

CHAPTER THREE

**APPLICATION OF PHENOMENOLOGY TO SOCIAL
LIFE AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

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ALFRED SCHUTZ AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL SOCIOLOGY

The credit of extracting the necessarily relevant elements from within the transcendental phenomenology of Husserl and to apply those upon the life-world for developing a real phenomenology of the social world inevitably goes to Alfred Schutz. Thomas Luckmann in the preface to Phenomenology and Sociology edited by himself, open-heartedly writes; "It is, however, undoubtedly the lawyer-economist Alfred Schutz, the student of Max Weber and Edmund Husserl and the friend of Aron Gurwitsch, who is central figure in the phenomenological reorientation of social theory".¹

Schutz does not intend to ponder over the transcendental or eidetic aspects of Husserlian static phenomenology. What he borrows from Husserl, is the pre-scientific and unquestionable realm of the lebenswelt or life-world. Husserl in his mature stages of philosophical growth, as we know, insisted on the reconciliation between scientific theories and the life-world as their meaning-fundament. Only in this accomplishment of eradicating the alienation of theoria from life-world, lies the "duty of a philosopher". Nevertheless, Husserl ever remains an aspirant for a "science of the spirit", rather than the hypotheses about the general features of the objective world.

Reduction is an essentiality for phenomenology. Husserl carried out reduction in all of his stages of phenomenological

investigation. His aim was to have a face-to-face encounter with the universal structures of subjective orientation. Once, bracketing the 'natural attitude' he obtained 'transcendental Ego' but encapsuled within a solipsistic maze. Later, brushing away the cursed egology, he discovers 'transcendental subjectivity as an intersubjectivity', as the ultimate reality. According to Schutz we need not go that far, because, for the sake of a phenomenological interpretation of the methodology of social sciences, we are required to come "face-to-face" with the life-world which is the basis for all constructs of thought-object, whether be of common-sense or scientific procedures.

After long years of careful perusal of the later Hasserlian works, Schutz came to the conclusion that Husserl's repeated attempts at solving "the problem of intersubjectivity" on the transcendental level of constitutive phenomenology was but fruitless. Furthermore he noticed that Husserl "was not conversant with the concrete problems of the social sciences". Schutz overcome those shortcomings and made various contributions, among which is notable his treatment of the phenomenon of typification in the spheres of everyday life and therefrom the transition into scientific model-construction. And most tactfully, what Schutz did, as comments H. Wagner, "... he cut through the Gordian knot of the problem of intersubjectivity, disposing of it in a way which was ingenious as it was simple"². Husserl's notion of intersubjectivity in the frame-work of his

transcendental phenomenology was plagued by solipsism, whereas, in the hand of Schutz, the same notion of intersubjectivity becomes one of the most unquestionable and taken for granted postulate for all social sciences whatever.

According to Schutz all social sciences envisage the concept of intersubjectivity of thought and action as taken-for-granted. "That fellow men exist, that men act upon men, that communication by symbols and signs is possible; that social groups and institutions, legal and economic systems and the like are integral parts of our life-world, that this life-world has its own history and its special relationship to time and space — all these are notions that are explicitly or implicitly fundamental for the work of all social scientists"³. And Schutz correctly asserts, "It must be stressed that careful description of the processes which enable one man to understand another's thoughts and actions is a prerequisite for the methodology of the empirical social sciences"⁴.

In order to understand the motives, purposes, meanings and habits of others, the social scientist must have a recourse to a stock of pre-interpreted experiences built up by the sedimentation within his own conscious life. The construction of the categories and models of the social sciences is founded upon the prescientific common-sense experience of the social reality as such.

Husserl tried to give an account of the life-world — the world of fellow-men's interaction and communication. The orientation of such a relationship is homogeneous since all members are actors or partners with each other. But Schutz deeply discussed about the heterogeneous relationship involving between an observer i.e, social scientist and the observed i.e., general actors in the social scene. According to Schutz, "The analysis of observation and of the observer is indispensable for an understanding of the procedures by which the social sciences gather knowledge about social reality.⁵" To explicate this, Schutz formulates the notions of They-orientation, Thou-orientation and We-re^lation.

