

Relationality and Phenomenological Organizational Studies

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Abstract

Robert Cooper has developed a discourse of organizing, centered on *relationality*. It is a discourse grounded in third generation phenomenology and pointing to fourth generation phenomenology. Phenomenology in its first (Husserl) and second (Merleau-Ponty) generations developed the *epoché* (procedure of investigation) whereby research transcended the natural attitude and forged contact between the researched and the researcher. Progressively logocentric 're-presenting' was transcended in (third generation) phenomenology via empathy and intersubjective awareness. Phenomenological 'research' has become the creation of dialogic and empathic identity. Despite the potential richness of such research, the ethics of shared awareness and involvement continues to pose major problems of consequentiality. If research is based on empathy and relationship, how does the researcher do justice to *relationality*? Without a clear link between awareness and action, it is very difficult for phenomenology to develop as a dialogic form of organizational studies. Ontological insight into the pre-structures of the life-world, however philosophically fundamental, will not suffice. Phenomenological research understood as a complex adaptive system (CAS), is (potentially) an alternative that respects *relationality* and honors the ethics of empathy. But truly radical *relationality* - for instance, embodied in the (very) flesh of life --- (in fourth generation phenomenology), challenges the very possibility of organizational studies.

Key words: phenomenology, natural attitude, flesh of life, empathy, logocentric, complex adaptive systems (CAS), *relationality*, Edmund Husserl, Michel Henry, Robert Cooper.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology via Edmund Husserl, famously directed attention "back to the things themselves" [*Zurück zu den Sachen selbst*] (Welton, 1999). But the call (made in 1900-1901) to go back to the things themselves, has had a very ironic fate. Husserl's intention was to escape psychological relativism --- that is, the claim that all thought is mere thinking, or so many mental processes, or merely complex forms of relatedness. Phenomenology, a century later, has become a principal intellectual source for recognizing the relatedness of consciousness and subjectivity, and now champions the (near) indefinable inter-space wherein self and world emerge. The philosophical despair of 1900 --- born of the inability to identify

absolute truth or objective reality, has returned in a postmodern guise, and ironically fueled by phenomenological concerns. Phenomenology has flipped from anti-subjectivism --- that is, the rejection of relativism and psychologism, to an attending to affect, particularity and unicity. Husserl realized that objectification, quantification and rationalization, could lead away from the things themselves, to prejudice(s), blind assumptions and uncritical opinions. There may be no reality left in psychological solipsism, but the fate of insufficiently examined beliefs is no better. Lived-awareness and experienced observation have been proposed as the solution. But lived experience of the life-world (*lebenswelt*), is only as rich (or poor) as the attention paid to circumstance(s).

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All the issues of the nature and quality of *relationality* have to be re-opened (Cooper, 2005). Husserl may have aspired to direct access to things in them selves, but he ended up re-asserting the problem(s) of relationship. He may have intended to rediscover the known, but actually he put the interdependence of the known and knower¹ back on the map. The ambiguity from which phenomenology was born – phenomenology is all about *the things themselves*, or is it about the *relationality* of the life-world --- refuses to go away. In terms of organizational studies, is 'organization' a potential horizon (or limit) of consciousness, which can be phenomenologically explored as a thing in the world; or is 'organization' a term that hides life-world complexity? Is the life-world a placeless place of gaps and intervals, wherein the self connects, narrates and repeats itself in an emergent nonlinear manner? Does the life-world demand relational exploration, but with little promise of providing stability, permanence or order? Can 'organization' be adequately represented, or is it another word for aliveness? Is it a life-force that cannot be objectified? Can the problem of defining and knowing 'organization' be solved via description, classification and explanation; or is the problem ontological? Does human interaction exist inside what is called 'organization'? If there is no possible outside from which 'organization' can be known, then organization is just another word for the *relationality* --- that is, an irreducible quality of human interaction. Organization may not be something we can have --- for instance, as an object of knowledge, but something we are -- i.e., as an act of empathy (Thompson, 2001).

