Transformative Phenomenology as an Antidote to Technological Deathworlds

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Abstract: The concept of lifeworld as posited by Husserl and developed by Schutz reveals key aspects of human social life. What happens when organized forces of human control tear lifeworlds apart? Gebser warned that without a transformation of consciousness humans would destroy their world. Habermas pointed out that humans were destroying lifeworlds with little awareness of the consequences due to the predominance of rational/legal thinking, thus creating "Deathworlds". Transformative Phenomenology has become a community-of-practice that is an antidote to Deathworld-Making. Transformative phenomenology includes hermeneutics, somatics and leregogic practices and phenomenologists trained in this way exhibit ten qualities of being. We offer the Rising Sun project, a phenomenologically based social innovation, as a case example. The call to maintain and restore lifeworlds is the call to oneness and peace. In the era of growing Deathworlds, we, phenomenologists, are urged to respond and contribute to this call.

Keywords: consciousness, lifeworlds, deathworlds, somatics, transformative phenomenology

1. Part One: From Lifeworlds to Deathworlds

> The eternal, the infinite, the omnipresent, the omniscient is a principle, not a
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> person. You, and I, and everyone are but embodiments of that principle, and the
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> more of this infinite principle is embodied in a person, the greater is he (she) and
>
> all in the end will be the perfect embodiment of that and thus all will be one as
>
> they are now essentially. This is all there is of religion, and the practice is
>
> through this feeling of oneness that is love.[1]

 "Whirling death machines need to be stopped … Stop funding these gigantic whirling

death machines!"[2] exclaimed Chelsea Manning, American activist, whistleblower, and politician,

speaking of the military, prison systems, and colonized communities in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Following in Schutz' footsteps but extending lifeworld to include the other life forms, Bentz and

Shapiro define lifeworld as:

> The lived experiences of human beings and other living creatures as formed into
>
> more or less coherent grounds for their existence. This consists of the whole
>
> system of interactions with others and objects in an environment that is fused with
>
> meaning and language and that sustains the life of all creatures from birth through
>
> death. It is the fundamental ground of all experience for human beings.[3]

The late Husserl, in the *Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental*

Phenomenology, posited the "lifeworld as the fundamental ground for all human action."[4]

Schutz had begun exploring this concept before he was aware of Husserl's work on lifeworlds,

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[1] Swami Vivekananda, Southern California Bulletin of the Vedanta Society, (2018).
[2] Chelsea Manning, *DemocracyNow.org*, (March 27-28, 2018).
[3] Valerie Bentz and Jeremy Shapiro, *Mindful Inquiry in Social Research,* (1998), 172.
[4] Edmund Husserl, *Crisis of the European Sciences,* (1954/1970), 103F.

which Schutz felt Husserl had left unfinished. The lifeworld to Schutz was independent of all concepts in the social sciences, including "system" and "culture."

Schutz delineated the elements of "lifeworlds," which mostly are taken for granted as humans pursue their tasks. Ironically, humans in pursuit of tasks have developed organizations that have lead to the destruction of lifeworlds along with the myriad of other creatures, both plants and animals. It would take a much longer treatment to encompass all the structures of the lifeworld as detailed by Schutz in this paper. However, we will highlight just a few here, which seem most pertinent to our argument that post-modern society is Deathworld oriented.

Schutz' work highlights the unique position of each person in every lifeworld to realize the importance of their position and to fully participate.[5] In this way Schutz implicitly calls upon us all to preserve and improve lifeworlds upon which we depend.[6] Lifeworlds to varying degrees allow for and support emancipatory "provinces of meaning,"[7] such as the arts religion and humor.[8] However, may not these activities, significant for mental and social well-being, also passively allow or even facilitate the continued expansion of deathworlds, as in "fiddling while Rome burns?"

A taken for granted assumption of the lifeworld is that humans are "free actors" living in the social world as "free beings."[9] "The mind by its fantasizing acts creates in succession in inner time the various projects, dropping one in favor of the other and returning to, or more precisely, -re-creating, the first."[10] The actions of persons are carried out within a system of plans and

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[5] Michael Barber, *The Participating Citizen: A Biography of Alfred Schutz,* (2004).
[6] Michael Barber, "If Only to Be Heard," in *Explorations of the Life-World,* (2005), 173-202.
[7] Michael Barber and Jochen Dreher, *The Interrelation of Phenomenology, Social Sciences, and the Arts,* (2014).
[8] Michael Barber, "Forward," in *Expressions of Phenomenological Research,* (2017).
[9] Alfred Schutz, in Helmut Wagner ed., *Alfred Schutz on Phenomenology and Social Relations,* (1975), 146.
[10] *Ibid.,*159.

projects of a higher order already existing. Schutz' lifeworld includes "imposed relevances" which we are born into such as family, social class, physical condition, gender, and later job, economic, etc. constraints and conditions.[11]

With the increased colonization of the lifeworld[12] there is doubt as to who is making the choice or whether a person can be free. When one's mind is always activated via Internet, iPhone, text messages, or television, how free are such supposed choices? How developed is the higher-level processes of logic, or in Vedantic thinking, the I, behind the I, that may make choices?

A Google design ethicist blogs about ways in which the structure of events online lead one's decisions and thoughts.[13] Casacuberta[14] analyzes the way the design of computer interfaces lead to a disembodied way of being. He presents an alternative to such "affordances" which would be designed to address the needs of humans as living beings instead of as mental machines. This relates to the developing field of neurophenomenology.

Along similar lines, the relevances, which are apparent to the actors in any lifeworld are predetermined and skewed by the nature of the cultural milieu. Habermas[15] outlines processes of the colonization of the lifeworld, which give predominance to systems of oppression and domination—Deathworlds. This has been amplified further by Oliver[16] and explored in *The Colonization of Psychic Space: A Psychoanalytic Social Theory of Oppression*. Technocratic thinking becomes an ideology that overcomes the practical interests of living beings in the

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[11] *Ibid.,* 321.
[12] Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, (1979); Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action,* (1989).
[13] Tristan Harris, "How Technology is Hijacking Your Mind," (2016).
[14] David Casacuberta, "Toward Embodied Digital Technologies," in *Contemplative Social Research,* (2016).
[15] Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action.*
[16] Kelly Oliver, *The Colonization of Psychic Space,* (2004).

interest of increased expansion of technical control and power according to Oliver. This power and control has come to supersede lifeworlds, which constitute meaning for citizens and communities.

To Schutz, death was a phenomenon within the lifeworld.[17] One of the features of the lifeworld is the "taken for granted" concept that the world will continue on as it is and our daily life will go on as before. Yet, humans face the fundamental anxiety that our lives will end and our capacities to continue actions and activities as in the past will diminish. Today humans are faced with a much greater anxiety—that of the death of all life on the planet. Over the ensuing decades since Schutz died, more than half of the species on earth face extinction by the end of the century due to the pursuit of greater control of the planet by technoeconomic forces.[18]

The concept of "World" underlies the concept of Lifeworld. As Donn Welton said, "The world in which we live and with which we are most familiar, day in and day out, is not the one projected by scientific thought."[19] Various sciences took on segments of the world allowing them to produce material effects and gain greater control over the forces of nature. However, only in recent times have some scientists begun to look at the overall effects on the ecological system as a whole. Modern science "yields ever greater mastery over things of nature, which results in science losing any recognizable bond to the lifeworld."[20]

With the decoupling of systems and lifeworld[21] the increasing destruction of living environments for humans and other creatures, the continued loss of species diversity, the planet is facing increased "Deathworlds" or social economic political systems which produce death and zones of death on the planet that can no longer support life.

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[17] Alfred Schutz, in *Alfred Schutz on Phenomenology and Social Relations*, 173-174.
[18] Robin McKie, "Species Will Be Facing Extinction," (2017).
[19] Donn Welton, "World," in Encyclopedia of Phenomenology, (1997), 736-743.
[20] *Ibid.,* 738.
[21] Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action,* 153.

Michael Welton[22] wrote concerning the decimation of the roles of workers and citizens through the overcoming of lifeworlds in favor of systems of control.   Instead of workers and citizens the roles of "consumer" and "client" have been inflated. Students have become "customers" (note similarity to consumers) and citizens have increasingly become targets of "experts" who are trained to manage them through therapy, coaching, change management and "correctional" processes. Welton continues: "A commodified, utilitarian life-style increasingly prevails … and mass culture is replete with hedonistic siren-calls away from communicative rationality"[23] (read lifeworld based upon authentic dialogue and deliberation). These processes move the system to fragmented lifeworlds and fractured selves, instead of coming from a healthy lifeworld of citizens engaged in the creation and sustaining of viable and joyful lifeworlds.