SCHUTZ' ANALYSIS OF VARIOUS SOCIAL RELATIONS

A non-solipsistic or intersubjective world is the ground of utmost indispensability for constructing any sociological or meta-sociological theory. General social theories take it for granted but for any phenomenological approach it is necessary to make a philosophical analysis for the formation of intersubjectivity. According to Schutz, any social scientific theory begins with a sort of 'bracketing' of solipsism itself. But this naive or natural attitude must undergo the phenomenological scrutiny. Unlike Husserl's transcendental or eidetic approach, Schutz undertakes a programme to arrive at intersubjectivity, based on 'direct experience of fellowman available in the face-to-face situation. His affinity towards immanence and

immediacy is understandable from the following question :
"Nor is (unless one relapses into the natural attitude) communication between a plurality of transcendental subjects and hence the institution of a communicative intersubjectivity possible in the transcendent sphere, since all communication requires events in the natural world and, as shown above, already presupposes intersubjectivity viz., the We-relationship".⁶

Emphasis on direct experience leads to the conception of the face-to-face situation, which is essentially characterized by temporal and spatial immediacy. A face-to-face situation is constituted when I pay attention to a fellow-man, 'confronting me in person'. This is called by Schutz, Thou-orientation. The Thou-orientation is not a judgment by analogy, rather 'prepredicative experience of a fellow being'.⁷ A person grasped in Thou-orientation must be present here and now. Thus Schutz radicalizes the notion of direct experience. There are others, who are not fellow-men and hence remain beyond the reach of the direct experience. These include predecessors, contemporaries and successors, who singly or jointly constitute the horizon for my fellowmen and me, also. This aspect will be mentioned latter.

The Thou-orientation formally refers to the 'pure' experience of fellowman just as being 'here and now', but not in substantial and specific details. In fact, however, we confront persons in their spatio-temporal and psycho-physical

concreteness. So Thou-orientation, according to Schutz is not 'pure', though it gives rise to another 'pure' relation. This is the formal relation of the 'pure' We-relation, which comes into being when the Thou-orientation is reciprocal. "It is reciprocal if I am oriented to you, and you, in turn take my existence into account. In that case a social relation becomes constituted"⁸. This pure We-relation is also filled with content and is actualized in various intensities of concreteness and specificity. A concrete We-relation is generated when I participate in the conscious life of another Self. This means the mundane existence of other Selves counterfaced to me or the We-relation as a priori given by my birth.

So we get the notion of pure We-relation constituted in reciprocal. Thou-orientation. But what is the connection between the pure We-relation and concrete We-relation. According to Schutz, all "concrete social relations in face-to-face situations are founded upon the pure We-relation". Pure We-relation, which is a formal concept, is logically prior to concrete We-relation. The later presupposes the former always, in the attempts of grasping the specific traits of the partner.

Now Schutz forwards some description of the We-relation as regards its modes. Compared to one's own interior stream of consciousness which is 'pure' duration, the experience of a fellowman in a We-relation is essentially 'mediate'. "I apprehend his conscious life by interpreting his bodily expressions as indications of subjectively meaningful process". Thus

experiences of We-relation is psychologically 'mediate' and sociologically direct. But this directness is sustained so long as one is straightforwardly engaged in the We-relation.⁹ So the persistence of We-relation is possible only through incessant and spontaneous flow of common experience.

This directness is discontinued when one tends to reflect about the experience. Since experience needs some reflection for clarification one must stop outside the face-to-face situation. In the words of Schutz himself; "While I was engaged in the We-relation, I was busy attending you ;s in order to think about it, I must break off the immediate rapport between us"¹⁰. During reflection on a past face-to-face situation, the once partner becomes a 'mere object of thought' and produces knowledge in retrospect. From this point, a dialectic of experience of 'self' and 'Other' in face-to-face situations happens to rise. Thou-orientation is disappeared by some objectification of the partner in reflective moments, the centre of orientation being only 'I myself'. But in the phases of concrete We-relation, the position of 'I' is in the twilight. Schutz puts it as follow : "... while I am straightforwardly engaged in the business of life, my own self is not present to me in an equally wide range of symptoms as is a fellow-man whom I confront in the Here and Now of a concrete We-relation."¹¹ It may be suggested that this point echoes Sartre's view about the transcendence of the ego.

