

The Meeting After the Decision

When Everyone Left with a Different Understanding (The TINS Framework™): A Phenomenological Revisit

[JOSHUA C. LAM](#)

JUN 11, 2026 SUBSTACK PUBLISHED

Featured Phenomenological Lens

Perspective (Maurice Merleau-Ponty)

Perspective refers to the situated way in which people experience and understand the world. Maurice Merleau-Ponty emphasized that human beings do not encounter reality as detached observers. We experience situations from a particular location within life, shaped by responsibilities, relationships, memories, expectations, and concerns. In this revisit, we explore how several people participated in the same meeting, heard the same decision, and yet left with very different understandings of what had occurred.

Reflective Question

How can the same decision produce such different experiences for different people?

This question invites us to look beyond the decision itself and consider how perspective shapes the way people experience, interpret, and understand events before any response is given.

Part of the author's ongoing doctoral research on phenomenology and human experience at the Institute for Christian Studies (Toronto).

Joshua C. Lam, LLM (Law/ADR), DMin, is a PhD (Philosophy) student at the Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto, where he is further developing the TINS Framework™ through interdisciplinary philosophical research on lived experience, conflict, relationships, and decision-making under the mentorship of Dr. Neal DeRoo.

Category: Workplace

As described in the original post titled "The Meeting After the Decision," the meeting had ended.

The proposal had been approved.

The direction had been established.

The discussion was over.

From an organizational standpoint, the matter appeared settled.

Yet something important continued after the meeting was finished.

One participant felt relieved.

Another felt disappointed.

Another felt encouraged.

Another felt uncertain.

The decision was the same.

The facts were the same.

The meeting was the same.

Yet the experience was not the same.

Why?

At first glance, it may appear that people were reacting differently to the decision itself.

Phenomenology invites us to consider another possibility.

Perhaps people were not simply responding to the decision.

Perhaps they were responding to what the decision meant to them.

TINS Social Constructivism reminds us that people do not respond merely to events. People respond to the meanings they attach to events through interpretation. What continued after the meeting was not simply the organizational decision. What continued was the meaning each participant carried away from the decision.

For one participant, the decision represented progress.

For another, it represented loss.

For another, it represented uncertainty.

The event was shared.

The meanings were not.

As participants reflected on what had occurred, different concerns became visible. Beneath the organizational language existed hopes, expectations, fears, responsibilities, ambitions, disappointments, and personal investments that had accumulated long before the meeting began.

TINS Communication Accommodation Theory helps explain why communication influences experience even when everyone hears the same words. Communication is not merely the transmission of information. Different listeners receive and interpret communication through different backgrounds, experiences, and expectations. The same statement may therefore communicate confidence to one person and exclusion to another.

What fascinated me about this situation is that the meeting did not create these perspectives.

The meeting revealed them.

A turning point occurred after the meeting rather than during it.

People began reflecting.

Questioning.

Interpreting.

Reconsidering.

The meeting became a space within which meaning continued to develop.

TINS Transformative Mediation Theory highlights the importance of recognition. In many workplace situations, people seek more than agreement. They seek understanding. Often the strongest reactions

emerge not because people disagree with a decision, but because they feel their perspective was not recognized within the process.

Recognition does not necessarily require agreement.

Recognition requires understanding that another person's perspective exists and carries meaning within their experience.

TINS Procedural Justice helps explain why people often evaluate decisions not only by outcomes but also by process. Individuals are more likely to accept difficult outcomes when they believe they were treated fairly, heard respectfully, and given meaningful opportunity to participate.

The decision itself may therefore represent only part of the experience.

The process through which the decision emerged also shapes meaning.

TINS Critical Theory reminds us that power and influence may affect how decisions are experienced. Individuals occupying different organizational positions may encounter the same event very differently because the consequences of the decision are not equally distributed.

TINS Instrumentalism reminds us that decisions create consequences. The meanings people assign to decisions often influence future behaviour, future relationships, future trust, and future collaboration.

The TINS Framework™ encourages people to look beyond decisions themselves and examine how decisions are experienced, interpreted, and understood by those affected by them. In doing so, organizational life becomes an opportunity to understand more clearly how perspective, interpretation, communication, fairness, recognition, and decision-making interact within everyday experience.

Why TINS Framework™ Theoretical Perspectives Matter:

A Deeper Phenomenological Lens

Phenomenology provides a deeper lens through which we can understand why the theoretical perspectives of the TINS Framework™ matter in everyday human experience.

Human beings do not merely experience events.

Human beings experience events from a perspective.

This observation may initially seem obvious.

Yet its implications are profound.

A decision does not arrive within an empty space.

It arrives within histories.

Responsibilities.

Expectations.

Relationships.

Memories.

Concerns.

The same event may therefore disclose different meanings to different people.

What interests me is that organizations often assume disagreement begins when people express different opinions.

Yet differences frequently emerge much earlier.

Differences often begin in perspective.

Before people respond, they perceive.

Before people evaluate, they interpret.

Before people speak, they understand events through their own *horizon of experience*.

Long before disagreement becomes visible, meaning is already forming.

This may explain why some meetings continue long after they end.

The discussion concludes.

The decision is finalized.

Yet interpretation continues.

Perspective continues.

Meaning continues.

The event has ended.

Yet experience is still unfolding.

Perhaps this is one reason reflection matters.

Reflection allows people to examine the perspectives they carry before those perspectives become assumptions about others.

Reflection slows the movement from interpretation to judgment.

Reflection creates space for understanding.

What fascinates me is that perspective is rarely fixed.

Perspective can change even when the event itself remains unchanged.

The decision remains the same.

The meaning changes.

The next time you find yourself reflecting on an important organizational decision, it may be worth asking a different question.

Not simply:

“Was the decision right?”

But:

“How am I experiencing this decision?”

And perhaps even:

“How might someone else be experiencing it differently?”

Notes

1. The TINS Framework™ integrates six established theoretical perspectives. References such as “TINS Social Constructivism” or “TINS Procedural Justice” indicate the application of these theories within the TINS Framework™ and do not imply ownership of the original theories.
2. Readers interested in the biblical integration of the six theoretical perspectives within the TINS Framework™ may wish to consult my book *Biblical Mediation in Marriage and Family Conflict Resolution* (Revised Edition, 2025), published under my full name, Joshua Chee-Ning Lam.
3. Readers interested in exploring the six theoretical perspectives of the TINS Framework™ in everyday life may wish to consult the *Why You Matter* five-book mini-series. The series applies the six perspectives to a wide range of real-life situations involving *personal life, work, marriage, family, and community*. Written from *both biblical and humanistic perspectives*, the series allows readers to begin with either perspective or move between the two to gain a broader understanding of human experience, relationships, conflict, and decision-making. The series is published under the name Joshua C. Lam.