Epoché --- bracketing of the natural attitude and further

Phenomenology has always entailed² procedural techniques of research --- that is, step-by-step procedures of investigation. From Husserl onwards, the return to things them selves, has had to be accomplished via research steps. Phenomenology is a process

approach --- it does not have an object of study of its own --- like the unconscious for psychoanalysis, or bureaucracy for Weber. Contemporary phenomenology describes the four steps to social investigation (Depraz et al, 2002) as:

1. First of all there is *pairing* (paarung). This involves the coupling of one and (an)other living being. The pregiveness of opinions, assumptions and normality has to be abrogated if experience, awareness and interaction are to re-emerge. The conscious mind is enslaved in habit and prejudice. The natural attitude of everyday doxa – or opinion and routine --- prescribes what is, what ought to be, and what can be done. Real contact with (an)Other is blocked by beliefs, practices and preconceptions. Most of the time, we pass through life without experiencing --- we drive on automatic pilot, we cook without reflecting, we answer the telephone without thinking about it, etcetera. It would be far too tiring to consciously interact with every circumstance, task, or other. By assuming determinism, materialism and mechanistic solutions, we may gain 'certainty'; but we lose experiential contact. When we take things for granted, we do not interact with them --- we reduce the 'other' to a pre-given notion. Only by freeing ourselves from these alienating practices, does experience (re-)become possible. The escape from doxa requires an initial suspension of mindfulness --- it requires that we look afresh, as if for the first time, at the other. This entails a process of pairing --- of meeting the other, of linking to the other, and of exploring relationship(s).

2. Second, the subject has to change radically in its attitude to the observed, researched or investigated. The (imaginary) movement of relatedness from the researcher to the other reveals the other's life-world. Not just the

outward behaviors of the other or one's own categories of constituting the other are examined; the other is allowed to appear in researcher awareness. There is movement from here to there --- perspective, awareness and attention for the other are experienced. The other is not just a spectral object, but is seen as (an)Other being in the world. The researcher attempts to make good accounts of experiencing other as (an)Other. Recognition of alterity or difference is the starting point to the investigation. Because the researcher welcomes it, fundamental otherness is perceived. The researcher's openness to awareness, makes the perception of the other possible. The researcher's goal is to perceive the other in its very flesh or aliveness. Research here is the lived act of (consciously) intending the other.

3. 3. In the third stage, the researcher loses her/his distance from the researched. Research becomes the gaze of existential recognition or an appeal to shared consciousness. The effect(s) of connectivity become evident and are thematized and explored. In the second stage the researcher's sensitivity or ability to connect to the situation of (an)Other was crucial. In the third stage, these relationships are made explicit. The researched is an acknowledged other to the researcher, and the researcher is another to the researched. Perspectives have become fluid, interactive, interchangeable and/or mutual. Difference and/or otherness can now be explored in dialogic interaction. Researcher and researched know that they are empathetically perceiving and perceived. The result of the second phase is that relationship is self-consciously acknowledged as crucial to knowing. The third phase takes the second phase explicitly into reckoning and builds upon this awareness. The first-person singular is transcended in a process of connecting, narrating and reflecting. Interaction as intentional

relationship is internalized in the research. Research is now a matter of mutual relationship --- the gaze of recognition, acknowledgement and empathy comes to the fore. Researcher and researched grasp one another and themselves as part of an interactive intersubjective world. The lived body or flesh of existence is crucial to this knowing. Such knowing is part and parcel of human circumstance, awareness and interaction --- the objectification or alienation of knowing is overcome.

While these first three steps are (more or less) Husserlian --- that is, (1) the escape from the natural attitude of common sense prejudices or doxa; (2) the researcher's radical cognitive shift from categories, systems and models, to the active mental reconstitution of the researched as living other; and (3) the re-absorption of the suspension of normality and the redirection of awareness in new shared living consciousness; the fourth step is contemporary (Spiegelberg, 1982; Moran, 2000; Sokolowski, 2000).

