Phenomenology of Aesthetic Organising—Ways Towards Aesthetically Responsive Organizations

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INTRODUCTION—“THE STATE OF THE ART”

Organising and organisational culture always refer to embodied dimensions as well as emotional situations and expressive processes. Despite its apparent significance, relatively little or limited theoretical considerations have been pursued concerning these neglected dimensions. The phenomenological roles of embodiment, emotions and the significance of ways of aesthetic expression for the organisational culture have not yet been a main focus of “modern” organization research and practice so far. Confined to “paradigm of modernity” these realms have been excluded or given a subordinate role on the organisational research agenda. However, there has been a growing interest in emotions and aesthetics on the part of organisation theorists in recent years (e.g. Gagliardi 1990, 1996; Höpfl and Linstead 2000; Rafaeli and Sutton 1987; Ramirez 1991; Sandelands and Buchner 1988; Strati 1990, 1992, 1996, 1999).

Phenomenological perspectives offer relevant insights into these neglected processes and can contribute to a further development of an aesthetic approach towards organisations and organising processes. In particular, the advanced phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty allows a descriptive and interpretative approach to the aesthetic role of the embodied, emotional and expressive dimensions of organising. In recognising the bodily and emotional constituents the paper tries to outline a “processual base” for approaching the pre-reflexive, yet active dimensions and influences within the organising aesthetic life-worlds. With this understanding, phenomenology provides possibilities to re-assess the relevance of direct experiences and reinstall the effects and values of phenomenal aesthetic qualities of organisational life. Moreover, “embodied intentionality” and responsive inter-action, respectively, “inter-passion” provide productive media for the enfolding of aesthetic meaning and sensitive responsibilities within organising realities.

The article first describes forms of “incorporated” or embodied dimensions of organisational culture. Emphasising the relevance of perception and embodied experiences, organisations are interpreted as embodied life-worlds, within which organising is primarily

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not only what people think and cognitively do, but what they live through with their operative intentionality. As this is profoundly related to emotions, their role in the organisational working-life and the implications of “emotional labour” will be discussed in depth.

Based on the phenomenological insights of embodiment and emotions, their significance for organising aesthetics are highlighted and discussed. Correspondingly, a processual “aesthetics of organising” will be offered and the importance of narratives outlined. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion on managerial and organisational implications and consequences of an embodied and emotional responsive organisation culture. At the non-ending end, some ideas about future research for a processual and responsive aesthetics of organising open up possible horizons.

THE EMBODIMENT AND EXPRESSIVENESS OF ORGANISING

From a phenomenological perspective all those involved in the organising process are first and foremost embodied beings who are embedded in a specific “life-world”. Advanced phenomenology can help render explicit these implicit embodied processes and significance of emotional experiences within the multiple constituencies involved. Not only do we “know more than we can tell” with respect to our pre-comprehension of phenomena (Polanyi, 1966), but we are immersed in a world of experience in which the lived is always greater than the known (Merleau-Ponty, 1963). That is, life both precedes and exceeds our very effort to grasp it. All pre-positional and tacit knowledge of this reality is based on daily dealings within the “corporate” context of organising. And the most fundamental way in which employees and customers are involved in these “life-worlds” is their corporeal interaction (Merleau-Ponty, 1963).

Actually this basic approach to perception already relates to a primary aesthetic dimension. Etymologically deriving from the Greek “aisthesis”, aesthetics refer to expressions which designate sensation and perception altogether, prior to any artistic meaning. The Greek verb “aisthanomai” denotes the capacity to perceive with the senses, sensing through physical sensory perception. Aesthetics refers to the sensibilities actionable to support the human perception and observe.

Merleau-Ponty, in particular, goes to the heart of embodied living experience, which is what perception is. Perception is not simply the result of the impact of the external world on the body; for even if the body is distinct from the world it inhabits, it is not separate from it. There is only perception as it is lived in the world. And the same is true for consciousness as the perceiving mind is an incarnated mind consciousness for its part, does not relate to the world in the manner of a thinker in relation to a series of objects. There is no subject in general, in effect, one entirely autonomous and separate from its objects, as Descartes argued. Rather, consciousness is perceptual; consequently, the certainty of ideas is based on the certainty of perception. This yields an account of the “subject” as a perceiving body, situated in time, and is immersed in the living world. In perceiving the embodied world of daily environment, these worlds are constituted as meaningful.

ORGANIZATIONS AS EMBODIED “LIFE-WORLDS”

This incarnate status of the perceiving subject opens the way to a phenomenological description of the living present in organisations too. It is through their (physical) perceptual selves that the subjects of the organising processes are situated in their environment in a tactile, visual, olfactory or auditory way. Whatever they think, feel or do, they are exposed to...
a synchronised field of the senses, in the midst of a world of touch, sight, smell, and sound. A phenomenological understanding of the organising process takes these sense-related contacts into consideration systematically.

In order to approach these interrelated processes they are understood as “embodied intention”. The original intentionality of the bodily consciousness of the agent within the service sphere does not feel an “I think”, but an “I can” or “I relate to”. In other words, the atmosphere within organising is primarily not what people think about it, but what they live through with their “operative intentionality” (Merleau-Ponty, 1963, p. xviii). In such an intentional space and time, organisations and its organising agents are embodied in particular and correlated ways. It is through the body that the agents of the organisational process directly reach their perceived and handled “objects” of work (or consumption). All those involved in the organisation process—even in media intermediated virtual networks—always encounter perceived realities through some body organs, from an intentional and specific point of seeing, hearing or touching. The body responds to meaningful questions posed to it through a situational context in which the body itself takes part. Both the embodied situation and the intentional, relational, and expressed contexts refer to an implicit dimension of emotions. Therefore, a phenomenology of emotions for the organising process will be delineated in the following.

PHENOMENOLOGY OF EMOTIONS IN THE ORGANISATIONAL WORKING-LIFE

Feelings permeate almost all-social transactions within the organising process. They shape and reflect the structure of everyday life in organisations and in the “production” and “consumption” of services. The possibility of expressing or the pressure to suppress, sympathy, joy, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, embarrassment, influences the quality of organising and the service process in an essential way. Generally, emotions are a constituent of meaning in organisational life (Fineman 1993). That is to say that emotions do not just have an “impact” on social and organisational life but they constitute the social aesthetic and organisational life itself. As “discursive” and “presentational” acts (Langer 1942; Cassirer 1964) emotions influence the way that members of organisations perceive, interpret, control, evaluate and resist their organisational actions (Waldron 1994).

This is particularly relevant to personal relations within service companies, respectively, service-like relations in organisations. The significance of emotions to services is due to the fact that satisfaction felt by the “servers” translates directly and subconsciously into customer satisfaction. In order to work out how emotions play a key role in organisational and customer-related activities, a phenomenology of working life is required which reflects the following questions: What are the “feeling rules” of organization? What impacts do they exercise on the “emotional labour” of service “production”? How does the sharing of work-feelings determine the efficacy of services and organisational activities? In other words, what are the specific emotionalities for a committed and productive working in services and organisations? Furthermore, it will be important to ask what influence they have on the reorganisation for a more effective service delivery and organisational process. What are the favourable circumstances for creating a productive service working culture? Finally, which organisational and managerial implications can be derived?

