *no an inner theatre* of the mind where show from the outside are projected, but perception is (via the body) in-the-world rather than (in) the mind. This implies that perceiver and perceived are (decentred and) relational beings participating in a perceptual field as a meaningful configuration. Perception as neither the integration of a set of impressions by a sensing, physiological organism nor the synthesis of a manifold of intuitions by a categorizing, judging psychological ego. Perception obeys neither a logic of the (purely) physical nor a logic of the (purely) psychical; it is neither a purely objective process, wherein we simply take in the world, nor a purely subjective process, wherein we simply constitute the world. Rather, perception occurs precisely between these two processes, in a phenomenal field; it operates within this field like a dialogue – between subject and object, knower and known, perceiver and perceived. This dialogue is characterized essentially by *ambivalence*, since each 'pole of perception' simultaneously informs, and is informed by, the other. Neither the subject nor the object has a fundamental primacy in perception; the only candidate qualified for such a designation is the phenomenal field itself. "Perception is not something given but rather an openness for further determination, Perception gives not sensation but a hold on the world. The perceiving subject is open to new forms of expression, including science, which reflect

back and even transform its original sense of the world.” (Rouse 2004, 272). Furthermore, perception is based in and interrogate with the world in or through acting that is in looking, listening and touching etc. (as applied perceptual schemas, as acquired, cultural, habit-based forms of meaning-mediating conduct) as embodied practice.

²⁴ 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.

²⁵ The polyvalent variegated open-ended term and metaphor of flesh is Merleau-Ponty’s central ontological principle, which sustains his attempt to overcome traditional metaphysical dualisms as well as to expand and ontologize his concept of the lived-body, signifying a polymorphous, open systems, a multivalent, and horizontal ambiguous Being and foundation of the possibility of expression. As a universal dimensionality the elemental Flesh subtends all other categorization and typicality (Weiss, 1981, 91). Not being a static totality or stasis (or metaphysical identity) it is a process of incomplete difference-enabling Being as ongoing explosion tied to dehiscence as the manner in which the perceptual and meaningful horizon remain open, through differential progress and sedimentations of meaning (Weiss, 1981, 91). 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 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).

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ Interestingly the Buddhist concept of ‘pratitya samutpada’, translated as dependent co-arising of phenomena inherently, is closely related to Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy of inter-relationships. In both inter-pretations phenomena arise from inter-relations (and inter-actions) *between* different aspects of a (single) reality (continuum) in which (inter-dependent) relationships are primary and nothing exists in independence. All phenomena and experiences arise out of encounters *between* the process in which phenomena and we as experiencers are entangled and / or engaged as living beings and the processes of other beings and environments. All are part of an ongoing cyclic and self-organising emergent be(com)ing, a dance of co-creation (following intelligible principles and rules/patterning). The idea that all arises out of multiple other things and has no existence apart from its relations to them “demonstrates the non-identity of identity in the sense that an entity is at all times already a matrix of diverse causes and conditions that contribute to the existence of a current event. The seemingly same cause on a surface will produce diverse results based on the conditions under which an action takes plays. Multilayered elements involved in the generation of a current event will, in their turn make contributions to the occurrences of future events”. (Park & Kopf 2009: 4). The philosophies of Merleau-Ponty and spiritual traditions of Buddhism, both disclose in their radicalized inter-relationship the absence in lived existence of any separate, substantial, independent, subjective self (as transcendental idealists would have it) or any separate, substantial, independent, objective world (as empirical realists would have it). All supposed enduring separations are illusionary constructs, as there

is only an inseparable sphere and continuum of be(com)ing. When all what we call ‘subjects’ and ‘objects’ are constituted through interdependently co-arising experiences we are and the world is our and its interrelating.