1. The ethics of relationship become crucial. Traditional research prioritizes reason over feeling; but this phase of phenomenological investigation emphasizes empathy and respect for others. 'Researcher' and 'researched' are intellectual artifacts --- but, in the phenomenological experience of the flesh of existence, there is primary shared aliveness. The conceptual imputation of 'ego' --- that is, of barriers, limits and restrictions, is characteristic of contemporary society. Opening awareness to intersubjectivity destabilizes such boundary setting. Self and world, I and other, foreground and background, all meet in the interaction of researcher and researched, self and anOther. As Levinas has argued, self is called into life by the gaze of the other -- selfhood is a product of interaction, relationship and shared existence

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(Levinas, 1998). The 'I' or 'mine' exists via the acknowledgement, love and support of others. If there are no caring parents, peers, or others, the child perishes – if not physically, then mentally. Human existence is a product of co-evolution, i.e. of sharing and cared-for interaction. I-ness and otherness interact, co-exist and are mutually constitutive. Research that honors both ipseity and alterity reflects the living flesh of existence. Such research is grounded in an originary intersubjectivity, which precedes divisions into subject/object or self/other. This is lifeworld research --- i.e. research that takes place in the flesh of shared living existence; wherein first-person methods (i.e. what the researcher does) lead to experiential (or intuitive) awareness (Husserl, 1970).

Practicing phenomenology

The lifeworld (re-)interpretation of Husserl's phenomenology, was first championed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and has been furthered by Michel Henry. There have been four generations of phenomenological thought. The first, Husserlian, focused on achieving knowledge --- how can the known be freed of prejudice, unwarranted assumptions, and downright blindness? The second generation explored the relationship between the known and the knower in perception --- with perception understood to be basic to all knowledge. The radical interrelatedness of subject/object, perceived/perceiver, and self/world, were focused upon. Philosophers such as Heidegger attended to the *being* of the knower and the known, fostering existentialism; while thinkers such as Merleau-Ponty described the lifeworld of awareness, perception and sense-making. Third generation phenomenology pursued the theme of the social nature of perception. Knowing is relational, interactive and shared. Human perception requires consciousness, but relationship, co-evolution and being-together, are crucial to the nature, possibilities, and establishment of

consciousness. Finally, fourth generation phenomenology currently investigates the commonality between the world and subject, or the material and the human. Via consciousness studies and complexity theory the old dichotomies are questioned. Mind and body, brain and consciousness as seen through the perspective of *relationality* are inter-dependent, co-evolutionary and interactive.

The complex interconnectivity and dialogic structure of the brain, parallels the communicative intricacy of language and sociability. The material, conscious, and social, aggregation levels are explored, not as contradictory or mutually exclusive, but as fundamentally complementary and parallel. Human consciousness is material; the brain is dialogic; substance (hyle) complexifies. *Relationality* applies across and between the various levels. Common principles of *relationality* may apply on the material, conscious, and social levels.

Contemporary reflection on *relationality*, especially of the relationship between organization and phenomenology, is embedded in third generation phenomenology, and a position close to Michel Henry's work. Thus, there is the need to pick up the debate at that stage (Henry, 1963 & 1988). Key issues that need to be explored in the relationship(s) between third and fourth generation phenomenology include: (1) what are (appropriate) first-person research methods, (2) how should we (in this context) understand selfhood or ipseity, and (3) what would a phenomenology of organization look like?

1. First person research methods un-learn the natural attitude wherein industrial and administrative work systems are objectively and ideally rational. Knowledge of the taken-for-granted reality of organization --- defined in terms of specific determinate ends --- is opened up by dis-ordering the apparent order. The closed nature of quotidian practical consciousness is di-verted ---