Despite the impossibility of simultaneous 'I and thou',

each partner will fail to achieve completeness without the counter-orientation coming from the Other. There must be a 'continuous cross-reference' directed to each other mutually. Schutz calls it 'the reciprocal mirroring of Selves' in which "I experience myself through you, and you experience yourself through me". Thus in the We-relation, as conceived by Schutz, the influence of both Werber and Mead is noticeable.

So far, we have discussed the dimensions of the face-to-face situation and the very mode of experience to grasp it. But obviously the domain of the face-to-face situation, as defined by Schutz, is not much wide. Our consciousness is not always characterized by a Thou-orientation. So, we are to look beyond the fellowman, who are present 'in person'. There are 'mere contemporaries' who can not be grasped in direct experience. "Contemporaries are not present in person, but I do know of their co-existence with me in time, I know that the flux of their experiences is simultaneous with mine"¹². Such contemporary people can be apprehended only by means of typification, which is a derivative and indirect process. Schutz calls all conscious acts oriented to contemporaries a They-orientation. The object of the They-orientation is one's knowledge of social reality in a general objective context of meaning.

From the notion of contemporary, we obtain this They-orientation as a mode of typified comprehension. Once such an anonymous orientation is established, we may direct this beyond the boundary of the present. These are the realms of

predecessors and the successors. Past and future, can never be brought within a direct experience of a face-to-face situation. Hence he says: "The world of genuine successors is absolutely free and beyond the grasp of my understanding. Belief in a historical law above history by which not only the past and the present can be explained but also the future predicted evidently has no foundation in the nature of human experience of social reality".¹³ He however admits that there can be a history of conduct, meaningful to the individual historical subject as well as that of 'objective-facts', comprising of accomplished actions. But all of these are subsumed under the indirect experience of social reality.

Now let us come to the relevant issue-namely the analysis of observation and the observer. What should be the mode of experience, appropriate for the social sciences. According to Schutz, neither a reciprocal Thou-orientation nor an anonymous They-orientation, is suitable here. What we require is a direct observation; "in which I confront a fellow-man, but the fellow-man does not take my presence into account or is not aware of my presence at all. For the social sciences the most important version of this situation is that in which I am the observer of the conduct of a fellow-man".¹⁴

Like a partner in the We-relation, the observer considers the body of the other as field of direct expression of the latter's subjective configuration of meaning. Unlike the

partner, again, the observer does never act upon the observed, and hence lacks any motivational interlocking. So there is an apparent problem of matching the "in-order-to" motives with the actor's "because" motives from the end of the observer. Schutz, however suggests three ways for this purpose, but not with warrant. His opinion is that due to the ex post facto nature of this matching in general, 'the partner's position in a we-relation is not privileged' as comparable to that of an observer. The observer in order to have an access to the actor's intentions, *must try* the best for constructing an onlooker-relationship indeed in a disinterested manner. But once knowledge is gathered for the sake of social-scientific interpretation he must transcend above the level of the assumed "face-to-face" situation, to that of a scientist. A social scientist can not understand other people's act without knowing the correlation between in-order-to or the because motives of such actions. Such an ideal understanding would presuppose the full identification of the observer's stream of consciousness with that of the alter ego. Only then the observer can be said to reduce the other's act to its typical motives, including their reference to typical situations, typical means, typical ends and etc. Only then an objective understanding of the subjective meaning texture of the actors is possible.

Schutz says, "To become a social scientist the observer must make up his mind to step out of the social world, to drop any practical interest in it, and to restrict his in-

order-to motives to the honest description and explanation of the social world which he observes"¹⁵. Fellow-men and actors, co-actors and re-actors in a social stage are characterized by their practical interest while the social-scientist as a pure observer and being himself a man in society too, must be some thing more with the particular characterization of a cognitive interest and relevance-structure as purposeful for the problem under scrutiny. Thus, Schutz constructs a very rational and typified model of not only of social actors, but of the very social scientists too.

THE MODEL CONSTRUCTION IN SOCIAL SCIENCES

Knowledge of the world, whether natural or social, both in common-sense as well as in scientific thinking, involves constructs, i.e., a body of abstractions, generalizations formalizations, idealizations corresponding precisely to the respective levels of thought organizations. Strictly speaking these are no such things as facts, pure or simple. All facts are from the very beginning-facts, segregated from a universal context by our intellectual activities. What we have, are all interpreted facts either detached from their context by an artificial abstraction or attached to their particular setting. But in both cases they carry along their interpretational inner and outer horizons. Now, according to Schutz, this does not follow that, in daily life or in scientific thinking we

are unable to grasp the reality of the world, rather what is meant that we merely grasp certain aspects of it, namely those which are relevant to us either for executing our mundane what-to-do-s or from the view point of a set of taken-for-granted rules of procedure of thinking called the method of science.

