Catholic University of Portugal
School of Human Sciences
Research Center for Communication and Culture

Phenomenology, Organisation and Technology

Editors
Lucas Introna
Fernando Ilharco
Eric Faï
Editors

Lucas Introna is Professor of Technology, Organisation and Ethics at Lancaster University. His research interest is the social study of information technology and its consequences for society. In particular he is concerned with the ethics and politics of technology. He is co-editor Ethics and Information Technology, associate editor of Management Information Systems Quarterly and a founding member of the International Society for Ethics and Information Technology (INSEIT). Email: l.introna@lancaster.ac.uk; http://www.lums.lancs.ac.uk/owt/profiles/119/

Fernando Ilharco is Assistant Professor of the Catholic University of Portugal (UCP), Lisbon, where he is Director of the Ph.D. programme in Communication Sciences. He holds a Ph.D. by the London School of Economics (LSE), (2002), and a MBA by the business school (FCEE) of UCP (1993). Since his Ph.D., Ilharco has been publishing regularly in academic journals and books. His areas of interest are (i) the technological/cultural contexts of contemporary organisational action and (ii) leadership, group development and change. His research approach is a phenomenological one (work of Heidegger, Husserl and Merleau-Ponty), with linkages to the complexity paradigm. Email: ilharco@fch.ucp.pt Personal site: www.ilharco.com

Eric Faÿ is a professor of ‘anthropology and management’ and ‘decision making’ at the EM LYON Business School. He holds a PhD in Management Science. His ongoing research interest in the phenomenology of life and psychoanalysis is a way to account for the speech, suffering and living dynamics of today's subject at work. His recent publications include “Derision and Management” Organization, 15 (6); “Life, speech and reason. A phenomenology of open deliberation” Ephemera 5 (3) and Information, parole et délibération. L’entreprise et la question de l’homme. Les Presses de l’Université Laval, Québec, 2004. He has guest-edited with Philippe Riot the special issue “Phenomenogical approaches to Work, Life and Responsibility” of Society and Business Review, 2 (2). Email: fay@em-lyon.com
Índice

Foreword
Lucas Introna, Fernando Ilharco and Eric Faÿ 9

I – Phenomenology/Approaches

Introduction 17

1. The Phenomenological Approach: an Introduction
Dermot Moran 21

2. Understanding Phenomenology:
the Use of Phenomenology in the Social Study of Technology
Lucas Introna 43

3. How To Do Phenomenology?
Core Moments and Techniques of the Approach
Fernando Ilharco 61

4. The Duplicity of Phenomenality:
New Perspectives on Ontology and Action
Eric Faÿ 81

5. Intentionality and Intuition: an Introduction
to the Cornerstones of Phenomenological Epistemology
Ion Georgiou 93

6. From ‘Realism’ to ‘Actualism’ in Information Systems:
Phenomenologically Revisiting IS Management
and Organizational Learning
Ken Uchiyama 123
II – Phenomenology/Organisation

Introduction 139

7. Companies are Works:
Strategy as Deconstruction and Reconstruction of a World 143
Louise Whittaker and Dominik Heil

8. Authenticity in Organisation:
Overcoming the Strategy/Structure Cartesian Split in Organisations 165
Fernando Ilharco

9. On the Mystery of the Other and Diversity Management 187
Bogdan Costea and Lucas Introna

10. Open Deliberation, a Path from Uncertainty to Action. Phenomenology and Action Research 207
Eric Faÿ

11. Toward a Phenomenology of ‘Collegiality’ 227
Walter Lammi

12. Phenomenology, Conceptual History and the Interpretation of Managerial Discourses 251
Bogdan Costea, Norman Crump and John Holm

III – Phenomenology/Technology

Introduction 277

13. Community and Virtual Strangers 281
Lucas Introna and Martin Brigham

14. Toward a Phenomenology of Computer-Worlds 295
Michael Waltemathe

15. Life-World and Information Technology: a Habermasian Approach 315
Bernd Carsten Stahl
16. Technology in the Life-World: Over-extended Zones of Operation
Ian Beeson

17. A Search for Human Substance in Information Systems Design: a Phenomenological Reflection on Humanising Information Systems
Hannakaisa Isomäki