that is, divided, made multiple, directed elsewhere. In the study of organizations, the self-evidence of the functional order has to be shattered. For instance, to turn to a field of illustration that will return throughout the rest of this article, old age homes do not just provide goods and services to the infirm elderly; they actively constitute what it is to be human. They produce and re-produce dependence, misery and professional dominance. Persons who are chronically ill, with on average two and a half years to live, are placed in a system where attention is earned by complaining (suffering), where passivity is demanded of them (in everything from what you get to eat, to when and how often you are washed, to what you are allowed to do all day), and where expertise (or people in white coats) has all the power. The elderly can only make sense of themselves as passive, dying and dependent. First person research methods investigate experiencing – or the *being* of the everyday -- and would not just reproduce the ready-made explanations, identities or concepts on offer for consumption. Old age homes all claim to *care* for the elderly. But their rules of behavior censor and exclude care, involvement or activity. Old age care produces a flow of convenient fictions --- the phenomenological researcher is open to the feelings, sentiments and the specificity of the researched. Such a researcher, penetrates the energies, complexity and undivided wholeness, which lies beneath the self-serving rational gloss. The elderly and their bedside staff form a 'human production system' of abject existence. An episteme of pleasure, delight and activity that rewards initiative and discourages passivity, would be a radical alternative possibility. Having achieved *learned ignorance* by abandoning the (institutional) natural attitude, the researcher can re-conceptualize care as pleasure, by exploring the 'whatever-could-be'.

2. Selfhood or ipseity stresses that despite constant change, there is a continuity of identity --- which is a crucial phenomenological issue. The pairing of involvements is the beginning to the study of the other. Another as what appears, is a phenomena of researcher (inward) reflection, and of (self-) revelation. At issue is the living another seen as richly, complexly, and dynamically as possible. But it is another in the consciousness of a researcher. Via sensitivity and affectivity, another is approached empathically, in a first-person perspective. In such research, the self-givenness or self-referentiality of the researcher plays a key role. This is not to assert that on the pre-reflective or pre-conscious level of *life* itself, that the 'ego' exists. But on the phenomenological (social or organizational) research level, there is the flow of narrative, attention and consciousness. Researcher awareness involves multiple (roles), authored (language), and is under constant revision (circumstance). It is interwoven in text(s) and embedded in sense-making (culture). But researcher intentionality can give organization, meaning, and structure, to observation -- insofar as the escape from the 'natural attitude' is possible. Researcher interiority is a crucial source of feeling, belonging, and awareness --- another is discovered via empathy. As phenomenological research proceeds, the openness of researcher consciousness recedes and dialogic awareness takes over. Awareness of another – as observed and studied, but also in dialogue and interaction --- demands mind or consciousness (Thompson ed. 2001 & 2005). The divide between openness to see, and empathy to dialogue, is not a rigid but an iterative process. Immediate presence always includes some tacit self-awareness --- i.e. the self-givenness of consciousness. In what is experienced,

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there is always (some) first-person givenness. In the *mineness* of research, there is self-referentiality. This minimal self can, according to phenomenology, supercede the natural attitude and choose for openness to another. Consciousness can be given to itself: (1) as open to the conceptual ready-mades of institutionalized thought, or (2) as attached to undifferentiated forces of existence and becoming (and, of course everything in between). The researcher can perceive an undivided wholeness, between the plight of the elderly, and her or his existence. Elderly care can be thought of as a problem for cost-benefit analysis, requiring efficiency studies that are part and parcel of the problem of keeping government budgets under control. Or, in essence, how do we get necessary care at the best price, delivered where it is needed? But elderly care can also touch on issues of mortality, self-awareness and existential identity. Institutionalized thought makes excrement, dirt, and rude energies invisible. In self(-awareness) perception, the flow, transience, and incompleteness, of dynamic and interactive circumstances, is or is not acknowledged. Phenomenology is all about the self's willingness and ability for openness, empathy, and to see (as being seen).