Now, having done a differentiation of rank between all scientific constructs and constructs of common-sense, Schutz makes a difference between the natural and the social sciences. According to Schutz, it is the natural scientist who determines his domain of discourse from a wide context and fixes the topical and interpretational relevance to his specific purpose. But the domain of discourse is devoid of any intrinsic relevance structure. Relevance is not inherent in nature as such, rather it is the result of the selective and interpretative activity of an observing man. The facts, data, and events with which the natural scientist is concerned are just facts, data, and events within his observational field but this field 'does not "mean" anything to the molecules, atoms, and electrons therein'.¹⁶

But the facts, events, and data before the social scientist, involve an entirely different pattern and structure. The observational field i.e., the social world is not essentially structureless. "It has a particular meaning and relevance structure for the human beings living, thinking and acting

therein... The thought objects constructed by the social scientists refer to and are founded upon the thought objects constructed by the common-sense thought of man living his everyday life among fellow-men¹⁷". So Schutz is right to observe that the construct of social sciences are construct of second order as because these are the construct of the construct made by the actors in their life-world.

According to Schutz, modern social scientists are facing a serious dilemma, as to whether the methodology of social sciences is toto coelo different from that of natural sciences or the methodology of the later will lead to reliable knowledge of the social reality. To overcome this difficulty particular methodological devices are required.

In order to analyse the specific nature of the thought objects of social sciences, Schutz, at the first hand forwards the following characterization of the common-sense construct employed by men in their daily life. Human beings live in a world which existed before their birth, experienced and interpreted by others as an organized world. All interpretation of this world is based on a stock of previous experiences of it. The individual's common-sense knowledge of the world, again, is a system of construct of its typicality bearing open horizons of anticipated similar experiences. The world in which the individual is biographically co-ordinated, is not his private world, rather it is from the outset an intersubjective world

of culture, understanding others and being understood by others. The world of culture is distinguished from the world of nature by a texture of meaning which originates in and has been instituted by human actions, whether be that of ours or our contemporaries, predecessors or successors. "All cultural objects — tools, symbols, language systems, works of art, social institutions, etc. — point back to by their very origin and meaning to the activities of human subjects... For the same reason I cannot understand a cultural object without referring it to the human activity from which it originates"¹⁸. An institution can never be understood without understanding what it means for the individuals who orient their behaviour with regard to its existence. Here lies the origin of the so called postulate of subjective interpretation of the social sciences. So tradition is meaningful only in the context of present.

Since the thought objects of social sciences are founded upon constructs of common-sense, Schutz first turns to what is called the postulate of subjective interpretation in social sciences. It is undeniable that the objects of the social sciences is human behaviour, its forms, its organization, and its products. But the question is whether human interactions or behaviours should be studied in the same manner in which natural scientist studies his objects or whether the objective of social sciences is the explanation of the "social reality" as experienced by man living his everyday life within the social world. According to Schutz both principles are incompatible with

each other. The social sciences have to deal with human conduct and its common-sense interpretation in the social reality with an analysis of the entire set-up of projects and motives, of relevances and constructs. Any of the social sciences which aim at grasping "Social reality" can not dispense with the postulate of subjective interpretation since it is a general principle of constructing course-of-action types in common-sense experiences of an actor in his/her 'biographically determined situation' sedimented by the stock of knowledge-at-hand originated and distributed by society in a course of time.

Schutz, with the example of modern economics which is one of the most advanced social sciences, tries to show the inevitability of this postulate of subjective interpretation. Apparently it seems to be the nature of study that the economists study "behaviour of prices", rather than the behaviour of men in the market, or the "shape of demand curves" instead of the anticipations of economic subjects symbolized by curves. Subject-matters such as "Savings", "Capital", "business cycle", "wages" and "unemployment", "multipliers" and "monopoly" are investigated successfully without indulging into subjective interpretation of the activities of economic subjects. Are not the methods of analytic and abstract conceptual scheme successful for the solution of many problems? But his reply is that the abstract conceptual scheme is nothing but a kind of "intellectual short-hand" and the underlying subjective elements are merely disregarded for the only scientific purpose at hand.