FEELING RULES IN ORGANISATIONS

Emotional energy mobilises constructive energy or helps determine a sense of belonging or solidarity (Collins 1990). This is also true for those working within organisations. In general,
“real feelings” both determine and are determined by organisational order and culture (van Maanen, and Kunda 1989). On the one hand, feelings influence formal and rational organisational processes and meetings, on the other they are opposed by emotional control and result-driven rational bureaucratisation. Organisations exercise a constraining control over displays of feelings in general and “emotional labour” in particular. Emotional labour refers to the management of feelings (Hochschild 1983, p. 7) or behaviour (Ashforth and Humphrey 1990, 1993), creating a publicly observable embodied display. As implicit emotional norms, feeling rules specify the range, intensity, duration, and object of private emotion, which should be experienced. As part of the service process, they are institutionalised in organisationally sanctioned scripts (Humphrey and Ashforth 1994). Through neutralising, buffering, prescribing and normalising the experience felt and its expression, emotions are compelled to conform to the norms of rationality (Ashford and Humphrey 1993, p. 109). Following fixed lines and reproducing bureaucratic patterns, service employees can be forced to pay attention to feelings which are not their own, causing personal and interpersonal conflicts. The gap between felt and expressed emotions marginalises individual experiences and negates the intimacy that typically accompanies personal feelings. Organisational control of emotions can lead to the suppression of disagreements, eliminating a productive commitment and creative employee participation (Higgins et al. 1992). The suppression of feelings during interactions with colleagues and customers may result in altered relational perceptions and changed communication patterns. Equally an outburst of highly intense negative or repressed emotions may then result in a climate of distrust and disrespect between employees and consequently transmitted towards customers (Price et al. 1995).

“WORK-FEELINGS” IN ORGANISATIONS

To overcome the problems of emotional practice we need to understand the underlying assumptions: the dualism of rationality and emotionality is socially constructed (de Sousa 1987; Harré 1986; Kemper 1993; Putnam and Mumby 1993), and consequently open to change. Understanding the significance of “work-feelings” can contribute to escaping from this dualistic trap. “Work-feelings” are those emotions, which emerge from human interaction rather than being imposed by instrumental goals and bureaucratic pseudo-rationality (Sandelands 1988; Hirschhorn 1988; Mumby and Putnam 1992). Complex, dynamic and interactive feelings emerge coincidentally with thoughts as a form of activity on the job. Feelings are not merely processed information or affective reactions, but an emergent quality of work as an ongoing process (Sandelands 1988). Emergent work-feelings and their corresponding “emotional labour” facilitate, in addition to task effectiveness what can be called “productive resonance”. They influence how to negotiate the meaning of various identities (Ashford and Humphrey 1993) roles and relationships during the service encounter, rather than conforming to predetermined display rules or to prescribed norms (Wharton 1993; Wharton and Erickson 1993).

However, work-feelings are intertwined in an ambivalent tension: In organisational everyday life and during concrete encounters employees often mask and/or simulate their feelings in order to manage the required social impressions avoiding embarrassment, and to save face. The effort to control and to bear the inconsistency of felt and feigned feelings can be alienating, stressful and hence counter-productive. Surface-acting, “expression management” and the already mentioned ascribed feeling rules—aiming at serving commercial or strategic ends—cause the structural tension between felt and pretended emotions to be
intensified. With a commercialisation of feelings (Hochschild 1983), the possibility for employees to lose touch with their own feelings increases.

Emotional dissonance occurs when an employee is required to express emotions that are not genuinely felt in the particular situation. A person may feel nothing when a certain emotional display is required, or the display rule may require the suppression of undesired emotions and the expression of neutrality or a positive emotion instead of a negative one. Emotional dissonance may originate from “faking in good faith” when the employee accepts the underlying display rule or from “faking in bad faith” when the feeling rule is not accepted (Hochschild 1983; Rafaeli and Sutton 1987). Various authors (e.g. (Abraham 1998; Adelmann 1995) propose that faking in bad faith has the most negative consequences. Thus emotional labour comprised both faking and suppressing of emotion causing emotional dissonance which can have severe consequences. Such dissonance can lead to personal and work-related maladjustment and physical and psychological dysfunction (King and Emmons 1990). It can cause alienation, stress, demotivation and burnout.

A mere instrumentalisation of managed feelings, using “affect-inducing-procedures” (Baron 1993; Isen and Baron 1991) for behavioural control, has been thoroughly criticised (Kemper 1990; Flam 1990; Conrad and Witte 1994) as it remains insufficient and limited. Even though “display-rules” may regulate expressive behaviour; they cannot regulate expressive (often involuntary) experiences, which are subject to situational stress, mood, fatigue and other factors in addition to normative demands (Thoits 1989, 1990). These problematic aspects of work-feelings are particularly prevalent in jobs with low autonomy and mere representational functions (Wharton 1993; Ritzer 1993).

Other studies have shown a differentiated view on the complex processes of work-feelings which can also become a performance game of mutual winners (Wouters 1989). Taking into consideration other roles in life and the psycho-dynamic context (James 1989; Fineman 1993; Wharton and Erickson 1993), or informal realms of division of emotional labour (James 1993; Hochschild 1996), which could lead to an extension of the concept of work-feelings. A personalised role enactment and emotional “interpersonal role-making” (Graen 1976) can contribute to a more satisfying self-expression and mutual experience. Thus there is a tremendous potential that unimpeded expressions of emotion can act as a catalyst for a productive atmosphere. Well-performed emotional labour provides an opportunity to “act out” (Cheney 1983: 346) one’s identification, that is to express one’s fidelity to the valued identity. Sharing of emotional experiences develops mutual affection, connectedness and cohesion that break down anonymity. Such interrelation and sense of community produce a mutual understanding and may help to develop a productive “self-and-we-identity”. In reciprocal relationships, each person sees the other as sharing meanings and cumulative, relevant experiences. Consequently valuing feelings as an enhancing force for the community for service-workers and clients can provide options for yielding forms of organising more productive service-processes. Thus, emotion work is not per se either positive or negative. Rather, emotion display and sensitivity requirements are related to emotional exhaustion but also to personal accomplishment (Zapf et al. 1999, p. 396).

As we have seen “body-based”, subjective and shared emotions are central for an effective organisational work context and its transformation. Therefore, changes in the implicit and explicit feeling rules can bring new life into an organisations’s culture and subcultures, permitting shifts from secrecy to openness, confrontation to collaboration. Through situated perception the embodied emotions can become “organs of expressions”.