3. A phenomenology of organization would focus on the antimony between *life* and *representation*. Henry (re-) labels the 'natural attitude', 'representation'; which is the opposite pole to openness and dialogic awareness or 'life'. Not what appears is crucial, but the relationality or process of appearing. The world in the natural attitude may be a system of categories and bounded entities; alternatively, self and other, observer and observed, can be acknowledged to exist dynamically, as mutable interrelations, interchanges and interactions. Awareness of another occurs between the one and the other in

creative linked inter-space. For Henry, phenomenology is not focused on the exteriority of appearances --- that is on the seen, observed and visible; but on radically immanent sensation(s) of aliveness --- from suffering, to joy. The one and the other are capable of feeling(s) – human existence is not blind, impersonal and abstract; but felt, experiential, and existential. In the conceptualization of organizations as rational, purposeful and self-consistent; human immediacy, life-world, and becoming, are forgotten. In organizational studies, lived-work is subsumed to economic reality. In managerial and business representation, the flesh of concrete existence is abstracted away --- the corporeal subjectivity of lived-work is rejected. Concrete human existence is negated. Organizational rationality defined in terms of profit; competitive advantage and economic growth reign. 'Technique' as the logic of organizational 'representation' deals in anonymous forces and standardized activity, realized for instance in knowledge management. 'Work' as understood in the 19th century theories of Marx --- refers to physical hard labor, which is individual and very physically active (Henry, 1976a, 1976b, 1983). The 'subjective force of living work' is not (sufficiently) studied in organizational studies, which almost always avoids physical labor and the flesh of immanence. 'Objectivity', or organization seen at a distance, is an abstraction. In specific and finite life, there is no such thing as a 'society' or 'organization'. These 'convenient fictions' of generic, ideally rational, corporate production, absorb the contents of the human world into their 'natural attitude'. What is represented is abstract, generalized and devoid of life's specificity. The outside, or behavior of organization, is representable; the inside or life of circumstances, is not. Abstract rules and system logic are portrayed as self-

organizing. For instance, in most old age homes the rules about diet, pets, going out for walks, visitors, etcetera are not grounded in the needs or desires of the specific persons or circumstances. The negation of actual life destroys intersubjectivity --- the persons involved do not address one another or take responsibility for their own actions. When someone {as in Henry's novel *Le fils du roi*} does try to rouse the victims of institutionalization out of their stupor, and to reconnect them with their zest for life, capacity for joy and ability to interact; malevolent medical, administrative and professional staff cannot bear to witness the revitalization and try to stop it. Organization acts against life when its abstractions put the lived flesh of sociability – i.e. possibilities for contact, physical relatedness and the logic of the concrete ---- out of action. In the contemporary, the blind growth of social and economic technique(s) via abstract representation has more power than has shared existence. This is a life-denying logic, which is truly a sort of 'barbarism' (Henry, 1987 & 1990). Phenomenological organizational studies has to be more committed to life's energy, than to representation's power. Hereby, it becomes an engaged and partisan practice, acting in defense of the flesh of life.

New steps: Third and fourth generation phenomenological studies

The goal of phenomenology is to reveal the originatory flesh of life prior to objectified or reified representation --- this is to be achieved by taking distance from the natural attitude, and entering intersubjective contact with another. The flesh of life is invisible by its nature – it never appears in the exteriority of objectification. The flesh of life is in-between --- found in the connecting and disconnecting of self and other; and in the fluctuating self-organization of subject and object. It is preconscious and relational. Human existence is formatively and

constitutively intersubjective --- humans can only exist if cared for and human social existence is produced by 'extelligence' --- i.e. via the otherness of knowledge, culture and language. Human existence precedes the duality of self and other. Phenomenology, in the first research phase, brackets the 'self / other' divide in order to get beyond the natural attitude and to encounter another. In its second research phase, it develops empathy as a way of knowing another. Only in the third research phase, is the constitutive role of the 'gaze' acknowledged wherein subject and object are co-generative. Thus, phenomenology takes a fairly long route to get to an overt awareness of subject/object dialogue, or full-fledged and mutual interaction. Evidently it takes a lot of work to abandon the spectral perspective wherein 'knowledge' is thought to be external or seen, observed and objective. The 'known' as other, alien and detached, is a style of representation or a theoretical imputation.