In Schutz's own words, "Correctly understood, the postulate of subjective interpretation as applied to economics as well as to all the other social sciences means merely that we always can — and for certain purposes must — refer to the activities of the subjects within the social world and their interpretation by the actors in terms of systems of projects, available means, motives, relevances, and so on".¹⁹

But, how subjective meaning of an action, being unique and individual due to its origination in peculiar and biographically determined situation, can be grasped scientifically? Schutz replies that the thought — objects constructed by the social sciences do not refer to unique acts of unique individuals occurring within a unique situation. The thought-objects of common-sense relating to unique events and occurrences are replaced by the construction of a model-sector of the social world within which merely those typified events take place as relevant to the scientist's specific problem under study. Nevertheless, it is possible to construct a model of sector of the social world consisting of typical human interaction and to analyse this typical interaction pattern as to the meaning it might have for the personal types of actors who presumptively originated them.²⁰ There is another difficulty however. The texture of meaning context of any system of science is objective in that it is verifiable to a community of scientists. Then how is it possible for a system of objective knowledge to successfully grasp the subjective meaning structure of actors, without a paradox? This is the particular problem, according to

Schutz, of the social sciences to develop methodological devices for attaining objective and verifiable knowledge of subjective meaning texture. To solve this we are required to peep into the attitude of the scientist to the social world. Schutz, characterizes this particular attitude of social scientist to be that of a mere disinterested observer of the social scene.

The social scientist is not interlocked with the observed situation, which is to him of a merely cognitive interest rather than a practical interest. He does not act within it, vitally interested in the outcome of his actions, hoping or fearing what their consequences might be but he looks at it with the same detached equanimity with which the natural scientist looks at the occurrences in his laboratory"²¹. Nevertheless the social scientist remains a human being in his daily life, living among his fellow-men with varieties of interactions. The very scientific activity itself takes place within the tradition of socially derived knowledge and basing upon the co-operation with other scientists. But we are to differentiate between their deal with science and scientific matters within the social world on the one hand, and the specific attitude which the scientist has to adopt towards his subject of study, i.e., the actors in interaction.

We know, following Schutz's analysis, that at any given moment individual man's purpose at hand is determined by his biographical situation within the natural attitude. Particular

objects and particular typical aspects of such objects as standing within an accepted context, are selected by the system of relevance purposeful for a subject. Man in daily life orientates his circumscribing cultural realm in a multifarious way with varying degrees of intimacy and anonymity. But the social scientist detaches himself from his biographically determining situation by adopting the disinterested attitude of a scientific observer. What seems to be unquestionable, and relevant in the biographical situation may become entirely dubitable and irrelevant to the problem under scientific scrutiny. In mundane common-sensical life-world individuals make themselves center of all plans and purposes. But as Schutz says, "By making up his mind to carry out a plan for scientific work governed by the disinterested quest for truth in accordance with pre-established rules, called the scientific method, the scientist has entered a field of pre-organized knowledge, called the ²²cospus of science" .

Within this corpus of science, the scientist has to accept what is considered by his fellow scientists as established knowledge, just as in common-sensical world the stock of knowledge-at-hand is taken for granted. And only under this circumscription the scientist may select his particular scientific problem and arrive at some scientific decision. "This frame constitutes his 'being in a scientific situation' which supercedes his biographical situation as a human being within the ²³world" . So the nature of scientific problem is the factor which solely determines what is or is not relevant to its solution,

and all other abstractions, generalizations etc. Thus it is the scientific problem which is the "locus" of all possible constructs relevant to its solution. One thing is very important to avoid so many misunderstandings and controversies in the social sciences that, any shift of the issue under investigation or scrutiny and the sphere of research involves a modification of the structure of relevance and of the constructs formed for the solution of another problems or on another level.