A re-contextualisation of emotions can be more than venting the frustrations or moan sessions of demotivation; it can substantially redefine the emotional “material” and contribute to a more productive “emotional texture” of the organisation. In this way it will be possible to feel different about feelings because those involved find different explanations
and treatments for the emotional “event” of work (Rime 1991). Consequently the emotional atmosphere influences and even shapes the conditions that determine the interpretations and acting in situated organisational contexts. Such an organisational climate not only motivates (Matsumoto and Sanders 1988), but will be also the base for a lasting job satisfaction and an improved performance (Jones and James 1979; Payne *et al.* 1976; Schneider 1990).

Hence, the emotional context is not just a stimulating environment for behavioural effort and cognitive variables, but a nested arrangement of structures and processes where the shared interpretations and learning of actors (Pettigrew 1990) help to shape a productive role-playing performances in the post-industrial world.5

**PROCESSUAL AESTHETICS OF ORGANISING**

Based on the phenomenological insights of embodiment and emotions in the following, a dynamic understanding of aesthetic of organising will be developed. As aesthetic experience includes a form of sensory knowledge, a form of expressive action and a form of communication (Gagliardi 1996, p. 566), aesthetic phenomena of organisational life, aesthetic responses and judgements and the role of narratives will be outlined.

“Aesthetics”, aesthetic-like feelings and values are a pervading part of the fabric of organisations everyday activities, experiences, judgements and reality. They imply heuristitic-evocative processes of imagination concerning always the interweaving with prior experiences and sensory faculties of aesthetic understanding (Strati 1999, p. 14). Art-like forms invariably not only reflect the life within organisation, they also often attempt to influence this very life. But much art-like forms and processes are unrecognised as such because it addresses issues and preoccupations of everyday life. We need to push the limits of aesthetics by looking at the intersection of art and daily life (Novitz 1992). Therefore, it becomes necessary to rethink our conception of the relations between “art” and life in a way that reflects more adequately the role that “art” and “enacted aesthetics” play in the lives of organisation.

Organizations are embodying aesthetic “properties” and use various aesthetic symbols and artefacts. Certain arrangements of designs and artifices are agreeable, and others the reverse, and they affect our embodiment and bodily states in the context of workplace settings and organisational life. But to ask whether “organisations” have aesthetic artefacts or are aesthetic, is perhaps already a wrong-footed starting point. It is the *process* of organisational activities and dynamics that needs to be examined and understood if we are to find aesthetic insights into the nature of either organising or the relationship of managing and following. It is the relational aspects, which are critical for an approach of these activities as aesthetic. Instead of static notion6 we need to understand the *transformational quality* of aesthetic dynamics of these embodied and felt processes as aesthetic dimensions that are ever present.

**RELATIONAL APPROACH**

For a relational approach, organisations are a dynamic constellation of relationships among forces (Hosking *et al.* 1995; Gergen 1994c; Mauws 1995). Organisational structure is not substantively fixed but rather is a shifting cluster of variable aspects or elements throughout a configured mesh (Meyer *et al.* 1993). Relationality provides a decentered perspective to organisation because the forces are dispersed and any view of the organisations itself requires one to take a spatio-temporal, holistic position and hence to invoke yet another set of relations. It allows to overcome the inherent problems and limits of a atomistic and
mechanistic substantialist perspective, including reification, the tendency to centre analysis on certain substantive feature, common denominator or generative first principle, and the exclusion of the observer from the system of organisational relations.

The relationalist methodology emphasises conditions of possibility rather than “cause”, and “effect”; i.e. it encourages us to seek the conditions by which it becomes possible to experience an object called “organisation” (Sandelands and Srivatsan 1993).

Aesthetic processes of organising too, need to be considered as how they make and remake persons, structures and entire worlds in an ongoing process of relating. The underlying relational processes author-is or constellates ‘the way things are’ and not the other way around. Aesthetic relating may construct multiple realities as different but equal, avoiding the imposition of one voice. This very different view of relating sets aside traditional inside–outside distinctions such as those between subject and object. Persons and worlds are not like inputs to processes, but are part of an ongoing (re-)construction in processes of relating text and context, act and supplement. In other words, persons and their worlds as well as their aesthetic experiences are emergent “products” of relational processes.

What I have in mind is not to approach aesthetics of organisation as “entities”, but to look at the embodied and situated relations and invisible but effective “structuring structures” with regard to their aesthetic qualities. Such approach would take the form of an aesthetic perception and appreciation or depreciation of, e.g.:

- the pleasure or pain experienced by observing the dis-/functioning of formal and informal rules or ways of behaviour
- the radiant fairness or otherwise of lines of co-ordination among employees and managers
- the ambivalence that certain sequences of ideas charm us as much as others tire us
- the toughness of unbending procedures
- the nonsensical influence of figures and quantification or accounting approaches with their monetarising controlling consequences
- the ridiculous and foolish way of specific power-politics
- the kitsch-like manner of feedback as pretentiousness or faux-gravity
- the grotesques of hypocritical acknowledging and praising
- the ugliness of prejudiced and unjust criticising
- the stressful strain of time pressure and the annoying or inauspicious distractions
- the boredom and dullness of unproductive work-meetings or empty rhetoric
- the stifling suffocation of stress, frustration and demotivation
- the hurting feeling of cognitive and emotional dissonance
- the monstrous violence of subtle, disgusting mobbing and hostile bullying
- the painful distress and anxiety of fears concerning workplace security and employability

But also:

- the beauty of an innovative business-plan
- the ambivalent feelings of emotional labour
- the satisfying play-like being in flow as “optimal experience”
- the sublime qualities of managerial work including element of artistry
- the encountering of commitment and trust
- the occurrence of fulfilling win–win situations
- the affection of experiencing the creation added value…
- the gratifying and delightful fulfilment of attained quality at work
the elegance of short and cogent presentations
● the genuineness of innovative organisational developments or
● the uplifting drive of successful performance achievement and work-satisfaction

This list could be added by further aesthetically relevant feelings like fear, rapture, anger, disgust, contempt, shame, guilt, sadness or interest, surprise, curiosity and joy relate to organisational processes. They all imply a potential transformation and are always embodied in temporal, non-verbally expressed, sometimes language movements in the inter(-personal-) space. As to say with Langer every artistic process-form reflects the dynamism that is constantly building up the life of feeling (Langer 1942).

The nascent logic inherent in bodily interaction, albeit ambiguous in its density and intensity, is nevertheless luminous in its import. This is perhaps due to the fact that it is fuller, richer, deeper and somewhat darker in its dense “texture”. By accessing and evaluating such processes of daily contact and dealings we respond aesthetically, and can also make aesthetical interpretations and judgements about them.