²⁸ Merleau-Ponty’s notion of wildness and the pre-reflective quality of wild meaning indicates that the subject and object have not been tamed into separate realms, but more like convex and concave sides of the same bowl, as close as the sea and the strand where each define or co-constitute the other. The inter-corporeity of Flesh as “non-orderly order” (Johnson, 2008: 180) is a being that is ‘wild’ as it is not reducible to some kind of eidetic principle (that would keep Otherness in the logic of sameness). Merleau-Ponty develops a chthonic state of ‘Wild Being’ that can, open a raw perception of the life-world’s elemental flesh. The wild being of flesh is a perpetual residue that however resists regressive thought, as it is through its gap-character with its *non-space*” of *in-between* more an abysmal found, an bodenlos-fundierender (abysmally-founding) Ur- and Ungrund, an ordinary presentability, which is an ability, power or potentially enable the wild logos of creativity (Merleau-Ponty 1995: October VI 1959.)

²⁹ 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 phenomenism, 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 phenomenism overlooks the complexities of the intentional structure of man’s consciousness of the phenomena.

³⁰ This form of pragmatism considers natural and cultural ecotones as transitional zone between ecosystems, which are “places of intensified energy, where genetic exchange and evolutionary potential are initiated” (Browne, 2007: 3). These *ecotonal territories* between abiotic, biotic, and cultural relations, and between individuals and systems, are also fertile grounds for imaginative moral cultivation and ethical reflection. This is the case because they contain the intersecting and divergent “interests” of various systems, being sites an interdependency of aesthetic, moral, scientific, and economic values, an inseparability of the various systems that constitute our environment and potentially enable environmentally sensitive practices. An *ecotonal orientation* find expression in art in both natural and cultural settings, in places where the artificial has in some way been imported into the wild and in places where the wild has been brought into contact with the artificial, like in the situational land art of Andy Goldsworthy. As individual and societal anaesthetization to the more-than-human is at the heart of the environmental crisis, “the aesthetic potential of living in ecotonal spaces, of participating in multiple complex systems, and of belonging to the land must be activated in the lives of the population before they can become perceptive of environmental problems (Bower, 2010: 78).

³¹ An elemental philosophy (Macauley, 2010) uses Merleau-Ponty’s interpretation of flesh as integral to re-animating, re-member and re-cycling the elements. Macauley also discusses the reclamation of the elemental in continental philosophy in relation to Elemental Reveries: Bachelard’s Poetics,

Elemental Dwelling: Heidegger’s Fourfold, Elemental Sensibility: Levinas on Enjoyment, Elemental Imperatives: Lingis and Our Sensuous Surroundings, Elemental Passions: Irigaray on Breath and Body, Elemental Landscapes: Casey on Place, Elemental Nature: Sallis on Imagination and outlines how a revaluation of Earth, Air, Fire, and Water contributes for perceiving elemental beauty, ecological duty, and environmental policy.

³² These characteristics are (Heron, 2003/2005): (1) It is developmentally holistic, involving diverse major lines of human development; and the holism is both within each line and as between the lines. Prime value is put on relational lines, such as gender, psychosexuality, emotional and interpersonal skills, communicative competence, peer communion, morality, human ecology, supported by the individualistic, such as contemplative competence, physical fitness. (2) It is psychosomatically holistic, embracing a fully embodied and vitalized way of being. (3) It is epistemologically holistic, embracing many ways of knowing: knowing by presence with, by intuiting significant form and process, by conceptualizing, by practising. Such holistic knowing is intrinsically dialogic, action- and inquiry-oriented. It is fulfilled in peer-to-peer participative inquiry, and the participation is both epistemic and political. (4) It is ontologically holistic, open to the manifest (nature, culture and the subtle), to

immanent life and transcendent mind. To relate (4) back to (3), there can be experiential knowing by presence with the manifest, the immanent and the transcendent, either relatively independently of each other or in full integration. (5) It is focussed on worthwhile practical purposes that promote a flourishing humanity-cum-ecosystem. (6) It embraces peer-to-peer relations and participatory forms of decision-making. The latter in particular can be seen as a radical discipline in relational spirituality, burning up a lot of the privatized ego.(7) It honours the gradual emergence and development of peer-to-peer forms of association and practice.(8) It affirms the role of both initiating hierarchy, and spontaneously surfacing and rotating hierarchy among the peers, in such emergence.