Mimosa Pursiainen
Foreword

This book is first and foremostly about phenomenology, but not phenomenology for its own sake. It is about what the phenomenological perspective or orientation can contribute to our attempts to make sense of complex contemporary phenomena such as the lived experience of technology and management in contemporary organisations and organisational practices. But why phenomenology one might ask? We would suggest that phenomenology is necessary because, as Dermot Moran writes in Chapter 1, it aims to be a radical foundation for our knowledge of the world – it aims “to get an unprejudiced, descriptive account of them [of the phenomena of the world as it manifests itself to us], alert to the precise manner in which meaning emerges or is made manifest in the experience of these phenomena”. We would further suggest that it is also because phenomenology, as Harman (2002) expresses it so vividly, “aspires never to be stupefied by the simple presence of any phenomenon; rather this method earns its living by gradually drawing out the countless layers of categorical structures implicit in the merest appearance. In this way, it pursues the meaning of the phenomenon” (p.26). Differently stated: phenomenology seeks to uncover the categorical structures (wherever or whatever they are) that renders the appearance of the phenomenon possible as that which it is. The meaning of the phenomenon is precisely that which makes it possible to be, or become present to and for us as the phenomenon that it is. Without grasping the meaning of the phenomenon we will forever be caught in the seduction of that which is merely present, on the surface of the world as it were, as it appears to us—not just through our sense but also through all our other sensing devices (theories, measurements, questions, observations, etc.). In our scientific practice we may produce endless amounts of empirical data yet these things that appear through our observations lack sense—they are without meaning; they miss their connection with the lived-world and become lifeless. In our journals we have a multiplicity of abstract concepts and theories, supported by ‘rich data’, yet these studies seem to leave the reality of life, the meaning itself, undisturbed. Phenomenology continually strives to ‘uncover’ this assumed meaning by enquiring about the conditions of possibility of that which appears.

Thus, the purpose of this book is to turn back and orient ourselves towards the ongoing meaningful and subjectively lived experience of technology and management in organisations—to return to the (meaning of) things themselves. Not that all the authors in this book agree in detail on what phenomenology is and how it should
be pursued. Nevertheless, there are in all these chapters a fundamental commitment “never to be stupefied by the simple presence of any phenomenon”, and to “pursue the meaning of the phenomenon”, wherever it goes. As Wittgenstein (1965) and Heidegger, amongst others, suggested, one should wonder at the world: “wonder that a world is worldling around us at all, that there are beings rather than nothing, that things are and we ourselves are in their midst, that we ourselves are and yet barely know who we are, and barely know that we do not know all this” (Heidegger)\(^1\).

This was indeed the desire that underpinned the creation of the workgroup on Phenomenology, Organisation and Technology (POT), with its inaugural meeting in London in 2001. The chapters in this book are a selection of the papers presented at our POT workshops over these last six years\(^2\).

One of the enduring concerns for the group is the question of phenomenology itself. It is often very difficult to find an accessible account of phenomenology. Part I of this book grapples with the question of what phenomenology is and how it might be used to orient ourselves towards the world as we conduct ourselves as ‘researchers’. This is a question that needs constant renewal and reflection as the phenomenological tradition develops and transforms itself. This first part of the book starts with an excellent chapter by Dermot Moran. His chapter provides a useful historical analysis of phenomenology as an important movement in the history of ideas that continues to exert its influence directly and indirectly in a variety of disciplines. His chapter is followed by a chapter by Lucas Introna who usefully introduces to some of the key ideas in phenomenology and shows how these have influenced the social study of technology. Next, Fernando Ilharco offers a succinct summary of the classical phenomenological method using the Husserlian methodological ‘steps’. He reinterprets these steps to include some of the important Heideggerian insights. Ilharco offers us an original account and a useful methodology. Following this, Eric Faÿ provides an enlightening discussion of phenomenology drawing on the work of Michel Henry to argue for the importance of returning to life itself in our attempts to make sense of organisational landscapes. Ion Georgiou provides a very good and accessible introduction to the classical Husserlian view of intentionality and intuition. His discussion is illuminating in understanding the basic transcendental orientation of phenomenology. The first part is concluded

\(^1\) Hölderlin’s Hymn “Andenken”, in Gesamtausgabe 52, p.64 (Frankfurt and Main: Vittorio Klaustermann, 1976), in Polt 1999.

\(^2\) POT 1 in London (GB), POT 2 in Lisbon (PT), POT 3 in Rovaniemi (FI), POT 4 in Lyon (FR), POT 5 in Amsterdam (NL), POT 6 in Oxford (GB).
with an interesting and somewhat different account of phenomenology through the notion of ‘actuality’ by Ken Uchiyama.