AESTHETIC RESPONSE AND EMBODIED KNOWLEDGE AND COMPETENCY

If we perceive the organising process sensitively and energetically, we develop an aesthetic response to it as an ongoing process. What competent aesthetic perception and response might consist of, and whether this can meaningfully be developed, is the subject of considerable debate in its own right. One essential ingredient for this is certainly knowledge of the constitution and context of the specific part of organisational processes in question. Such knowledge is not to be understood as the possession of the minutiae of factual knowledge about organisations, but more a reflected awareness of the presence of interrelated qualities, which are affecting. It is through the body that we know, learn and develop competencies. The “body” which knows is not the anatomical body which ends with the epidermis; it is the lived body. This is the body, which feels the ‘here,’ and also lives ‘there’. It is the sentient self, which merges with the world. At this level, there is no separation between self, which merges with the world. At this level, there is no separation between self, other, and world. This is the self, which emerges from the world and merges with the world because it is the world.7

According to Merleau-Ponty we are acquiring our skills by dealing with things and situation, and in turn they influence how things and situation show up for as requiring our responses. In fact our relation to the world is transformed as we acquire a skill. Competency can be understood as the ability to seek and find new rules and reasoning procedures to decide upon a plan or perspective. This requires the capacity to draw back and to adopt the detached rule-following stance (with a beginner’s mind of an “adult” novice). Proficiency develops, if experience is assimilated in an atheoretical way and when intuitive behaviour replaces reasoned responses. Involved intuitive response makes it much easier to see what needs to be achieved, instead of tiresome and strenuous calculating procedures, to select among several possible alternatives. Immersed in the world of skilful activity the proficient performer sees what needs to be done, but decides how to do it. On a next level the experienced expert not only sees what needs to be achieved, but thanks to a vast repertoire of situated discriminations he sees how to achieve his goal. This ability to make more subtle and refined discriminations allow an immediate intuitive situational response that is characteristic of expertise. What the learner acquires through experience is not represented in the mind but is presented to the learner as a more and more finely discriminated situation, which then solicits a more and more refined response. In so far as the situation does not
clearly solicit a single response or the response does not produce a satisfactory result, the learner is led to further refine his discrimination.

Merleau-Ponty calls this feedback-loop the “intentional arc”, which is projecting round about us, our past, our future and our human setting. The idea of an intentional arc is meant to capture the idea that all past experiences are projected back into (present) world. The intentional arc is steadily enriched and refined but as a non-goal-directed activity. It can be purposive without the agent entertaining a purpose. Therefore aesthetic experience involves attending to, perceiving, and appreciating an “object-and-process-for-itself”, without regard to whatever utilitarian function it might perform. This implies also an incorporation of the unknown, recognising the ineffable contents of the experience (e.g. realising that at the roots of anger, hatred, envy, jealousy, pride and prejudice and other negative emotions or passions lies the desire to be accepted by, approved of and esteemed by others).

Knowledge, emotions and impressions about the acting of people and structures have an effect on our aesthetic (dis+) appreciation of them, just as knowledge about the genre and the artist have an effect on our aesthetic (dis+) appreciation of a work of art. Equally our aesthetic valuation of organisational processes is informed by everything which is being felt. Known and remembered about it—almost inevitably, judged as its “character”.

Studies of aesthetic response are complex and conceptually rich. Theories from art historians, psychoanalysts, semioticians, information theorists, and philosophical aestheticians have all contributed to the understanding of man’s creation of and response to works and processes of art. These varied perspectives attempt mostly to explain aesthetics by the detection of structural properties of aesthetic stimuli and patterns, and of individuals’ perceptual reactions to these properties (Cupchik and Heinricks 1981). Aesthetic responses are primarily emotional or feeling responses and are thus very personal. They cannot be objectively evaluated as “right” or wrong. An aesthetic response is not reducible to a feeling of satisfaction at the possession of any resource, as aesthetic values cannot be considered as type of “amenity value”.

**AESTHETIC INTERPRETATION AND IMAGINATIONS**

Interpreting aesthetic events offer access to possible perspectives, situations, constructions, and these permit us to draw new meanings. In interpreting, the “reader” (e.g. consumer) is involved in the dynamic of de-familiarizing and de-pragmatizing themselves as old orientations toward the subject matter is broken and ultimately reoriented. This reorientation, however, is the imaginative aspect of the interpreting project. The power of a new image to surprise us matters both because the unexpected reveals what the world already meant to us although we hadn’t noticed, and because the unexpected challenges the rigidity of habit and conventions, in the process showing us new ways to make meaning. With Bachelard (1958/1969) we need to value the suddenness of the unexpected and the surprise of the idiosyncratic not only as signs of semantic innovation but also for their revelatory power. Getting engaged with the eventful powers of wonder, astonishment, and “adult innocence” performed narrated imagination and poetic images can be appraised for their ability to break through the blinders of habitual perception and to discover the particular.

In practical terms, by interpreting imaginative works we supply meaning to a context by bringing into play the surplus of meaning, its poly-semanticism. It is this polysemic contest
of meanings which permits the actual “exploitation” of the metaphorical economy of the context which is never exhaustive. By unfettering the polysematic richness contained in the codification of conceptual organisational discourse alternative contextual imaginations and practices become approachable. Creative imagination, inextricably tied to the acts of interpreting, is nothing other than the act of revivifying the moribund discourse of conceptual thought and conventional organisational practices.

The aesthetic response and interpretation can be followed by aesthetically judging the experienced processes. Making a judgement involves description (e.g. identifying and classifying), analysis (e.g. examining the relationship of parts of the process to each other), interpretation (e.g. attaching meaning to the process as a whole), and evaluation (e.g. based on the preceding activities.) Evaluations based upon full perception of the subtlety and nuances of the process will provide a richer and more valid premise for the judgement. However, aesthetic judgements do not always follow this detailed process, and the judgement or evaluation of process is not something necessarily reserved for informed experts. In its original sense referring to the Latin “judicium sensitivium” aesthetic sensible judgement it is based on the “gustus” or the taste and hence distinct from pure intellectual or cognitive knowledge and must be exercised case by case. Although aesthetic judgements cannot claim any universal assent or objective grounding, they are not simply subjective opinions or arbitrary projection, as aesthetically ascribed attributions and judgements can be passed, discussed and negotiated (e.g. within in reference groups) in an ongoing debate. However, importantly this requires that these judgements about organisational processes are conducted within an aesthetic terrain and applied to situations-specific organisational contexts and its particularities. The judgmental faculty (Urteilskraft) is effected with regard to the particular in the aesthetic and a fortiori moral sphere (Strati 1999, p. 105). As a value-loaded position, one aim of such an aesthetic critique could be the identification of ways regarding the qualities of organisational action e.g. a beautiful or ugly life in organisations. The possibility for providing warrant for these appraised interpretations depends upon there being appropriate aesthetic criteria for recognising adequate interpretation and rejection of inadequate ones (Wolfe, 1982, p 40). Adequacy can be approached by relevant patterns, which serve to interpretations that help for better understanding and diagnosing the present situation and offering “guidance” for further creative developments and future actions (or conscious processes of letting-go).