> Society grows smarter, people get dumber . . . The consequences of the
>
> fragmented consciousness for persons are quite devastating. Our life compasses
>
> go awry and we do not know how to orient ourselves any longer, and it becomes
>
> more difficult to construct a coherent life narrative.[24]

A poignant example of the loss of self-orientation (as described above by Welton) was the outcry of a woman leader of an indigenous North American group. At a conference in Surrey B.C., this woman, clearly of power and well respected in her community, burst into tears, saying, "I don't know who I am!" She, like countless others from indigenous and repressed communities, feel the generational effects of the active repression and destruction of their historical lifeworld including the lands, plants and animals upon which their livelihood rested. The continued protests of indigenous people to save their remaining lands from the TransCanada Pipeline of oil sludge is an outstanding example of the oppression of economic/system powers over lifeworlds.

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[22] Michael Welton, *In Defense of the Lifeworld,* (1995).
[23] *Ibid.,* 146.
[24] *Ibid.,* 146.

Heeding Heidegger's despair, that humans cannot overcome the deadly force of technology[25], Kida pointed out that technology came about prior to human reason, and therefore humans through reason alone cannot change the trajectory towards self-annihilation that is clocked by the nuclear scientists of the world.[26] Commenting on the effects of the collapse of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactor and following an earthquake, Kida said: "no one has even come up with a satisfactory means of dealing with the ever-increasing quantities of radioactive water. One has the impression that technology has broken free of human control . . ."[27]. He urges younger generations to think deeply about things before acting and to reject the continued push toward higher levels of so-called economic productivity. Additionally, Kida asks us to muse on the similar origins of technology and art, as well as their fundamental differences.

1.1 Expulsions and Deathworlds: The Brutality of Complex Systems

As the survival of life forms on earth is in question, humans must overcome the economic and technological forces leading to Deathworlds. Deathworlds are human worlds focused on destroying meaning, coherence, we-relationships, and intersubjectivity for humans and other life forms. Once totally destroyed these worlds become "dead zones" killing or expelling all life. In the current epoch, complex arrangements of legal, financial, technological, corporate and governmental structures have created powerful dynamics that create great wealth for some and expulsions for millions and the persistence of Deathworlds. Sassen in her monumental synthesis characterizes these processes as "expulsions."[28] Extreme mining practices, such as mountain top removal and hydraulic-fracking, the creation of abstract financial instruments leading to massive

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[25] Martin Heidegger, "Only A God Can Save Us Now: The Spiegel Interview," (1966).
[26] Gen Kida, *The True Nature of Technology,* (2013).
[27] *Ibid.,* 8-9.
[28] Saskia Sassen, *Expulsions*, (2014).

home foreclosures, the usurpation of farmlands, the devastation of millions through wars are connected to the intentions and deliberate actions to increase capital for some. At the end of 2011 there were 42.5 million persons displaced by war and conflict.[29] Massive unemployment and incorrigible underemployment, millions of foreclosures, shrunken economies (for example 30% of the labor force in Greece lost homes, jobs, prospects overnight) and increased incarcerations in for-profit prisons are the results.

These forces lead also to increased dead zones or Deathworlds from the oceans to inland water sources to vast uninhabitable areas. Sassen calls for these areas to be recognized on maps, to be brought above ground. She asks: "What are the spaces of the expelled?" which, are invisible to the standard measures of modern states and economies. These spaces places should be conceptualized, as they are "many and growing." Making them alive as real spaces and places on our maps and awareness, including regular news reports on them, could become "the raw spaces for making new local economies, histories and modes of membership."[30]

We should include also an analysis not only of dead zones and Deathworlds, but of "death-making zones."   President Trump marketed billions in warheads and drones to Saudi Arabia, while providing support for fueling their planes as they bomb Yemen. Fragments of these bombs were found to be made by Raytheon a company located in Goleta, California, near the wealthy community of Santa Barbara and home of the Fielding Graduate University. DemocracyNow! reports:

> In news from Yemen, U.S.-backed Saudi forces have launched a new series of
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> attacks on the port city of Hodeida, sparking fears of a humanitarian crisis.
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> The charity Save the Children has warned disruption to supplies coming through

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[29] *Ibid.,* 56.
[30] *Ibid.*, 222.

Hodeida could 'cause starvation on an unprecedented scale.' The group warns 5

million children are at risk of famine. Meanwhile, CNN is reporting new evidence

confirms U.S.-made bombs have been used in a series of attacks killing

Yemeni civilians since the Saudi assault began in 2015.[31]

Gebser's study of the evolution of human consciousness points to a way out by involving

humans who look deeply at their own internal selves. The consciousness required for life to

continue on earth is neither collectivistic, which submerges the individual self, nor egoistic,

which espouses that individuals foster their individual gains for wealth and power.

> . . . weapons and nuclear fission are not the only realities to be dealt with; spiritual
>
> reality in it intensified form is also becoming effectual and real. This spiritual
>
> reality is without questions our only security that the threat of material
>
> destruction can be averted. Its realization alone seems able to guarantee man's
>
> continuing existence in the face of the powers of technology, rationality, and
>
> chaotic emotion. If our consciousness, that is, the individual person's
>
> awareness, vigilance, and clarity of vision, cannot master the new reality and
>
> make possible its realization, then the prophets of doom will have been correct.
>
> Other alternatives are an illusion; consequently, great demands are placed on us,
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> and each one of us have been given a grave responsibility, not merely to survey
>
> but to actually traverse the path opening before us.[32]

Ray Kurzweil, the inventor of artificial intelligence, has predicted that the human world

is becoming a vast "singularity" where humans will no longer have bodies. The contents of

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[31] "Yemen: New Evidence of U.S.-made Bombs," (2018, September 19).

[32] Jean Gebser, *The Ever-Present Origin*, (1985), 5.

brains will be uploaded into a giant computer grid, which will maintain itself.[33] This is the ultimate triumph of technology over life into one giant Deathworld. (There is a laboratory at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) devoted to creating the "Singularity.")

1.2 Habermas' Grounds for Truth-Seeking

How can persons get in touch with truth? Habermas points out that power distorts communication, which in turn fosters false communications.[34] Truthful communication must be *understandable* (speakers share norms and ways of speaking and writing so that they can accurately interpret meanings); *true* (assertions are cogent and recognizably affirmed in the actual world), *truthful* (speakers are sincere and able to examine their own ideological and experiential distortions); and have a sense of *rightness* (speakers follow valid moral norms).[35] Can one find any instances of public communication these days that exemplifies these characteristics? It is a premise of this paper that these conditions may only be realized when we develop and implement a means to create consciousness change. Such change becomes reality though processes like Transformative Phenomenology which allow for such communication to be developed, and which act as antidotes to Deathworlds.

In the following, we will explain what we call Transformative Phenomenology (Part Two), and share a hermeneutic reflection on a public communication that was grounded in Transformative Phenomenology as a case example for a phenomenological antidote (Part 3). We will also discuss community-of-practice as a vessel of collectively and socially enacted Transformative Phenomenology (Part 4), and end with our vision of a way forward (Epilogue).

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[33] Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Near,* (2006).
[34] Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*.
[35] Bentz and Shapiro, *Mindful Inquiry in Social Research.*

2. Part Two: Transformative Phenomenology as an Antidote for Our Times

> But if you look, the content of so-called modern education—very much oriented
>
> about material value. Not talking about inner value. So now, today the best
>
> educated people, emotionally—lot of problem![36]

Transformative Phenomenology defies discrete definition because of the ineffable nature

of its transformative outcomes. It is a phenomenology that "… transforms and enhances personal

life and professional effectiveness."[37] It can be described as the methodology and methods of

somatic-hermeneutic-phenomenology put into action in the lifeworld that can lead to personal,

professional, organizational, and systems transformation.

Transformative Phenomenology as described by Rehorick and Bentz[38] relies on (to

varying degrees) the eidetic phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, the social-phenomenology of

Alfred Schutz, the bodily-awareness of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the ontological-existential

phenomenology of Martin Heidegger, and the self-reflective hermeneutic methods of Hans-Jorg

Gadamer, among other philosophies.

Transformative Phenomenology places a high respect on the phenomenological tradition

that values *somatics*, the concept of body. Although it is not as prominent as it is in Merleau-

Ponty's writings, phenomenology has always recognized that consciousness is embodied.