There is no intrinsically existent 'I' or 'other', or 'subject' versus 'object'. But there is a stream of consciousness or a felt interiority of being and of consciousness. These can share in the flesh of the world, as they are inward and outward, reflexive and object-directed. 'I-ness' and 'other-ness' are not mutually exclusive, conflictual or incommensurable. Self and other are mutually constituted – openness and circumstance, intentionality and technique, subject and object, exist in the light of one another. Self-consciousness and another exist in each other's gaze ---- world and awareness are co-determined and developed through interchange, co-evolution and interaction. Phenomenology assumes empathy or the researcher's ability to encounter another. The One and the Other belong to a common relational logic where they are one another's foreground and background. They share the same flesh of the world and can interact by exchanging gazes. Contemporary organizations stress competition, jealousy and rivalry, repressing sharing, dialogue and mutuality. Because of this, they cannot properly value the (bodily) experience of feeling and being felt –

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epitomized by one person who touches another, revealing the common flesh of their lived bodies.

Reflection of the lived body cannot survive if made logocentric – shared empathy, or touching and being touched, are interactive achievements (Derrida, 1980). In fact, mind/body integration develops through a fairly long process of social maturation and shared learning. Psychology in the natural attitude posits egocentric monads that do, or do not (in maturation) achieve (ethical or altruistic) sociability. According to this psychology, a self has to develop in the infant before messages, information and communication can be exchanged. An egoistic self that chooses to send or receive, is prioritized ---- first there has to be a communicative *homo economicus* before there can be anything else. But contemporary cognitive science makes it clear that this psychology reiterates market capitalism more than it accurately describes human development. An attitude, or emotion, can be passed to newborn infants --- in some cases even less than an hour old, and they imitate facial gestures in response. Thus, primary sociability, is not learned --- openness to another is inherent. Concepts of 'self' and 'other', identity and awareness --- that is, of personhood; all follow (much) later. From the start, there is intercorporeality --- the self and the other are combined in the flesh of life. In the pre-linguistic phase, there is already communication. Differentiation into self and other is not primary; interactive relationship is prior. As recent research has made evident, humans are equipped with 'mirror neurons' --- neurons that display the same pattern of activity in response to the subject's actions as in response to another's performance of these actions. Existence is not characterized by logocentric action --- from perception (stimulus) to recognition (response); but by a relationship of direct immediate responsiveness. It is a responsiveness that is fundamentally equal for oneself as for the other. Mainstream (behaviorist) psychology assumed that the other could only be perceived from an egocentric position.

Spontaneous and originatory pairing, or coupling, was *a priori* ruled-out. But consciousness is not based on the rational processes of monads, or on a model of sending and of receiving of messages. Infants recognize and dialogue (with gestures) and with other's intentions, long before they develop (spoken) language. It seems likely that intersubjective interaction is the ground to language and not vice versa. Life does not begin with the self and work outwards to interaction; life is inherently open, responsive and interactive. There are ample pre-reflective couplings, long before a conscious idea of the self develops. Intersubjective openness is inherent and includes awareness of the other's awareness of one's self. For there to be interaction, the one must feel the presence of the other, and perceive that the other is aware of her or his presence. Interaction requires exchanged or shared presence, to be sustained. And this is exactly what occurs. In organizational studies this relationship has been called (by Weick) the 'double interact'. It is important to note that such a relationship is inherently human and its absence is ontogenetically unnatural. Thus we can justifiably speak of *à priori* responsiveness of the one to the other, and of both, to their relatedness.

The inherent open intersubjectivity of humans is emergent --- that is, it develops, changes and complexifies, in a nonlinear and interactive manner. The self knows many inner splittings or inner openings --- that is, processes of joining and separating, merging and opposing, empathizing and retreating. Organization --- defined as chains of double interact(s) --- is inherent and inevitable. But the quality of empathy, or the way the common flesh of existence is (or is not) shared, is highly variable. Logocentrism that prioritizes a monadic and rational self, which is inevitably egocentric, is a life-denying conceptualization. It rejects the primacy of interrelationship and attempts to repress empathy. Recognizing that inherent empathy is constitutive to human existence, makes relatedness, ethics, and care, much more

self-evident. Bonding and coupling are inherently developmental; the antithesis between self and other is developmentally illogical. Sociability stretches awareness and gives impetus to development. Human social development involves a process of ever-larger scales and intensities of interaction and cooperation.