Processual aesthetic judging is primarily concerned with frames for ordering and qualities of relationships rather than content knowledge. And an aesthetic judgement will draw out self-understanding or understanding of a particular context or concept by way of contrast and embellishment and by way of stretching the imagination. Appraisal criteria in the arts indicate that persuasiveness, rather than verifying validity is paramount. Penetration and insight are sought grained in arguments supported by success in shaping conceptions (Eisner 1985). What is reflected in our aesthetic appraisal or organising processes is the specific emotional, relational and contextual involvement within the same. With this there remain a twofold source of ambiguity (a) inherent to the formulation of the aesthetic judgement and (b) relative to participation in a judgement highlighting the elusiveness or organisational aesthetics (Strati 1999, 103). Such a processual aesthetics—as an approach towards organisational understanding—can not only open significant “windows in the walls of the organisation” (Strati 1992, p. 569), but also help us to advance the inner worlds of the same for approaching the pervasive relevance of an experiential perspective. One of the most influential processes in organisations is narrative. Hence, in the following the relevance of a narrative approach for an understanding of the processual—relational aesthetics will be described.
NARRATIONS AS AESTHETIC PROCESS

The responsive, interpreting and judging process can be related to aesthetic communication which may take place in narratives. The re-presentations of telling and sharing stories constitute and open up situations. They create a situation in which an aesthetically oriented subject experiences her-self as belonging to intersubjectively shared lifeworlds, c.q. as participating in a conduct of life which is constitutive of the organisational lifeworlds concerned. As far as an action co-ordinating function is ascribed to aesthetic action, this function is embedded in the “creative eros” of aesthetic communication, that is to say, in the need of socialized and socially integrated narrative agents to communicate their needs experiences, responses, interpretations and evaluations with others.

The sharing and use of performed stories from own experiences and that of other people we know stimulate critical and creative thinking and enhance awareness, fosters empathy and understanding and may deepen appreciation of commonality and of differences.

Stories are a fundamental form in which people express values and reasons, and subsequently make decision about action. The narrative paradigm recognises the capacity of people to create “. . . new stories that better account for their lives or the mystery of life itself” (Fisher 1987, p. 67). Shared story telling can contribute to expressing the organisational experience of members (Boyce 1996, p. 19). However, narratives can also be instrumentalised as a device for the legitimisation of dominant power relationships in organisations, used as ideological forces that privilege some interest over others (Mumby 1988). While story telling communicates the shared values, etc. It can also be a means of managerial oppression and panoptical disciplining (Boje and Gephart 1995). Narratives can set forth powerful and persuasive truth claims—claims about appropriate behaviour and values—that are shielded from testing or debate. Furthermore narrative can provide models of correct behaviour and rules for the extension of the models to new definition and create an anticipated reaction of the failure or protest based on an “invented tradition” of the firm (Witten 1993).

THE SOCIAL PRAGMATICS OF NARRATIVES OR LIVED NARRATIVES AS FORMS OF RELATIONSHIPS

The narratives of daily life may not always be well formed, but under many circumstances their bodily and inter-subjective relations are of particular relevance for personal encounter situations within services. This engagement represents what can be called “international meeting” (Merleau-Ponty 1963) of situated body-subjects. For any deeper understanding of service this embodied meeting process between “provider” and “consumer” will be crucial.9 In service interactions the service quality actually emerges at that point where the embodied “production” and “consumption” interpenetrate. Employees work directly under the gaze and response of their colleagues or clients, whilst their experience is directly dependent on the activity of those working with or serving them. In this way the embodied subjectivities of all of them are fundamentally interrelated. And this “embodied interrelation” is constitutive for the expressive interactions of the organising and service process. However, how does this embodied expression take place? It is through emotions that the corporeal base of service process find an expressive correspondence to a fundamental corporeal metaphoricity in all utterance. The body is the natural symbol of society, the ontological reference of all human organisation and our unconscious transference of it (Douglas 1982).10 The “discourses” of
narratives are also always already lodged within the realm of relations within organising and organisations.

The narrative knowing has long been a neglected aspect of human scholarship in general and in organisational studies in particular (Polkinghorne 1988; Phillips 1995). But organisational and consuming realities are based on narratives too (Orr 1987, 1990). It is through stories as guides of conduct that organisation and consumption work. For service employee narratives enhance bonding and organisational identification in order to update their knowledge and acting. Moreover, for customers, stories serve as an essential practice of interpretation to understand, orientate and evaluate services they buy and become involved with.

Narratives serve as an aesthetic and creative experiential process: It evokes specific thoughts, feelings, images and communications (Gagliardi 1996, p. 566). Prior to defined needs or explicit preferences, the narrator is implicitly involved in the specification of what will be valued collectively and what she/he and others are aiming for. Narration bridges between various meanings, allowing us to cross and re-cross from one meaning to another and making it possible to live with ambiguity and uncertainty. As the symbolic convergence theory (Bormann 1993) has shown, it is through storytelling that meanings, values, and motives converge through forming group narratives and history making integrating with the customer. A typical pattern of a service story includes “customers” and “servers” as protagonists, a quest and/or predicament, attempts to fulfil the quest or to resolve the predicament. Service stories resonate with these symbolic expressions. Stories are the key as to how “prosumers” think about service experiences and the way they evaluate the quality of services. Narrated plots provide “prosumers” a medium to create and experience vicariously the events of their “prosumption”. The service-provider and the customer voluntarily become “caught up” in a co-created story. They participate in a drama and feel psychologically involved in its story line, atmospheric scenarios, unfolding motives, and characters and their informally scripted patterns of interchange. Through an emotional climate and identification with the enacted story both are standing on and continuously rebuilding the common ground of the embodied, symbolic “prosumption” and organising.

Narratives are “cultural storehouses for organisational intelligence.” (Kreps 1989) They reduce uncertainty by providing organisation members with pertinent information and enhancing their uncertainty an increasing predictability. Furthermore they help to manage meanings by providing members common explanations for collective sense making. In this way they facilitate member bonding by giving common symbolic frames of reference. “Living stories” offer keys to the way members in the organisational culture interpret reality, as every organisation has sets of cognitive and interpretative schemes or frames and they provide informal networking and connection among organisation members; embody traces and sometimes explicit articulations of the dreams or goals of the organization.

CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR AN EMBODIED CULTURE OF AESTHETIC ORGANISING

This paper has emphasised the constitutive role of embodiment and emotions for organising processes particularly for services. Possibilities and difficulties of a organisation, which integrates, embodied, emotionalised an symbolic dimensions have been discussed. It became clear that the embodied subtle, often tacit clues and emotional signs of meaning and contexts in situated “body-to-body” communication, constitute specific local practices of organising. In these the, inter-body, emotional and symbolic “landscapes” of the members
of an organisation and its customers “interweave” in a reciprocal insertion (Merleau-Ponty 1969, p. 142).

But the Gestalt of these enclosed practice differ in varies ways from those prevailing in conventional practices of management. The predominant and implicit narrative of conventional leadership follows what Eisler has termed “dominance model” (Eisler 1990). It includes a self-concept that depends on a social–emotional separation from others (subordinates), emphasising imposed rules and controlling rationality within an entitative epistemological paradigm (Hosking et al. 1995). The contextual narratives to which such an understanding of management references to, severely restrict what is thinkable and doable. However, to create an aesthetic-sensitive organisational culture requires and warrants a different kind of management. For an “aesthetic organising” the managerial task agenda will include profoundly changed assignments. “Managing” organisations aesthetically cover a creative co-creation of the internal and external service encounters. This challenge refers to the management of emotional knowledge, problem deployment, and a symbolic and a responsive “aesthetic leadership”.