Husserl critiqued the disembodied attitude of psychology.[39] Both Gadamer and Ricoeur

examined the nature of body, and incorporated it in their hermeneutics.[40] Hanna who is

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[36] H.H. The Dalai Lama, "The Ancient Wisdom the Dalai Lama Hopes Will Enrich the World," (2018, March 18).

[37] George Psathas, "Forward," in *Transformative Phenomenology,* (2008), xv.

[38] Rehorick and Bentz, *Transformative Phenomenology.*

[39] Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences.*

[40] Louise D. Derksen and Annemie Halsema, "Understanding the Body," in *Gadamer and Ricoeur,* (2011).

grounded in phenomenology[41] brought somatics into a larger setting for practices of healing.[42]

Hanna's work includes the practices such as yoga, meditation, Buddhists' mindfulness that are

based on the Asian tradition of body-mind-spirit interconnectedness. Having these lineages in its

foundation, Transformative Phenomenology emphasizes the importance of somatic awareness.

Transformative Phenomenology also requires researchers to embody or enact the principles,

qualities, and attitudes of the methodology in their actual lives. Rehorick and Bentz have found

phenomenology to be transformational when its research engages with human issues and

concerns that engage scholar-practitioners.[43] Bringing somatic learning to the forefront

intensifies the power of the work of consciousness and social transformation.

Processes like Transformative Phenomenology allow for *truthful* communication to be

developed. This is a phenomenology that embraces mindfulness, somatic awareness, and

empathy. The process also embraces shared collaborative understanding, healing practices for

self and others, deep personal reflection around lived experience, and enhanced consciousness.

Practitioners of Transformative Phenomenology recognize how enculturated patterns of learning,

working, communicating, and external goal setting that have ignored the body and lived-

experience throughout the lifespan can be addressed. They focus on developing leadership for

well-being, collaborative relationships, enhanced communities of learning and care, and social

and environmental justice.

Transformative Phenomenology is a foundation for embodied acts of reasoning—

situationally informed judgments—in response to the technification of the social world.[44]

Embodied reasoning promotes decision-making in the human realm using approaches that:

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[41] Thomas Hanna, *The Bergsonian Heritage,* (1962).
[42] Thomas Hanna, *The Body of Life,* (1993).
[43] Rehorick and Bentz, *Transformative Phenomenology*.
[44] Donald E. Polkinghorne, *Practice and the Human Sciences,* (2004).

… take place within a shared embodied and culturally informed background; they are mainly derived through processes that operate out of awareness; they are emotionally informed; and they integrate concerns about multiple values and particular needs ... (this) does not encourage practitioners to ignore scientifically validated knowledge statements that relate to their practice … it requires practitioners to think for themselves.[45]

Practitioners who embody phenomenology as a way of being can realize a transformative potential that did not exist before. This is the potential to catalyze transformative learning in support of consciousness change within self, others, groups, organizations, and larger systems. Husserl made a prediction about this potential when he commented:

Perhaps it will even become manifest that the total phenomenological attitude and the epoché belonging to it are destined in essence to effect, at first, a complete personal transformation, comparable in the beginning to a religious conversion, which then, however, over and above this, bears within itself the significance of the greatest existential transformation which is assigned as a task to mankind as such.[46]

In what follows, we map the potential that can emerge from an "education" in Transformative Phenomenology, as developed, practiced, and embodied by Rehorick & Bentz.[47] Those who choose to engage in this learning process end up realizing that "the deepening of awareness that results from phenomenology is itself a process of transformation."[48] Through Transformative Phenomenology we learn how phenomenology can impact one's research and

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[45] *Ibid.,* 149.
[46] Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences*, 137.
[47] Rehorick and Bentz, *Transformative Phenomenology*; David Rehorick and Valerie Bentz, *Expressions of Phenomenological Research,* (2017).
[48] Rehorick and Bentz, *Transformative Phenomenology,* 4.

transform one's life and practice.

What indication(s) do we have that phenomenologists are currently acting in the world in ways that foster greater understanding, truth, truth seeking, and moral-rightness, for positive change in consciousness? What process is involved in the development of these qualities? What are the qualities of these agents-of-change? And, how are other people who are not familiar with phenomenological ways-of-being influenced by these phenomenological scholar-practitioners? We answer these questions through an examination of the experience and practice of Fielding Graduate University (FGU) doctoral students, and graduates, who chose to engage with phenomenology.

2.1 What is Transformative Phenomenology?

Rehorick & Bentz provide a retrospective assessment of two decades of phenomenological research carried out at Fielding Graduate University, which attracts experienced mid-career professionals seeking a flexible and customized approach to graduate learning. Scholar-practitioners (scholar-leaders) emerge from the Fielding program.[49]

Former students contributed chapters to the edited volume that outlines the impact of phenomenology on their research, practice and lives. These authors provide rich stories of the diverse practices that embody *truthful* communication to address practical concerns in the lifeworld from the diverse vantage of the executive coach, human development professionals, leadership specialists, company executives, directors of medical organizations, professional musicians, and community social innovators.

Within the same volume, Rehorick and Bentz present the results of an empirical study of seventy-six dissertations completed by Fielding scholar-practitioners over two decades that relied

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[49] Rehorick and Bentz, *Expressions of Phenomenological Research.*

on phenomenology to varying degree. They attributed the research studies as being either based upon-, informed by-, or inspired by phenomenology.[50] The seventy-six dissertation topics point to a great diversity of practical human centered topics. Melville posits, "the (Fielding) doctoral program should be judged by the real-world impact of what students learn."[51] The body of applied research created by FGU scholar-practitioners is provided as a demonstration of the utility of phenomenology and hermeneutics to professional practitioners engaging the world through the lens of Transformative Phenomenology.

George Psathas reminds us that, "phenomenology is many things to many people" and that "phenomenology can restore, affect, influence, and change persons." [52] "Phenomenology becomes an artful, assimilative experience for those who take it seriously and incorporate its premises, methods, orientations, and perspectives—boldly, affectively, cognitively, and assumptively."[53] For the learner, the process of Transformative Phenomenology brings phenomenology to consciousness and offers the opportunity for the learner to incorporate it into their lifeworld. We believe that phenomenology transforms anyone who cares to engage with it in a deep way.

> Transformative phenomenology may be the way to show how we can experience
> renewal—through our readings, our study, our interviews, our organized
> protocols, our hermeneutic exploration, our understandings; in short, through all
> of the mysteries entailed in the transformative process."[54]

Husserl reminds us that the phenomenologist engages in a perpetual effort to understand

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[50] *Ibid.*
[51] Keith Melville, *A Passion for Adult Learning,* (2016), 114-116.
[52] Psathas, "Forward," in *Transformative Phenomenology,* xi.
[53] *Ibid.*
[54] *Ibid.*, xii-xiii.

things like a beginner, finding an entry point into the philosophy again and again.[55] For the

beginner at Fielding, the focus is not on an exploration of a more exclusive, theoretical, kind.

Any number of philosophers, methodologies, and methods can serve as entry points into the

phenomenological realm—Husserl, Schutz, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Gadamer, Wolff, van

Manen, Wagner, and Psathas. Barber observes that Fielding scholar-practitioners do not restrict

themselves to one version of phenomenology but use phenomenology to explore their interests,

through a multidisciplinary lens, to a greater or lesser degree as they see fit.[56]

> … as if phenomenology itself precludes any absolutizing of itself … these
>
> authors are unwilling to abide within the comfortable bounds of
>
> phenomenological philosophy itself. Instead, they seek to bring its resources to
>
> bear on a variety of practical concerns in such a way that it is impossible to think
>
> of them in any other way than as the "Scholar-Practitioners" that they call
>
> themselves.[57]

It is this openness to finding new entry points to phenomenology that is characteristic of the

Fielding scholar-practitioner. Where the past "awaits new interpretations to help reconceive it …

blocking attempts to predict with any certainty the future the past will yield.[58]

Writing, and the interpretation of texts, is central to the process of Transformative

Phenomenology. Learners become engaged in their research project from a first-person

perspective. They often experience a thoughtful, disorienting, incoherence in coming to

phenomenology for the first time through the development of their protocol statements,

conducting their interviews, engaging with hermeneutic explorations, and reflecting on lived

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[55] Maurice Natanson, *Edmund Husserl: Philosopher of Infinite Tasks,* (1973).
[56] Barber in *Expressions of Phenomenological Research*.
[57] *Ibid.,* 7-8.
[58] *Ibid.,* 7.

experience.[59] The allure of phenomenology and hermeneutics grows over time. The veiled

nature of the taken-for-granted is acknowledged and the "unclouded phenomenological eye"

emerges.