Part II proceeds to take a phenomenological orientation towards a variety of organisational phenomena in diverse and informative ways. The first two chapters address the phenomenon of strategy, offering unexpected insights. Dominik Heil and Louise Whittaker, in Chapter 7, point out that companies give rise to worlds. Through a Heideggerian perspective, the authors show a way of ‘doing’ strategy by lending resolve to an existing and ongoing process of sense making. In Chapter 8, Fernando Ilharco provides an analysis of key texts on strategy with the aim to uncover that which is essential to ‘that thing called strategy’. In Chapter 9, Bogdan Costea and Lucas Introna address head on the increasingly prevalent issue of ‘diversity management’. Is it possible to ‘manage’ human diversity? The authors argue lucidly that ‘diversity management’ transforms the elementary lived experience of self and other into a problem. Using elements of Heidegger and Levinas philosophical anthropologies, Costea and Introna suggest that the encounter of the Other, as Other, is at the core of sociality and is the very source of the phenomenon of organising. In Chapter 10, Eric Faÿ draws on a two-year action-research project to argue that deliberation as ‘speaking speech’ is at the heart of organizing. He argues, after Michel Henry, that ‘speaking speech’ not only manifests a new world but also, through affectivity, manifests life itself. This is followed in Chapter 11 with a carefully crafted text by Walter Lammi. The author explores ways in which members of an organization, a university in this case, manoeuvre for their own perceived benefit. Lammi guides the reader through an enlightening account of ‘collegiality’, suggesting, in conclusion of the chapter, that phenomenology is in the end not about applying “theory” to “practice”. In Chapter 12, the concluding chapter of Part II, Bogdan Costea presents an in-depth critical examination of modern management discourses that focus on the individual, on commitment, autonomy, and creativity: “from self-affirmation economic value will emerge” – so it would seem, or at least until you read Costea’s analysis.

The focus of Part III is our condition of being immersed in an increasingly technologically textured life-world. Computer and network mediated communication changes dramatically the way phenomena appear to us and the way we appear to others. The authors of this section bring very diverse and illuminating views to this new technologically textured world. In the first chapter, Lucas Introna, referring to Heidegger and Levinas, wonders how it is possible to create communities in the age of virtuality. The issue underlying this compelling chapter is no less than the emergence of a new way of living universality. From another viewpoint, Michael Waltematthe, departing from Alfred Schutz’s arguments and concepts, interestingly
argues that computer worlds are provinces of reality which combine the world of daily life and the worlds of phantasms and play. In this context, Bernd Carsten Stahl, in Chapter 15, asks what the 'becoming of rationality' is in today's technological world. This question seems most pertinent. Drawing on Habermas, he provides valuable insights which prompts one to ask the following crucial question: do these technologies expand a collective and shared life-world; or alternatively, do they lead to confusion by creating diverging life-worlds? Ian Besson, in Chapter 16, drawing on Schutz and Luckman’s “structures of the life-world” asks similar questions but in a different direction. He very helpfully raises the practical and moral issues of working through ‘over-extended zones of operation’ and suggests some answers in the direction of Borgmann’s notion of ‘focal practices’. Another interesting angle is to ask, as Hannakaisa Isomäki does in Chapter 17, how the designers of information systems or infrastructures view the human beings they are designing for. The answer may appear worrying: they generally view human beings as non-human phenomena or in terms of functional ‘software’. This answer points us to the ways we may be ‘moulded’ by software or by technological networks. In turn, our body immersed in these networks gains extended power. Such power over our body or from our body in-forms thus our ‘cyborg style’, this is what Mimosa Pursiainen, in the concluding chapter of this third part, analyses in a very illuminating way referring to the work of Foucault and Merleau-Ponty.

These are the three parts of this book, which intertwine Phenomenology, Organisation and Technology. Phenomenology, we would suggest and hope we have shown, provides us ways to get back to the actuality of the ‘everyday’ life of organized and organizing human beings working in and through the mediation of organization; working through the mediation of information technology. We hope the reader finds this set of truly polyphonic contributions compelling, interesting and useful. We believe that the chapters in this book demonstrate that phenomenology is still a relevant and vital orientation in understanding technological and organisational phenomena. Indeed, that it offers accounts and insights of phenomena that no other methodology can offer. We also suggest that the path that our POT workgroup is taking – in applying ‘head on’ phenomenology to contemporary organisational and technological issues – might be a new and interesting direction for the phenomenological movement as a whole. Through phenomenology and its variety of approaches, the shared commitment among POT participants and contributions is thus to open up lived experiences and generate less idealized or normative accounts of organizational life, and therefore to more realistic methods (than mainstream managerialist ones). Correspondingly, this phenomenological project, broadly, can
be said to be twofold: (i) it aims to provide a path towards more realistic knowledge, knowledge closer to lived experience – this is our original contribution to the scientific project; and (ii) to provide methods or views which are less stark (one may even say sanitised) than those based on pure ‘evident objective reality’ – this, we believe, is our social responsibility as researchers. In this sense, phenomenology clearly has something to say about the difficulties encountered early on in the 21st century.

We believe that the book can serve as a valuable introduction for those who wish to take up the phenomenological orientation and approach—so as to move beyond the ‘metaphysics of presence’ in which that which appears is granted privilege over that which renders such appearance possible in the first place. Although this book presents some aspects of phenomenology it does not provide any final or definitive answers to the central questions that continue to concern us. We would suggest that many questions are and need to be kept open, such as:

- What is phenomenology?
- How best to orient ourselves phenomenologically?
- What are phenomenology’s possibilities and its limits?
- Why is it still important for us to engage with it?

This book is the start of a journey not its conclusion. We hope that the reader will be inspired to join us on this journey towards the things themselves.

References