MANAGING EMOTIONAL AND AESTHETIC KNOWLEDGE

The way in which the space for emotional energy can be “managed” and co-ordinated will be specific to different organisational cultures. Therefore first of all the management of a productive organisational culture requires specific knowledge about the particular emotional and aesthetic setting. The managers need to recognise that the employees, (as well as the customer) are a competent source of relevant emotional and aesthetic information for the improvement of productivity. To permit the durability of successful integration, it is critical to assess and evaluate the major concerns and productive-relevant emotions and aesthetic processes of the worker and customer as “co-workers”. This appraisal of the emotionalities and aesthetics needs to done within the terms, categories or labels of worker and customers way. The “productivity manager” needs to know the felt gaps between expectations and experiences of both the employees and customers and their interrelation. Consequently building an effective integrated “performance-systems” for “monitoring” the quality and performance of the actors becomes necessary. For evaluating the overriding information the questions ought to concentrate on how has and could the embodiment and expression of the organisation and service process be realised or improved; or: why when, in which ways does it fail. In setting-up job, designs and structuring of tasks related to the provision and execution of organisational and service offerings the issues concerning bodily and aesthetic needs and feelings of employees and customers can then be taken into systematic account. Accordingly questions or problems concerning embodied emotions and aesthetic aspects can be answered appropriately during the procurements of material and social “resources”, co-ordination of facilities and when problems occur.

RESPONSIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING AND DEPLOYMENT IN SERVICES AS AN EXAMPLE

Due to various reasons, service processes cause defections and complaints by the customer (Kowalski 1996; Reichheld 1996). Service employees must be given a mandate to solve problems directly. This presupposes that service workers are given adequate resources to be able to salvage critical incidents as they occur on the spot. This requires an understanding of the local practices with its “local ontology” (Gergen 1982). Eliminating cumbersome
bureaucratic procedures and designing flexible handling systems can contribute tremendously to enable adequate responses to situational or structural service-delivery failures. For this employees need appropriate training (e.g. customer awareness seminars to understand customer needs and difficulties better) and tool to deal particularly with problem customers (Bitner et al. 1994). Service provider need to be competent in diagnosing problems, gathering and disseminating relevant information, managing waiting periods and resolving conflicts to groom a better customer interaction (Betran and Hoech 1990). The task of the managers will be to set up a responsive compensation plan for corrective actions or pre-active prevention programs concerning possible conflicts. Ideally this would be completed by an integration of a service problem deployment frame as a planning and communication system (Stauss 1993). In high contact situations, front-line employees receive feedback through facial expressions, tone of voice and empathy directly. But what is needed for a sustained productivity is not only feedback about performance failures or problems but a feed forward (Ballantyne et al. 1995), which redirects the commitment and teamwork into constructive future acting. On the other side the customers can be “trained” to get to know what to expect and to develop an appropriate behaviour in given situations. Treating them as “partial employees” they can learn to contribute of the service productivity enhancing their own and the mutual satisfaction.

EMOTIONAL- AND AESTHETICALLY-SENSITIVE SYMBOLIC MANAGEMENT

The traditional managerial tasks of planning, implementation and control of the service performance have focused on the technical and functional operations. These basic operations need to be extended towards the realms of the emotional and aesthetic processes. Overall, management needs to create a suitable “feeling and aesthetic climate” that is conductive for productive processes. This requires that managers in their actual leadership performance become part of the productive team, who receives hands-on experience.

To make “work feelings” and aesthetics central to participation in the work environment will be the overriding task for any managerial decision-making processes. Corresponding training programmes, which help employees to analyse task and social interactions, could be helpful. Enacted training aim accordingly to develop individual competencies such as empathy and rapport, listening skills, techniques for problem identification and rational analysis-competencies understood to facilitate emotional and aesthetic knowledge of contexts. An alternative to standardised packages or predefined training programmes is to abandon predetermined content by facilitating ‘locally grown’ definitions and needs while focusing on multi-logical (Dachler and Hosking 1995) and dialogical processes.

A successful manager knows how to create conditions for an emotionalising and personalising (Surprenant and Solomon 1987) of the organisation. This would imply that managers themselves serve in facilitating organising and services by transmitting and inspiring productive knowledge and practices. In this way, the manager becomes more a conciliating and alleviating coach than a conceited principal. By building commitment and confidence, removing obstacles, creating opportunities the manager becomes a facilitator who cultivates the organisational teams and each of its embodied members. Through skillful servant leadership an emotionally receptive management of meaning (Smircich 1983; Smircich and Morgan 1982) could contribute to the emergence of an aesthetic culture. The success of “symbolic management” (Griffin et al. 1987; Pfeffer 1981) is to a great extent based on the evocation of emotion. Managers employ emotion–sensitive symbolic means to both foster and shape excitement (Schneider 1990). Myth and rituals evoke shared emotion and hence engender and affirm desired values and beliefs (Trice and Beyer 1984; Turner...
1994). Understood as integrating enactment of myths, rituals always involve both physical and emotional aspects (Rook 1985). What could be called “ritual performance management” creates an idiosyncratic integration of everyday life (Geertz 1973; Siehl et al. 1992) which enables people to live with ambiguity (Weick 1979, 1995) and a sharing of aesthetic experiences (Gagliardi 1996, p. 566; Ramirez 1991).

**RESPONSIVE MANAGEMENT OF EXPRESSIVE CO-CREATION**

Effective managers are skilled in the art of reading the situation that they are attempting to organise or manage and reacting accordingly. In addition to this capacity the reflective service manager of productive settings needs to become a conscious “author” writing symbolic contexts. As a practical author a manager is able to give a sharable symbolic formulation or patterning to already shared feelings arising out of shared circumstances (Shotter 1995). To give a shared and shareable significance of the already shared embodied feelings can creatively enable or restore a flow of productive action. Using formative power of rhetorical language, such practical “authoring” cultivates a sense of responsivity including an emotion-sensitive answerability and forms of addressivity. This prevents that the manager places him/herself ahead of all others in the storytelling and keeps him/her cautious not to dismiss people as having stories that do not count, who are too emotional to tell stories or who have no story. In this way it will be possible to recognise and embrace the silent voices of those marked by gender, race, colour, physical differences, etc. to ensure that they retain a place entrenched rather than being shunted off at the periphery.