> A person's view of the lifeworld, understandings, and situations of others are
>
> clouded by his preconceptions, scientific and popular constructs, and media
>
> images and distortions. Over time, these may blind us to what is apparent to the
>
> unclouded phenomenological eye, much as cataracts impair one's vision.[60]

The ineffable process of personal learning and transformation is realized with the endless

opportunity to return to the philosophy, again and again.

2.2 Education and The Emergence of the "Leregogue"

> Leregogy is a term coined to try and bridge the indomitable severing of roles
>
> between teacher and learner. It implies a transactional and shifting set of "roles"
>
> wherein both people, are at various times and sometimes synchronously, both
>
> teachers and learners …[61]

> Barber suggests that the openness that Fielding phenomenologists exhibit to toward their

research might be attributed to the leregogic method (attitude) of teaching that Rehorick and

Bentz have adopted.[62] They offer leregogy as an alternative collaborative learning model to that

of the teacher-directed focus of pedagogy, and the self-directed focus of andragogy.

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[59] David Rehorick and Gail Taylor, "Thoughtful Incoherence," in *Human Studies: A Journal for Philosophy and Social Sciences*, 18(4), 389-414.

[60] Rehorick and Bentz, *Transformative Phenomenology,* 21.

[61] The conception of leregogy traces its origins to Rehorick and Taylor, "Thoughtful Incoherence." For further development and applications see David Rehorick and Stephen Jeddeloh, *Discovering Leregogy*, (2010); David Rehorick, Stephen Jeddeloh, and Kenzie Lau-Kwong, "Boundary of Transformative Learning," (2014); David Rehorick and Sally Rehorick, "The Leregogy of Curriculum Design," (2016); and Rehorick and Bentz, *Expressions of Phenomenological Research*.

[62] Barber in *Expressions of Phenomenological Research*.

The neologism "leregogy" as conceived by Rehorick describes the guiding and supportive stance between a teacher and a learner that is founded on trust, devoid of power, accepting of faultiness, and conscious of the impact of reward and criticism. A leregogic teacher walks beside the learner as an equal and affirms the role of teacher-as-guide. It is a relationship where social distance and dialogue mitigates dependence and spawns creativity. The teacher and learner acknowledge that there are many possible avenues to the learner's destination. In a leregogic relationship, the teacher learns from, and with, the learner as they engage in a unique self-directed journey of scholarship and self-discovery.[63]

Whether or not a leregogic attitude is innate to the learner, we contend that such an attitude is a natural outcome of the adoption of qualities (competencies) that arise, implicitly, through an education in Transformative Phenomenology as modeled by Rehorick and Bentz. Students who experience a phenomenological education through leregogic mentorship can emerge as transformative-phenomenologists-in-action, expressing a leregogic attitude that is infused with phenomenological qualities (Figure 1). A leregogic education can lead to the emergence of a phenomenological way-of-being that shows deep respect for the experience of others and is focused on recognizing "inner value." The qualities and attitudes of transformative phenomenologists are presented next.

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[63] James Marlatt, "The Transformative Potential of Conversations with Strangers," in *Expressions of Phenomenological Research,* 45-80.
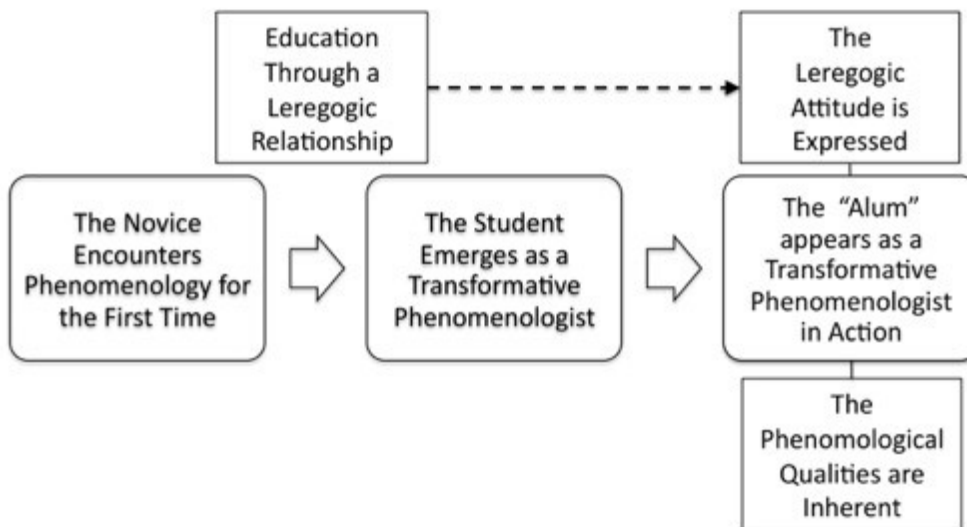
Figure 1: Education Through a Leregogic Relationship and the Emergence of the Transformative Phenomenologist

2.3 Qualities and Attitudes of Transformative Phenomenologists

Transformative phenomenologists seek positive changes in self, Lifeworlds, and professional practice for the benefit of society. They are educated in the principles of Mindful Inquiry — develop a capacity for mindful thought, interpret situations in the context of history and culture, attempt to alleviate suffering by critiquing the sources origins of oppression, and pull back epistemological blinders by going back to the things themselves.[64]

Rehorick and Bentz identified ten qualities[65] of phenomenological scholar-practitioners

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[64] Bentz and Shapiro, *Mindful Inquiry in Social Research.*

[65] The authors originally referred to ten "competencies." The term "qualities" was adopted retrospectively as being a more relevant descriptor. The term "competency" is overused and problematic in the world of organization development. Competency frameworks abound and executives try to use them in the belief

based on their analysis of phenomenological research completed at FGU from 1996 to 2016

(Figure 2). Transformative phenomenologists seek to transcend the reality of everyday lived-

experience in service of generating common understanding among others. Over 75 doctoral

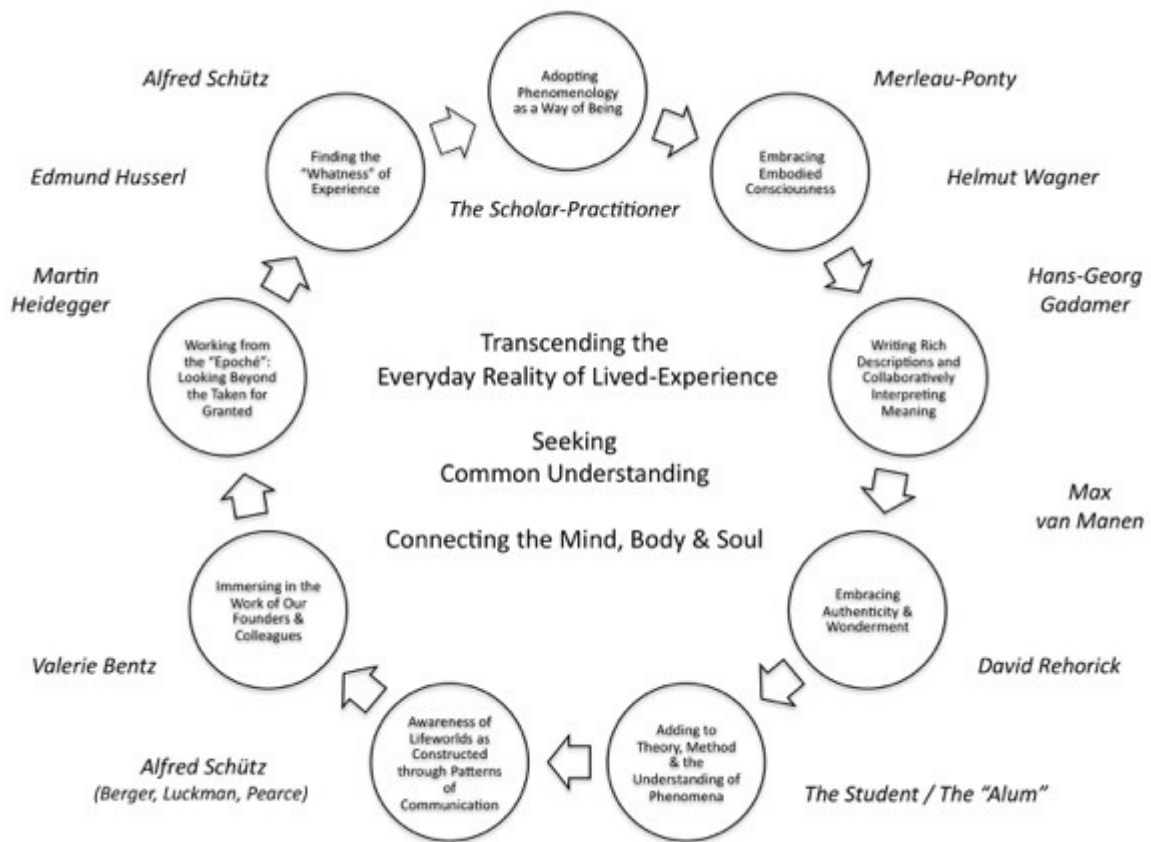students were introduced to the founders of phenomenology during this period.