Common-sense constructs of interaction patterns are formed from a "Here" within the world which determines the presupposed reciprocity of perspectives, but the social scientist has no "Here" within the social world, rather, he considers his position relating to the relevance structure of the scientific undertaking. Thus the social scientist observes human interaction patterns insofar as they are susceptible and tangible to his observation and interpretation, but ever his terminology being in the texture of the subjective meaning. In this regard Schutz mentions about Verstehen in three different senses which should not be confused.²⁴

Transcending his own biographically determined situation the social scientist endeavours to construct typical course-of-action patterns corresponding to the observed occurrences, upon which he co-ordinates a personal type — a model of an actor gifted with 'fictitious consciousness'. This consciousness contains exclusively that what are relevant to the problem under scrutiny. The imaginary consciousness is stuffed with a set of typical in-order-to motives corresponding to the goals of

the observed course-of-action patterns and typical because-motives upon which the in-order-to motives are founded. Both types of motives are assumed to be invariant in the mind of the imaginary actor-model. In such a scientific model the actor is just a puppet or homunculus in the hands of the social scientist to serve his purpose. This puppet has no ontology outside the frame of reference. He has no hopes, no fears, no anxieties. "It is the scientist who defines what is to his puppet a Here and a There, what is within his reach, what is to him a We and a You or a They. The scientist determines the stock of knowledge his model has supposedly at hand"²⁵. In case such a model of actor is conceived as interrelated and interacting with others who are too homunculi then the general principles of reciprocal perspectives, the system of relevance and the correspondence of motives are also determined by the constructor. Similarly all standards and institutions determining the behaviour of the model are provided from the beginning by the constructs of the scientific observer.

In such a simplified model of the social world pure rational acts, rational choices from rational motives are possible because all the difficulties encumbering the real actor in the everyday life-world have been eliminated. Thus, the concept of rationality in the strict sense already defined, does not refer to actions within the common-sense experience of everyday life in the social world; it is the expression for a particular type of constructs of certain specific model of the social

world made by the social scientist for certain specific methodological purposes"²⁶. However there are a few principles that govern the construction of scientific model of human actions in general.

i) The postulate of logical consistency : The system of typical constructs designed by the scientist must be fully compatible with the principle of formal logic and this logical consistency distinguishes the scientific constructs from the common-sensical ones.

ii) The postulate of subjective interpretation : The scientist in order to explain human actions should ask in what model of an individual mind can be constructed, which can explain adequately the observed facts as the outcome of activity of such a mind in an understandable relation.

iii) The postulate of adequacy : Each term in a scientific model of human action must be constructed in such a manner that human action performed within the life world by an individual actor in the specified way would be intelligible for the actor himself and for his fellow-men in terms of common-sense interpretation of everyday life.

If all these principles are followed the subjective meaning of human action would be grasped in an objective way and the thought objects of social sciences would also remain consistent with those of common-sense. This would account for a proper method of a social science, as a rational model.

Schutz believes in the all-encompassing power of rationality and only on this line the demarcation between the commonsensical world and that of any science can be drawn. Such philosophers who hold the view that men's power of rationalization is limited in making sense of impulses are not few. But it seems to be a typical Weberian influence for maintaining omni-rationality in scientific sphere, though not always true in the common-sense life. Let us cite from Schutz : "We have to distinguish between rational constructs of models of human actions on the one hand, and constructs of models of rational human actions on the other. Science may construct rational models of irrational behaviour as a glance in any textbook of psychiatry shows. On the other hand, common-sense thinking frequently constructs irrational models of highly rational behaviour, for example in explaining economic, political, military and even scientific decisions by referring them to sentiments or ideologies"²⁷

It is not much difficult to construct a rational model in any natural science. But the case is complicated in the branches of the social sciences, like economics, jurisprudence in that social scientists here are required to construct first a model of 'rational action'. But 'rational actions' are not found in the life-world inhabited by human beings. So, an economist has no other way than to construct a model of artificial environment inhabited by homunculi — the personal ideal types. So, what comes out of this analysis is that rationality has an

objective application on 'other' — be it real or fictitious. But the concept of reflexive-rationality is absent in Schutz' frame of reference.