Moreover the manager plays a significance role in dramatising (Grove et al. 1992) and coordinating the role performances of organising and service work. Body-sensitive and expressive managerial strategies will set a different tone for the organisation and will influence the communication, decision-making, and leadership patterns of the entire organisation, including relationships with all external individuals and institutions. This requires organisational changes concerning basic assumptions and structures. With flatter, more flexible management structures, enhanced opportunities for an embodiment of feelings and a responsive treatment of emotions may emerge. Through a post-monistic decontextualisation and dialogical solving of situated problems, a “responsive reason” (Waldenfels 1994) can help to deal with raised embodied claims or problems appropriately and to find proper answers. A responsive and transformational service leadership (Seltzer and Bass 1990) knows how to build a free commitment, how to increase intrinsic values, and act as “living symbols” (Wasielewski 1987; Nadler and Tushman 1990).

To sum up, aesthetic sensitive managers need to counsel or leave space for letting-go of both the actual embodied, emotional and expressed levels of organising and service work. Managing and improving organisational and service productivity is dependent on the ability of managers to initiate effectively and sustain emotion-oriented strategies and specific tactics (Ostell 1996). This invites guiding questions concerning as to how possibilities of a more fulfilling embodiment and expression can be upgraded. In other words, the manager has to find out when, why and how the expression or non-expression of embodied emotions becomes productive or counter-productive. Moreover, in direct co-operation with the members of the organisations she/he needs to determine proactively what could be done to prevent the latter from happening. Instead of conventional hierarchies, the new formation of organisation leads towards a more immediate and interactive base for co-ordination. Open decision-making based upon expertise, social competencies and situational or task-oriented rotating leadership (Vanderslice 1988) will become increasingly important. A service quality
leadership is to do with both developing a post-heroic, dispersed leadership capacity in the employees and nurturing them so that they are not dependent on formal leaders (Sims and Lorenzi 1992). The essence of an adequate management of productive embodiment is to create the right matching of the “embodied emotional stake-holder”. It is not the right “leader match” (Fiedler et al. 1976) but a “leading match” in which the expected and felt experiences of all of the Organisational role-players can be satisfied. Such a properly tuned organisation will lead towards an embodied and emotionally responsive organisation culture.

CONCLUSION

Phenomenological and aesthetic considerations had very little impact on organisational theorising and practice to date but which have a great potential for transforming. A phenomenological approach towards organisations may well be qualified not only to shed new light on problems old and new, to reclaim for organisation research parts of man’s quotidian aesthetic world that have been abandoned by science and practice as too private and too subjective. In addition it can serve as a bridge for relating various approaches towards an integrated understanding of aesthetics in organising. It could give access to layers of man’s experience unprobed in everyday living, thus providing deeper foundations for both organisations and life. Merleau-Ponty’s critique of the Cartesian metaphysics projects the possibility of a new, corporeal ontology that reflects the inextricable intertwining of the human “body-subject” with the world it inhabits in organisations. By acknowledging with Merleau-Ponty the intertwining inseparability of “object-knowledge” and “self-knowledge” in the midst of fields of in-between chances for an aesthetic reflection and aesthetic reversibility, receptivity and corresponding responsiveness become approachable. Merleau-Ponty’s approach offers a real chance to work on organising aesthetics. His anti-foundationalism, anti-essentialism and non-dualism, and concept of (good) ambiguities presaged the best in “postmodernism” (Madison 1988). In fact his basic insights entail the anticipatory articulation of post-modern themes: the relinquishment of meta-narratives, the rejection of a purely objective realm and the decentering of the master subject.

Furthermore Merleau-Ponty’s sense of being in its dehiscence and deflagration in his indirect ontology of “flesh” and approach towards reversibility can be interpreted as a “pre-postmodern” “return forward” into what he calls non-dual Wild Being offers instructive interpretation for our current time and future developments of “organising aesthetically” to come. Overall, the phenomenological approach of this paper represents a framework for further analysis. It provides a “bedrock” for more rigorous theory building and empirical testing. The methods of phenomenology offer alternative pattern metaphors for understanding aesthetic processes in organisations. Critically they could contribute to re-examine the implications of variation in qualitative technique. For example phenomenological interviews (Kvale 1983) are a powerful means for attaining an in-depth understanding of other persons embodied and emotional experience. Thus adding to epistemological options (Strati 2000) and relating to primary knowledge and enhancing practices, phenomenology can bring us in closer touch with real-word aesthetic processes in organisations, while ascertain the heterogeneous dimensions involved. As differentiated reminder of the life-world’s multifaceted wholeness and tremendous multi-dimensionality, a phenomenology of aesthetic organising is likely to serve as a helpful antidote to part-views and one-sided analytical-rational methods.

It is hoped that the phenomenological framework proposed in this article may contribute to a more holistically oriented research on embodied, felt and expressed aesthetics in organisations. As by taking into account the embodied, emotional and symbolic organising processes, a better understanding of the constitution and development of the organising
aesthetic process can be attained. Furthermore, with the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty in particular we can cultivate a respect for the unperceivable and unspeakable in the pregnant silence of our bodily being which bespeaks a reverence for the incarnate mystery of life: the hidden and revealing Invisible.

The eye and ear of the heart has its impalpable reasons that the rational mind can never know.

NOTES

1. “To return to things themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always speaks, and in relation to which every scientific schematisation is an abstract and derivative sign-language as is geography in relation to the countryside in which we have learnt beforehand what a forest, a prairie or a river is” Merleau-Ponty 1963, p ix.

2. The bodily and inter-subjective relations are of particular relevance for personal encounter situations within services. This engagement represents what can be called “incarnational meeting” (Merleau-Ponty 1963) of situated body-subjects. For any deeper understanding of service this embodied meeting process between “provider” and “consumer” will be crucial. In service interactions the service quality actually emerges at that point where the embodied “production” and “consumption” interpenetrate. Employees work directly under the gaze and response of their clients, whilst the experience of the customers is directly dependent on the activity of those serving them. In this way the embodied subjectivities of the “producer” and the “consumer” within services sector are fundamentally interrelated. (“pro-sumer”). And this “embodied interrelation” is constitutive for the expressive interactions of the service process. However, how does this embodied expression take place? It is through emotions that the corporeal base of service process find an expressive correspondence.

3. Indeed, the very imbrication of the perceiving organism and its surroundings is what lies at the basis of perception. This means that there is no perception in general—a notion which would turn it into an abstract universal; As a result of the incarnate nature of perception, the perceiving subject is always changing, always going through a process of rebirth. “Our first task will be to re-discover phenomena, the level of living experience through which things and other people are given to us. We shall no longer hold that perception is an incipient science but conversely that classical science is a form of perception which loses sight of its origin and believes itself complete.” Merleau-Ponty 1963, p. 57.

4. Sensual Perception re-creates or re-constituted the world at every moment. (Merleau-Ponty 1963: 207). As enveloped in a living significance for Merleau-Ponty it is literally a form of communion. (Merleau-Ponty 1963: 212) “The sensible gives back to me what I lent to it, but this is only what I took from it in the first place.” (Merleau-Ponty 1963: 214). In this way sense experience is that vital communication with the world which makes it present as a familiar setting of our life.


6. Aesthetics is a category that we create in language. Like every linguistic creation, this category is a double-edged sword that can be empowering or tranquillisign. We need to realise that by labelling something as aesthetic we are articulating a view that involves us—the observes-as much as the observed in a common system. The language of aesthetic needs itself be understood as a device for connection, creation and co-ordination.