Figure 2: The Qualities of Transformative Phenomenologists

The Transformative phenomenologist-in-action exhibits phenomenological qualities and

adopts "leregogic" attitudes that promote reflection and enhanced consciousness. Some of these

qualities and attitudes are listed below, modified after Rehorick and Bentz:[66]

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that they can identify the competencies that will drive productivity, and that Human Resource departments can train and measure people in those hard and soft competencies for the sake of productivity. These attempts are illustrative of what Heidegger calls making persons into "the standing reserve for use."

[66] Rehorick and Bentz, *Expressions of Phenomenological Research.*

Inherent Phenomenological Qualities

- Experiencing phenomenology as a way of being

- Approaching life and practice with the "sparkle" of wonder and creativity (openness)

- Engaging from the perspective of the epoché (Husserl)

- Seeking the "whatness" of experience (Husserl, Schutz)

- Embracing embodied ways of knowing (Merleau-Ponty)

- Seeking mutual enhanced understanding (i.e. Coordinated Management of Meaning)

- A practical focus on recognizing the natural attitude in the reality of everyday life (Schutz)

Mindful "Leregogic" Attitudes

- Being open and mindful of learning from and within relationship (openness, mindfulness)

- Embracing doubt and chaos and tolerating incoherence when encountering new situations

- Accepting silence as a component of learning in relationship (deep listening, emergence)

- Staying open to immediate experience. (letting-go, detachment, releasement, surrender-and-catch) (Heidegger, Wolff)

- Understanding that dialogue, empathy, friendship, trust, spirit, hope, and love are important elements in learning, meaning making, change, and transformation (love of human kind, cognitive love, respect, trust)

In the next section, we provide additional insight into the collective potential of Transformative Phenomenologists in the world through the exploration of a phenomenologically inspired community-of-practice as a case example.

3. Part Three: The Surrey Experience – A Case for a Phenomenological Antidote

Fielding Graduate University convened a two-day meeting in Surrey, British Columbia during February, 2018 that brought together voices from the Surrey community and the Fielding scholar-practitioner community. The two-day meeting was organized under the theme of *Social Innovation for Leadership in Work and Life* and focused on generating a dialogue about practicing Transformative Phenomenology. Fielding administrators, faculty, graduates, students, city administrators, and members of the Phoenix Drug & Alcohol Recovery & Education Society attended the meeting—including citizens in recovery. The Phoenix Society is a leader in social innovation in the area of homelessness, addiction, crime, unemployment, and poverty in the city of Surrey.[67] Wilson describes how Transformative Phenomenological inquiry–in–action shaped social innovation across individual, group, organizational, and institutional levels of engagement.[68] Michael and Ann Wilson refer to their "living practice" of embodied inquiry that "strengthened a focus on our development as scholar-practitioners and the process of becoming embodied in our research and accountable to the lifeworlds of marginalized citizens we served."[69]

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[67] Michael Wilson and Ann Wilson, "Rising Sun," in *Expressions of Phenomenological Research*, 236-271.

[68] Ann Wilson, "Social Innovation Summit: Exploring Leadership and Work and Life," presented at the Fielding Graduate University Conference on Social Innovation for Leadership in Work and Life: Expressions of Phenomenological Research, (2018, Surrey, B.C.).

[69] *Ibid.,* 3.

During the first day of the meeting Fielding scholar-practitioners described their contributions to Rehorick and Bentz's edited volume *Expressions of Phenomenological Research: Consciousness and Lifeworld Studies*.[70] A Fielding research and practice session was held at the Phoenix Society Rising Sun Social Innovation Centre on the second day.

In what follows, one of the authors of this paper (Ayumi) will write in first person, and reflect what she calls *The Surrey Experience* as an example of the phenomenological antidotes for the Deathworlds. This is a hermeneutic understanding of the Surrey event. In this interpretive analysis, she will interweave her first-person voice, lived experiences of hers and other participants[71], and Heideggerian philosophy.

3.1 On The Surrey Experience

I participated in the event as one of the speakers, but I had not had any expectation for the event. I actually had not paid attention to the agenda much as my main interest was to see my professors—Dr. Valerie Bentz (Fielding faculty; co-author of this paper) and Dr. David Rehorick, who had opened the door to phenomenology (Transformative Phenomenology) for me, and deeply impacted my way of life. I just wanted to see them again. On the day I flew to Vancouver, where Surrey is located nearby, the whole Vancouver area was covered by snow, which had not happened for many years. I was welcomed by the crisp air, white falling snow from the light gray sky, beautiful black silhouette of tree branches and birds in the white background, and their deep silence. In retrospect, the magic of the snowy scenery was as if it was preluding the profoundness I would experience during the next two days. I say profound because the Surrey experience was authentic, magical, and sacred. Although I could not

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[70] Rehorick and Bentz, *Expressions of Phenomenological Research.*
[71] Some of the presenters of the event wrote short reflections of the event, and I used them as a part of the data for my interpretive analysis for this section.

articulate my sentiments back then as it had an ineffable aspect, it was a powerful experience for

me, and I felt other participants had similar feelings.

With the Heideggerian perspective, humans are a part of the world as *being-in-the-world*,

and they are implicated by what is happening around and in them.[72] As such, the Surrey event

participants (including me) were implicated and affected by many layers, facets, or a web of

various factors that interplayed and synergized each other at that space and time. These layers or

facets are intertwined, and the source of the profoundness cannot be explained in a linear

fashion. But in what follows, I will delineate them from the perspectives of the setting, the

people (the hosts, and the event participants), and the thinking to explicate the essence of the

Surrey experience.

3.2 The Setting: The Rising Sun Project–Phenomenologically Approached Social Innovation

As we have discussed in the earlier section, the Rising Sun project was approached

phenomenologically, and it affected many lives of Surrey citizens. Having the people from this

project, both people who lead and support the project as well as the residents who used to be

living on streets as homeless, had a deep impact to the attendees of the event. In addition, the

second day of the event took place at one of the Rising Sun facilities, and its physical space

created an additional meaningful container for us—the event participants—to connect ourselves

to the humanity and to have dialogues at the higher conscious level. Some of the participants

express it as follows: "While deep dialogue often occurs at Fielding events, this one was special,

thanks in part to the graciousness of our hosts and the healing power of what they have created in

Surrey with the Phoenix Society." (Fielding alumna) Another alumna said, "The experience

raised my consciousness and questions about what makes a civil society, a good community, a

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[72] Martin Heidegger, *Being in Time,* (2008).

home. I sensed that many who participated felt the same." A Fielding student commented, "By far the highlight of the weekend was the time spent and visit to the Phoenix location." Through the talks on the Rising Sun project and the various comments from the local participants (people from Fielding and Phoenix Society), I sensed that they not only attuned to the humanity, but also to the sacred land from the indigenous people, on which the facilities stand.

3.3 The People (The Hosts): Michael and Ann Wilson, Founders of the Phoenix Society and the Rising Sun Project

Michael and Ann Wilson were the connecting point for the event as they are the founders of the Phoenix Society and the Rising Sun project. Michael is a Fielding alumnus, and Michael and Ann wrote a chapter on the Rising Sun project as a phenomenologically approached social innovation.[73]

Both Michael and Ann embody authenticity, altruism, and the phenomenological attitude, and their warm and welcoming presence was unmistakable. The phenomenological attitude is the orientation or a way of being that one engages to others as a whole person of mental, emotional, bodily, and spiritual self, and at the same time he or she considerers that others are also whole persons. A phenomenologically attuned person heeds one's assumptions and pre-knowledge, and does not jump into judgment without reflecting on his or her biases. A phenomenologically attuned person is also not afraid of getting in touch with the deep part of self and one's vulnerabilities, listens to others (and all living and non-living things) deeply, and can have genuine dialogues with self and others.