In (re-)presentation there are entities and boundaries, objects and identities; instead of flux, flow and emergence. Michel Henry's celebration of Kandinsky (*Voir l'invisible*) argues that Kandinsky's construction and deconstruction of colors and shapes expresses the force of the invisible (Henry, 1988). Not objects that can be re-presented, but emotional plenitude, spiritual necessity, and emerging turbulence, are painted. What is indicated are the generative forces of pre-defined and pre-conscious existence. Kandinsky's fundamental agitation without referentiality is a precondition to the entities, distinctions, and identities of everyday existence. The artist expresses the invisible flesh of connection, meaning and selfhood. Flesh is not an experience of objects. Kandinsky's oscillations of color and form, mirror the co-existing affects, feelings, and tones of the flesh of existence. In his art, life's indefatigable creativity, auto-differentiation and energy, resonate.

Phenomenology stops us from plunging back into unreflective doxa or life-at-hand. It forms a barrier to existence as technique. The fundamental sociability, constitutive of human survival and the care inherent to the very possibility of individualization, is spotlighted. The ethics of empathy is generative and crucial to humanity's co-evolutionary dynamism. Subject/object interaction functions in opposition to the logocentric repression of interrelationship. Subject/object interaction is, at least in part, indeterminate, unpredictable, and creative. Logocentric order attempts to ban irrationality and chaos -- it assumes that activity has to be coordinated, efficient and controlled. But living interaction defers meaning ---- happenstance, serendipity and indeterminacy are common. In

life's processes of engagement, results are often unclear. In genuine dialogue, there is 'deference'; --- i.e. no one predetermines the outcomes. *Différance* --- or the deferrals of respect and openness, are inherent to such interaction (Derrida, 1982). Phenomenology rejects logocentric re-presentation (as in the natural attitude) in order to embrace dynamic and mutable interaction. But phenomenology's championing of life-world processes, is under pressure. For instance, the administrative systems and rule-governed regulations of old age care are much more logocentric now than they were only a few years ago. Care has to be tabulated in 'care-minutes' and clients categorized in 'needs categories'. Insurance payments are based on objectified representations that are entirely indifferent to shared experience or intersubjective existence. Senile persons can experience daily showering as torture; but 'good care' requires it. Partying (often) so strongly reduces medicine use, that it is highly cost efficient --- but try and put a rented elephant or a hired clown onto your medication budget.

Phenomenology brings the researcher closer to the researched --- to what is experienced, desired and valued. And because phenomenology is based on empathy, the quality of the researcher/researched relationship is crucial. Phenomenological research if it is not to become self-contradictory, must not be governed by logocentric techniques or protocols. But if phenomenology is truly ethical --- it must, not only take responsibility for the researcher/researched relationship, but also take responsibility for what it does with its descriptive results. Empathy brings responsibility. Acknowledging, investigating, and experiencing self/other bonds leads to a form of social knowledge that often calls for action. For instance, if old age persons hate standardized hospital-like surroundings, why can they not have personal space, or nursing-help dressed in bright joyful colors, or lots of curios and personal souvenirs about them? Phenomenology often remains too reflective, unable to couple action and change, to what it has to offer in awareness.

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The prescriptive powerlessness of phenomenology is its key weakness. As long as no actionable statements emerge from its research, no phenomenological organizational studies is likely to develop.

Phenomenology attempts to un-know the logocentric denial of self/other, subject/object, and consciousness/world interaction, commonplace in administrative-economic rationality. Human sociability in the flesh of existence, inherently involves complex interaction. Care, learning and communication, require organizing. Organizing is characterized by a conscious or social pre-structure --- that is, efficacy or life-force prior to individualization, or to naming, or to experience. Fourth generation phenomenology explores the dynamic power of human existence prior to: the 'I' and the 'other', the 'self' and the 'object', the 'body' and the 'world'. Preceding the distinctions that delineate the bipolar and bounded entities, there is the raw complexity, noise, or energy, of pure potential. Before locatable distinctions or defined locations, there already is energy, duration or vitality that separates and joins the material mass of existence. These connections and disconnections are experientially endangered by logocentric or natural attitude re-presentation.