7. Nietzsche knew about this “embodied self” and “knowing body” when he qualifies the same as “great reason which does not say ‘I’, but does ‘I’!” which does not feel I’am but I can “Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, there stands a mighty ruler, an unknown sage—whose name is self. In your body he dwells; he is your body. (Nietzsche, Thus spoke Zarathustra, p. 34).


9. In services this interrelation constitutes “pro-sumer”, who simultaneously produce and consume the service process. By using the neologism “pro-sumer” and “pro-sumption” and from a post-dualistic perspective (Parker, 1996, Knights, 1997) the underlying bifurcating and foundational frame of reified entities of a “producer” and a “consumer” are questioned.

10. Language itself, moreover, is indicative of being physical gesture in words; “Did you grasp the idea?” “Your words touched me.” “You are rubbing me the wrong way!” Abstraction ultimately manifests an ineradicable material foundation. An etymological analysis of language discloses a profound corporeal ground.

11. comp. Spinoza et al. 1999 Human beings are at their best when they are intensely involved in changing the taken-for-granted, everyday practices in some domain of their culture—that is, when they are making history. History making, in this account refers to changes in the way we understand and deal with ourselves. The authors identify entrepreneurship, democratic action, and the creation of solidarity as the three major arenas in which people make history, and they focus on three prime methods of history-making reconfiguration,
cross-appropriation, and articulation. Spinosa et al. stress that history is no longer portrayed as a straight highway, but should be viewed as a tree with multiple boughs stretching in different directions.

12. It is the structured and created style of the “lived story” which will be crucial for a successful “prosumption” process. By means of style the “prosumers” identify their world as significant. “Style” can be recognised as a manner of “being-in-the-world” which both “re-presents” and expresses “subjectivities”. Style is the trace of the “subjectivities” of the “prosumers” before an actual, accountable subject of “producer” and “consumer” is made present. In this sense style is that which conditions the signification of the “prosumption”. In other words, style is what gives form to the “stuff” of “prosumptive” experiences. In this way ‘style’ entails the “prosuming” “subjects” to be nowhere prior to their self-activation. This primordial commonality, being prior to the subject-object and fact-value dichotomy is in being what Merleau-Ponty calls “Flesh”, that is, the concrete emblem of a general manner of being. Comp. Merleau-Ponty, 1964a,b,c, 140. 12. The “prosumptive” subjects are the creation made available from an activation of their style. This activation of a style is not caused by a subject, but by the explicit confines inculcated in a pending ‘de facto’ situation. In facing a particular “prosumption” situation, one’s style is that which enables the situation to be dealt with. Like a lacework or “living mesh”, the “subjectivities” and “objectivities” of the “prosumption” process are in an ever present exchange, or intertwining of both. The fascinating intricacy of “prosumption” refers to the area of perceptual activity, wherein the seer is made intimate with the “thing” or the “other” seen, the one who touches the “thing” or “other” being touched. Meeting the thing “itself” and the other “him/herself” becomes the “materialisation” of style. Style, like subjectivity, is one’s, “way-of-being”, perceiving, thinking, etc. But the difference is that a style is not ‘someone’ already existing according to the bounds of his or her situation, it is ‘someone’ waiting to happen, waiting to become. This it what the paradox of creative and stylistic expression means: it is in style and expression that a restating “translation” will be realised, which becomes a “con→text” through which it appeals or calls for. (Merleau-Ponty 1969). A personal style represents the locus of possibility for establishing a decentered subject. For a “prosumptive” perceiver the “thing” or the “other” is necessary to develop his/her own identity. In this way, a decentered self develops as a performance of its initial style. The existence of “prosumers” is indeterminate in itself, by reason of its fundamental structure. This is true in so far as it is the very process whereby the hitherto meaningless takes on meaning and chance is transformed into reason, in so far as it is the act of taking up a de facto situation (Merleau-Ponty 1963: 169). The subjects of the “prosumption” become a function of its signifying activity, style giving meaning to the meaningless. Thus “style” is nothing and nowhere before its activity of bringing into being a whole orientation toward the world, toward culture, toward persons, and toward one’s own experience of the world, culture and other people. Style enters itself into the ambiguous domain of “prosumption”, in the place of the intertwining, where differentiation has not yet resolved itself into the “objective” or the “subjective”, where specifications are not yet resolved itself into the “objective” or the “subjective”, where specifications are not yet relevant, and where a distinct position cannot be found, asserted, or offered. Style is the responsive in-forming, giving form to what is not yet formed, not yet specified, not yet shaped. This can be realised by a creative process, involving an ever-renewed engagement with the flux of phenomena, with the perpetual birth and death, and new birth of existence. We can intimate the possibility of a new relation to the phenomena, a relation in which we have learned to leave them be. On the one hand, we accept them in their pristine and unsayable integrity, on the other we transform them through continually renewed mythic and artistic renderings.

13. Although communication seems to universal in its intentional projection of comprehensibility, it is particular in its concrete, practical realisation. The radical bodiliness of its expression constitutes the zero point of one’s individual origination of discourse, conditions all knowing as perspectival and delimits all communicative competencies by an incurable wound of ambiguity.

14. Merleau-Ponty does philosophy as interrogation. Unlike deconstruction he does not, it seems to me, aver the death of man nor the end of philosophy, but affirms human being and the world in all its questionableness, and philosophy as its intelligible reflection, a quest which is as inescapable and irreducible as it is inexhaustible. http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/EPS/PES-Yearbook/1998/albano.html#fnB13.

15. Just prior to collapse into complete non-duality there is this chiasmatic point where the difference between the dualities begins to separate but have not yet gained the necessary escape velocity to tear apart. It is this thin space between the collapse of the antinomic opposites and the arrival at complete non-duality that Wild Being directs our attention toward. At this level we discover that there is something beyond the essence and the eventity; a Holon which is simultaneously whole and part. The holonic nature of the thing is a chiasm between the view of the thing from the outside as eventity and from the inside as “essential” epoch. We can think of the Holon as establishing the chiasm between inside and outside and the integra as establishing the reversibility between different viewpoints on the same thing. These two approaches toward the thing together establish the ‘flesh’, or ‘play’, or ‘schizoid’, or the ‘interactive heterogeneity and heterogeneous interactivity’ by which the various philosophies of Wild Being describe the world. Such an approach of non-duality goes against the predominant dualistic trends in our culture. In the Western Tradition we have done our best to ignore and repudiate these non-dual states, except in some forms of mysticism which we subsequently devalued. Therefore we do not have the tools in our culture to talk about these non-dual states that have been so important to other cultures. David Loy calls NONDUALITY in his book on the relation between Asian philosophies and Western philosophies. On-dual states of thought, perception, and action are the ground from which Asian religion and philosophy begins. Comp. Loy D. 1999. Another example is can be found in play or aesthetic value-experiences as a non-dual activity prior to all other activities. Comp. Hans 1981.
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