One of the Fielding students at the event describes her experience of Michael as follows:

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[73] Wilson and Wilson, "Rising Sun."

This past weekend appears to generate from a transcendent place. When you look into Michaels' eyes deeply or perceive his aura, he is connected, loving, and firmly grounded in what is happening at the moment . . . As I connect with Michael, across the occupied room, gaze meeting gaze, I feel a sense of joy and communication that itself is addictive. I don't want it to end . . . A being whose transcendence is not subject to the limitations of the physical universe. (Fielding student)

At the end of the second day, I was talking with a long-term resident of the Rising Sun facility about Ann, and he was telling me how much he appreciates her and Michael.

She [Ann] always takes a time for me when I get upset and need to talk to someone. Talking to her calms me down. Ann and Michael, both of them, always sit with me when I need to talk. Actually, they do not even have to say anything. Just being with me, it alone helps me feel better. (Resident of Rising Sun, personal communication, April 25, 2018)

While listening to the resident, I was nodding deeply in my heart about the warm, welcoming, and healing energy that emanates from Michael and Ann. Although my encounter with them was rather limited, I knew what this resident was talking about. I felt I was welcomed, accepted, and loved when I was with Michael or Ann, just like the participant of the above comment. I felt that they consider me as part of *us*. Monroe (2002), political psychologist, concludes from her research that the only explanatory factor for altruism is the perception of self in relation to other human beings, that is the sense of shared humanity or the perception that all the humans are *one*; Monroe calls this *the altruistic perspective*.[74] What I sensed from Michael and Ann is the

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[74] Kristen Renwick Monroe, "Explicating Altruism," in *Altruism & Altruistic Love,* Stephen G. Post and Linda Underwood eds., (2002).

transcendence that goes beyond the limit of the physical self, or using Monroe's term, the altruistic perspective.

3.4 The People (The Event's Participants)

It was not only Michael and Ann who manifested or engaged in the phenomenological attitude, and had authenticity and altruism. The whole group, the participants, were engaging with each other in the phenomenological way whether they understood phenomenology as an academic subject or not. Our phenomenological attitude was filling the rooms and the participants' hearts as if they were patterns in music played by different instruments.

As explained, the phenomenological attitude includes being able to dwell in one's deep part of self and share the experience with others, as well as being able to be present with others' inner depths. This attitude deals with one's vulnerability. Vulnerability is something people often try to avoid, but Brown (2012), social science researcher, asserts it is a path to humanity and growth.[75] "Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity. It is the source of hope, empathy, accountability, and authenticity. If we want greater clarity in our purpose or deeper and more meaningful spiritual lives, vulnerability is the path."[76]

I was touched to see both the speakers and the audience were willing to share their vulnerabilities. I saw that in the topics of their presentations, but also how they delivered the messages. Some of them, including myself, seemed not comfortable talking in front of people, but they spoke from their hearts and their way of engagement stroked the chord of my heart. It was same with the residents of the Phoenix Society, who were willing to ask questions, make comments, and share their experiences with the group. We, the event participants, were very

[75] Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly*, (2012).
[76] *Ibid.,* 33.

supportive for each other, and developed a safe and sacred space in a joint, gradual, tacit, and embodied manner. It was as if we were writing, sharing, and appreciating personal phenomenological protocols, and then co-created deeper joint protocols as equal human beings.

For example, one of the Phoenix Society residents sensed the urgency to express what she felt from the group and set the tone for the 2nd day by singing an indigenous song. I did not know the song, but I joined singing after hearing the repeated tune and phrase, although I did not understand the words. While singing together and looking into the eyes of other participants, I became a part of the *one*, and got grounded. Valerie (Fielding faculty; co-author of this paper) caught quickly what people were sensing, and she spontaneously made a human circle by all of us holding hands. At the end of the session, the lady who sang the song showed us her courage again by telling us she needed help, and the rest of the group stayed in the moment with her, being present and sending her both verbal and nonverbal support. This ending again made me feel that I was a part of the one.

Another Fielding student reflected that the Surrey experience was transformational, and stated, "I did not imagine that this conference would have affected me so profoundly. Participating in this conference was an empowering experience." He originally felt very uncomfortable at the event as he thought he was not good enough:

> While at the conference, I was suffering from "impostor syndrome." . . . I felt that I could be asked to leave at any moment. I was in the presence of accomplished social activists, administrators, academics, and authors. Certainly, they would see right through me and know I did not belong. In fact, if I listened closely enough I am sure I would hear people whispering about me. I had to hide until I could escape.

But as he was participating in the event, he gradually transformed. He continued to reflect,

Saturday was awesome. I fellowshipped with some amazing people who took a

genuine interest in me. As the day progressed, I grew more confident and bold in

my conversations . . . As my presentation began, I felt a peace wash over

me. Although I was anxious, I knew God was with me. Even when the computer

froze up, I was at peace. The words I needed to say so that I could understand

myself came out. There was power for me at that moment. I cannot speak for

anyone else there, but I changed after I was done. I have a better understanding of

who I am. I am comfortable with me. Most importantly, I learned I mattered.

(Fielding Student)

It is a story of courage, but I do not think his courage would have come to surface

without the collective Surrey experience that all the participants were jointly creating. Other

participants comment on their experiences as follows:

There was a magical potpourri of collective intention, shared wisdom and synergy

on the Sunday that was something unusual and amazing -- beyond the feedback

and experiences of the room at the end of the morning, the informal feedback and

reflections in conversations afterward had a common theme of how powerful and

impactful it was to have that range and mix of individuals in that kind of learning

space together... it was further intriguing (thanks to the magic of the universe!)

that even the topics shared that morning aligned and fit so beautifully into the

space and how it was being held. (Fielding student)

On the second day, I was moved by the deeply personal stories of courage,

compassion and commitment shared by the presenters and the space that was

created with the participants to explore issues conceptually and also to be alive in

the room. The experience raised my consciousness and questions about what

makes a civil society, a good community, a home. I sensed that many who

participated felt the same. (Fielding alumna)

In the following, Jim (Fielding alumnus; co-author of this paper) succinctly summarizes

the essence of the Surrey experience:

Our community came together with the unstated intent of validating our role in

catalyzing positive change in the world around us. … Our stories came from the

heart and, in turn, impacted some of the hearts and souls of others around us …

Our consciousness was raised toward a tacit acknowledgement of the "goodness"

that surrounds us, and an inspired hope for a better world. The energy that we

gained from the ephemeral experience of meeting other like-minded people may

dissipate, but the ripple effect of those interactions will continue to resonate, as

we remain mindful of our collective potential.

The Surrey experience exemplifies that *living or doing phenomenology* as a practice can

be a counteracting power to the Deathworlds, not only because of the humanity aspect, but also it

challenges the metaphysical understanding of being and the technological understanding of being

that people hold since the time of Plato.[77] [78] The Deathworlds may be more pronounced in the

current climate because of the advanced computer generated technologies, but the origin of the

technological understanding of being has been the same; it is the frame of mind that people live

in, which promotes the continuous advancement of technology and deepens the downward

Deathworld's spiral.

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[77] Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, (1977), 3-35.
[78] Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

Heidegger does not critique technology itself, but he questions the technological understanding of being, and how dangerous it could be. He posits that humans have been pursuing efficiency wanting more for less, and this thinking or culture drives technology even further. Heidegger is concerned people are taken up with technology, and they don't even think about what they might lose by participating in and being consumed by technology.[79] [80] Some advanced technologies, such as Singularity, might be easy to grab people's attention and make them question the directions. However, the technological understanding of being is pervasive in people's lives, and is often hidden from their consciousness. People may think they are using technology as resources or tools, but the opposite is also true: humans are resources to be used as *standing reserve* and being orderable.

> Everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed
>
> to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering. Whatever is
>
> ordered about in this way has its own standing. We call it standing reserve
>
> [*Bestand*].[81]

An airplane on a runway is an object, but it is also a standing-reserve or a cog to be ordered for the whole transportation system.[82] Humans use airplanes as a tool to get to another location quickly, but it is also true that humans are used to fill the airplanes, in other words, they are standing-reserve to be ordered in the system of air transportation.[83] Likewise, social networks (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) make it possible for people to connect with others instantly regardless the locations and time, and to reach out to a large number of people. But at the same

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[79] Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking,* (1966a).
[80] Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology.*
[81] *Ibid,.* 17.
[82] *Ibid.*
[83] Hubert L. Dreyfus, "Heidegger on the Connection Between Nihilism, Art, Technology, and Politics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, (1993), 289-316.

time, people are considered as target for the information dissemination, and to be worse, their personal information is used as standing-reserve to be ordered for marketing, politics, and other kinds of statistics. Technology or the technological understanding of being affects people's understanding of being. With this frame of mind—what Heidegger names *Ge-stell* (Enframing)—humans, other living beings, and Mother Nature are mere materials to be used, manipulated, and ordered in the pursuit of efficiency and predictability.

The technological understanding of being is so pervasive and dominates our thinking and actions, while "the splendor of the simple"[84] or insignificant yet profound practices, such as friendship, gathering with people for good conversation, walking in a path in woods, are marginalized because they are not the acts for efficiency.[85] The Surrey event was a good illustration that how a get-together of people that was phenomenologically lived let the transcendence appear—the transcendence from the individual to the oneness, as well as the transcendence beyond the technological understanding of being.

At the Surrey event, the participants did not try to will out the calculated positive outcome. The goodness of the event organically surfaced through the interplay among the setting, the people, and the non-calculative flow of the event. The event had the agenda (outline) for two days such as who presents what, but the participants attuned to what was emerging throughout the days. It was a different type of gathering from typical corporate training programs that are created by the deductive approach of using the instructional systems design. In such programs, the measurable goals and objectives are identified first, and then designers move onto dividing them into sub-goals and identifying strategies and activities to achieve these sub-goals. Teaching points and learning points are identified and captured in training manuals for

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[84] Martin Heidegger, "The Thinker as Poet," in *Poetry, Language, Thought,* (2001), 7.
[85] Hubert Dreyfus, "Heidegger on the Connection Between Nihilism, Art, Technology, and Politics."

instructors, so that there is not much deviation among training sessions delivered by different instructors. I used to work in that kind of environment as the producer of training programs in leadership and human skills. This approach has its own merits, but it is driven by the *Ge-stell* and the technological understanding of being. On the other hand, the Surrey event had *technology* (as *technikon* and *techne*) in the original sense for the ancient Greek and it prompted poiesis in our group as for the Greek, "*techne* belongs to bringing-forth, to *poiesis*, it is something poietic."[86]

3.5 The Thinking: Meditative Thinking and Hermeneutic Circle

The event generated the hermeneutic circle in which the participants were positively affecting each other, but the process of reflecting on the event deepened my thinking and insights even further. Our hermeneutic circle or the *fore-structure* of understanding never ends.[87] In the acts of contemplating, sharing our reflections, and musing further, we, the authors of this paper, keep deepening our understanding of the Surrey experience. For example, at the beginning of the reflective stage, I was moved by the participants' attitude for each other, that is, considering each other as equal human beings. But as I kept reflecting, I started to question about my being with others. It was easy at the event to perceive the Rising Sun residents as equal human fellows, and I was touched with the preciousness I felt from each person. But through the continuous process of reflection, I thought of my past, of the times I was walking on streets in San Francisco (where I live), trying to avoid homeless people on the streets. I was scared of them, and perceived them as *the homeless* or *the drug addicts*, not as human fellows with their potentialities hidden inside of them. I did not have the same mindset and openness towards the

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[86] Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 13.
[87] Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

homeless people back then. The reflection on the Surrey experience made me realize not only

what I was overlooking but also possibilities of my any other hidden negligence, and gave me an

opportunity to look the world in a different way.

Thinking about the Surrey experience I shared in this Part 3 has the nature of *meditative*

thinking[88] that ponders fundamental yet hidden meanings of being[89] through the contemplative

and cyclic movements of reflections. Heidegger laments people are in "flight from thinking"[90]

and avoid or have forgotten to engage in meditative thinking. He observes that people's

dominant thinking is *calculative thinking*, that is the thinking in the analytic and linear manner

for predicting and analyzing issues, solving problems, or taking actions. The calculative thinking

is rooted in the pursuit of efficiency and predictability, and goes hand in hand with the

technological understanding of being, and it nurtures the downward spiral to the Deathworlds.

The phenomenological attitude and meditative thinking in Transformative

Phenomenology bring transformation to the one who engage in them. It made a difference for

the Surrey event participants, and it made me look at the world differently.

4. *Part Four: Social Learning – Transformative Phenomenology Communities-of-Practice as*
an Antidote to Deathworlds

The reflection of the Surrey event in the last section (Part Three) highlights the power of

the communication and network of people grounded in the phenomenological processes and

attitudes. The synergy among the group members amplifies the transformative nature that has

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[88] Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking.*
[89] In this case, the hidden meanings of being concerns more of the raison d'être of beings, and it has the *ontic-existentiell* nature than the *ontologic-existential* interpretation of Being that Heidegger (2008) argues throughout his career.
[90] *Ibid.,* 45.

been observed by Rehorick and Bentz[91] [92] and explained in Part Two of this paper. In the

following, we will examine the social aspects of Transformative Phenomenology, especially

through the lens of communities-of-practice.

Communities-of-practice (CoPs) are groups of people who share a concern or a passion

for something they do and learn to do it better as they regularly interact.[93] Lave and Wenger

introduced the concept as a framework for understanding social ways of knowing and earning.[94]

The framework evolved into a social theory of learning.[95] [96] The concept emerged out of a study

of apprenticeship that identified that learning takes place through a complex set of social

relationships that exists beyond the mentor and novice—where learning is more reliant on

journeyman and more experienced apprentices that act as a "living curriculum" for the

apprentice who is seeking identity. The Fielding scholar-practitioner community meets the

criteria defining a CoP espoused by Wenger: CoPs share a domain of interest, consist of a formal

or informal caring community that enables people to learn from each other, and focus on a

shared practice.[97] The cultivation of these elements by the community is a key activity of its

members. Members navigate from the periphery of the community toward more central roles as

they gain confidence and revise their identities toward one that values expertise. "The practice of

the community is dynamic and involves learning on the part of everyone."[98]

Wenger identifies four elements of social learning capability that supports innovation and

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[91] Rehorick and Bentz, *Transformative Phenomenology.*
[92] Rehorick and Bentz, *Expressions of Phenomenological Research.*
[93] Etienne Wenger-Trayner and Beverly Wenger-Trayner, *Communities of Practice: A Brief Introduction,* (2015).
[94] Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning*, (1991).
[95] Valerie Farnsworth, Irene Kleanthous, and Etienne Wenger-Trayner, "Communities of Practice as a Social Theory of Learning: A Conversation with Etienne Wenger," *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 64(2), 139-160.
[96] Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity,* (1998).
[97] Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, *Communities of Practice: A Brief Introduction*.
[98] *Ibid.,* 4.

learning in social systems.[99] *Social learning spaces* promote genuine encounters between learners. *Learning citizenship* requires personal engagement and a willingness to learn. *Social artists* provide bold, or quiet, inspiration to learning citizens and are tuned to the social dynamics of the learning space. *Learning governance* focuses on decision processes that optimize social learning capability. All of these elements were evident at the Surrey meeting. New perspectives emerged as voices from two inquiring communities intersected within an empathetic social environment and inviting physical space.

A model of the Fielding Phenomenological CoP provides some insight into the complexity of social learning systems (Figure 3). Participants of the Surrey meeting are depicted as a circle of Schutzian puppets representing dispossessed people (including people in recovery), students encountering phenomenology for the first time, doctoral students, and leregogic graduate scholar-practitioners, mentors, and social innovators. Testimony of consciousness-raising and identity seeking is illustrated through quotations from some of the participants.

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[99] Etienne Wenger, "Social Learning Capability: Four Essays on Innovation and Learning in Social Systems," in *Social Innovation, Sociedade e Trabalho,* (2009).

The Fielding & Phoenix Society Communities Intersect

"I don't know who I am!"

"When you are living on the street and doing drugs, you don't care, you don't care about anything."

The Transformative Phenomenologist: welcoming, humble, empathetic quiet, somatic, "leregogic" (learned)

The Dispossessed One

The Mentor

The Novice

"Fellowship, reflecting, and singing with this community was truly transformative."

Space

Empathy

"Will I join (The Transcendent One) in his transcendence and lose my physical universe?"