I have proposed to view phenomenological research as a complex adaptive system (Letiche, 2000 & 2001). Such a system is nonlinear, dynamic and emergent. It, so-called 'self-organizes', which means spontaneously dialogues with, and in, its environment, taking on differing identities and forms, dependent on its relationships to others, events and change. Its interface between subject and object, and the effects foreground and background have on it, constantly circumstantially shift. Order is not entropy; its *relationality*, as Robert Cooper calls it, is dynamic, creative and full of movement (Cooper, 2005). Phenomenology provides a relational view of human perception, selfhood and interaction; wherein empathy and the shared flesh of existence are crucial terms. These terms describe inherent dimensions of

(inter-)relationship and matching forms of developmental intersubjectivity. But complexity theory's conceptualization of personhood, and of consciousness and of one-on-one interaction, has been inadequate. Complexity theory, much more than phenomenology, has been willing to make statements about organizing. It has called for interactive logic and the honoring of relationality in interaction. It has been willing to abhor the logocentric repression of life-force, and to champion generative or constitutive relationship(s). Phenomenology can bring us much closer to lived existence and to experiential relationship(s). But it tends to get lost in the specific and particular. But complexity theory has been too willing to generalize --- for instance, about self-organization; and it has been somewhat facile in its willingness to be prescriptive. Complementarity needs to be sought between phenomenology's care and accuracy, and complexity theory's systemic and dynamic focus.

What Nathelie Depraz and Evan Thompson are doing in fourth generation phenomenology is exploring the radical *relationality*, of material existence, of complexity and complexification, of sociability and dialogic interaction, and of consciousness and culture. The *relationality* of each element potentially resembles and complements the activity of the others. Such a phenomenology is a much more radical form of process thinking than what preceded it. For the (organization) researcher, such a radical version of *relationality* makes the logocentric position of the researcher-observer impossible. Researchers become just as much a part of the flow of phenomenological *relationality* as are anything or any one else. This makes the ethics of research deeply problematic --- if there is no point, outside of events from which consequentialism can be launched, how does the researcher initiate and/or maintain his or her position or perspective? In this article, I have made use of criteria of immediate shared sociability, characteristic of third generation phenomenology, as an ethical research

compass. But my reaction(s) to the care of the aged were grounded in an intuitive sociability of interrelatedness, which is fragile. A basic ethical stance to old age care emerged in my illustrations. Organizational studies is sometimes far too uncritical of management practice, and sometimes it is philosophically and ethically insightful without being pragmatically pertinent. When you know that old age care should support quality of life and that it does not do so, you need to take action. When you realize that the best thing you can do for the chronically ill is to bring enjoyment, sociability and activity so they (at least momentarily) can forget their ills, you grasp a possibility for designing relevant care. If you see the need to encourage and reward pleasure and not suffering or complaining, you want to do just that. Phenomenology, intersubjectively reveals situations of life and creates empathic knowledge, but this implies responsibility. Having come close to another, one must requite the resulting responsibility. Phenomenology reveals *relationality*, but needs to connect what it reveals to action(s) if it is not to destroy its legitimacy in an unethical self-contradiction, which betrays the very empathy which it claims to make use of. Phenomenology succeeds via empathy, but that *relationality* is not ethically neutral; it requires commitment, action and deeds. Depraz and Thompson in fourth generation phenomenology investigate a radical materialist (or connectionist) phenomenology, wherein matter / substance / being / existence, all lead to event, process, polyphony and meaning. The *relationality* of empathy and fundamental sociability, has proven very difficult to handle, while the *relationality* of the *flesh of life* is even ~~much~~ more demanding. Thus, *having foresworn the logocentric fallacy and learned to see research as a complex social process, can relational consciousness and ethics prevail, and if so how?*

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