Intersecting Communities

" (struggling to find words) ...Everywhere I go ... (pause) ... they say they love me."

The Transcendent One

Inquiring Cultures

The Student

"Our phenomenological attitude ... was filling the rooms and the participants' hearts as if they were patterns in music ..."

"We're just two people trying to love the world as it is and trying to change it for the better".

The "Alum"

"The weekend was an affirmation that I have finally, fully, become a PhD."

"The experience raised my consciousness and questions about what makes a civil society, a good community, a home."

"I was ... powerfully reminded that ... I am an evolving scholar/practitioner who will always seek and find new learning and pathways of growth."
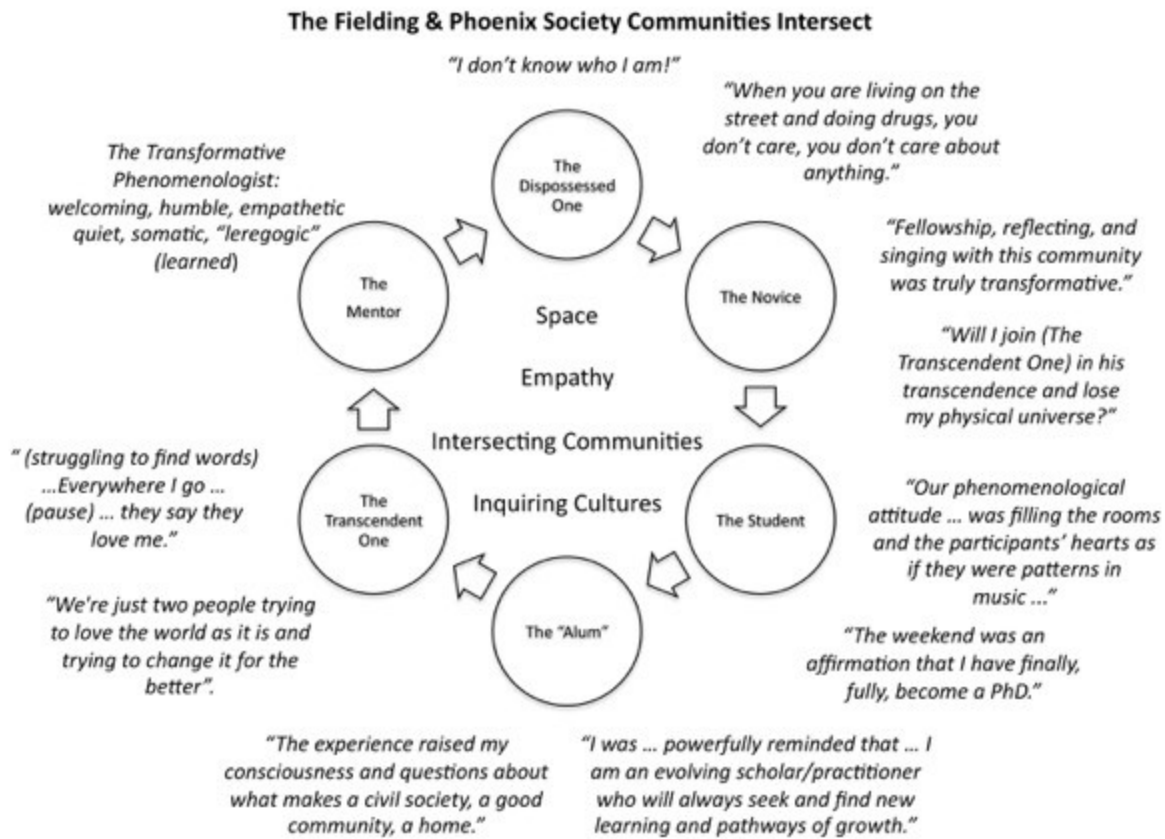
Figure 3: A Phenomenological Community-of-Practice in Action represented as a circle of Schutzian puppets.

The circular construction of the figure suggests that a phenomenological CoP is a learning process, in which a learner takes an on-going journey as a new learning or horizon puts a learner onto a new level of learning process. Just like the hermeneutic circle, it is an upward spiral to deepen the understanding and growth. Conversely, the uncomfortable, the sense of not knowing, and vulnerability are inevitable aspects of the circular learning process as it demands going back to the Novice. The phenomenological CoP as social learning system provides mutual support for the learning process for the members for their growing pain, while it keeps in check for the development of individual and collective hubris.

The circular nature of social learning also suggests that the learning process is always available to *start again* even when a learner gets lost. This is significant in the current epoch of

the Deathworlds where people feel their selves are fractured due to the controlling and technocratic thinking that permeates the modern world. The computer assisted social media is driven by and fosters the *fast-communication* (*fast* as in fast-food, meaning quick but superficial and not much nutrients), and it fuels further fragmentation in the Lifeworlds and fractured selves. As the participants of the Surrey event experienced, the social communication that embodies the phenomenological qualities and attitudes heals human spirits and unites people. It was a place that Habemas's *truthful* communication existed.[100]

Looking at the Surrey event as a CoP grounded in Transformational Phenomenology, the four aspects of truthful communication permeate. Whether it is influenced by Husserlian bracketing or Heideggerian fore-structure, the processes of reflecting, heeding, identifying, and sharing one's assumptions and biases are a part of the thinking, talking, and acting for the participants, which made the conversation *understandable* (speakers share their norms and assumptions) and *truthful* (examine their ideological and experiential distortions). The community consisted of various people in terms of their backgrounds, such as professional, academic, experiential, ideological, social, and economical. Plus, the ways they experience the world—the way they think and feel, and what they think and feel—were all different. Yet the participants of the event resonated with each other, and made the communication *true* (assertions are cogent and affirmed by others). The topics and conversations at the meeting were grounded in individual and collective transformations, which held *rightness* (speakers follow valid moral norms) in their communication.

As stated earlier, CoPs in general are for people to jointly learn and in which to develop certain topic areas—content—that is shared as a common concern or a passion for something

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[100] Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society.*

they do.[101] For CoPs grounded in Transformative Phenomenology, concern for both content and process are essential as a way of ensuring the process of growth. While members deepen their skills and knowledge through the truthful communication, such communication itself reinforces the aforementioned qualities and attributes of Transformational Phenomenology among the members.

Thus far, the discussion of the phenomenological CoPs as social learning focused the ones in Fielding Graduate University including the one from Surrey event, but the CoPs grounded in Transformative Phenomenology are not limited to official groups of researchers, scholars, scholar-practitioners, or professional practitioners, nor need to be affiliated to Fielding Graduate University. Anyone who practices Transformational Phenomenology as a research methodology, a way of living, or a learning process is a part of the larger CoP of Transformational Phenomenology. Opportunities to engage and embodiment of its principles, qualities, and attitudes can create truthful communication in their spheres of influences.

5. Epilogue

The danger is in the near. It is the Deathworld in our post-modern society, where the calculative and technology driven thinking is invisibly dominant, and the extinction of species is visibly happening. While people's selves are fractured and alienated, the need for revitalizing the spiritual reality of mankind and other living species has been growing. A number of philosophers and thinkers call for looking into our consciousness, and Habermas (1979) urges us to engage in *truthful* communication to counter the Deathworlds and revitalize the Lifeworlds.[102]

Processes such as Transformative Phenomenology provide a container or vessel for

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[101] Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner, *Communities of Practice: A Brief Introduction*.
[102] Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society.*

cultivating truthful communication among us, and act as an antidote to the Deathworlds. Transformative Phenomenology, as an umbrella concept for a phenomenological research methodology and method, a way of living, a learning process, and a community of practice, is grounded in the actions and practices in the lifeworlds, the somatic, the hermeneutics, and the leregogic attitudes, which leads to transformations both in individual and collective levels. The process of engaging and enacting Transformative Phenomenology in our lives brings *oneness* as the inclusive coherence that transcends multifold realities.

As noted earlier, Gebser calls for each one of us looking into selves and our consciousness in order to restore healthy spiritual reality.[103] It is a call for getting back the Lifeworlds from the Deathworlds. We, the authors of this paper agree with Gebser: "great demands are placed on us, and each one of us have been giving a grave responsibility, not merely to survey but to actually traverse the path opening before us.[104] A vessel is here, as Transformative Phenomenology, waiting for ones who wish to take a responsibility and traverse the path with us.

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[103] Gebser, *The Ever-Present Origin.*
[104] *Ibid.,* 5.

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