DEVELOPMENT OF ETHNOMETHODOLOGY BY HAROLD GARFINKEL
AND VIEWS OF SOME OTHER PHENOMENOLOGICAL THINKERS

Harold Garfinkel, (born 1917) was strongly influenced by the phenomenological analysis of Alfred Schutz. He is recognized as the propounder of ethnomethodology, that means, "ethno", the observational study of ; "methodology", the methods that people use to make sense of social settings out of their experiences. As for ethnomethodologists the theoretical concern centres around the processes by which common-sense reality is constructed in everyday face-to-face interaction, it can rightly be considered a distinctive branch of phenomenological sociology. Ethnomethodology takes Schutz's phenomenology of the life-world as the starting-point for empirical investigations in a truly radical manner since in this new steps it is questioned and tried to find out the rules that are employed by the members in producing a sense of intersubjectivity. In the words of Randall Collins, "What for Schutz had remained an armchair phenomenology, Garfinkel turned back into an empirical investigation, although of a novel or even bizarre kind. In the process, Garfinkel came up with some new discoveries that went far beyond what either Husserl or Schutz had seen"²⁹. In contrast with the works of Schutz, Berger and Luckmann which are primarily

philosophical and macroscopic, i.e., about the general nature of realities, the later ethnomethodologists are interested in the microscopic aspects, i.e., in the empirical analysis of the ways in which particular meanings are constructed. They claim the exclusive validity of the microscopic approaches for explanatory purposes.

Schutz was inclined to discover what essences or "ideal types" could be found in particular type of experiences that men have in their daily life. For this Schutz came up with a series of purported laws, e.g., that social consciousness involves the suspension of doubt about the reality of a common-sense world, that the social actors assume a reciprocity of perspectives, that our prevalent attitude is that of working towards some goal etc. But for Garfinkel the picture of the social world is somewhat different. His world sits over an abyss — being unalterable and untouchable like a mysterious "X-factor" that we indulge in interpreting. Our strongest social principle is to leave the interpretations alone so that their flimsiness and unfoundedness may be elicited.

According to Garfinkel the world is multi-levelled. There is the world itself, the world of "Lebenswelt objects" that we actually experience and the world of "signed objects" that we talk about or reflect on socially. We are caught in our signs and can never jump out of our verbal skills. When we direct our attention to the objects of the world they are transformed into

signed objects. We cannot know what the world is like without reflecting on it. In truth they do not "look" like anything. All that we can say is that the world is there in its dual form. This is the basic Husserlian principle in Garfinkel's updated version of the system.³¹

Society, in the view of Garfinkel's ethnomethodology is full of illusions but of some necessary types. "Signed objects" are inevitable although these exist only in our system of accounts. The "breaching" experiment reveals that if the taken-for-granted nature of their conventionally assigned meanings are questioned, people are at a loss, because if things are once considered as arbitrary there is nowhere to stop. Everything is likely to crumble down if we cease to abide by the traditional interpretations. The apparent strength which helps the social settings to stand by comes from the very flimsiness of the social reality itself and this is possible only because men are actually conservative in their cognitive faculty because they intuitively feel that the social world is a set of arbitrary constructions built over an abyss. The stability of this structure depends upon only the unquestionability on the part of people. So, society is not held together by rational agreement or mutual understanding, but by something else "X-factor". Garfinkel is reluctant to explore the "X-factor" and come out with any general characterization of what lies inside. His insistence is on the point that everything is locally produced and there are no general laws at all.

Now we are to examine what Garfinkel opines about the methodology of understanding social phenomena. According to his view, traditional sociology in the theoretical approaches merely deals with "signed objects", without peeping into the lebenswelt. Even the symbolic interactionists are merely producing yet another array of "signed objects" which veil the actual life as it is experienced. As a way out Garfinkel suggests that Sociologists are required to start over anew and get as close as they can to the actual experiences that make up the moment-by-moment detail of social life. Although it is impossible to report the lebenswelt itself, yet they can grasp the actual methods by which people in the social scene transform their various lebenswelt objects into the particular corresponding "signed objects". Thus from ethnomethodological point of view, science is socially produced by people who make interpretative statements which in turn become the probable objective knowledge itself. Some ethnomethodologists have studied mathematics as it is actually produced, going through the real life-struggle of mathematicians to construct arguments and showing how these give rise to a body of theorems and proofs with a mistaken image of existing objectively and universally, quite untouched by human mind.

Though ethnomethodology has not refined its most effective analytical techniques, there are four somewhat regularly employed methods. Like cultural anthropology and symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodologists also recognize participant

observation as a way not for taking part in the real life-patterns or interaction courses of the men but to grasp the methods people employ in constructing and maintaining a sense of real social world, Second one is the "ethnomethodological experiment or the famous 'breaching experiment' which means that the researcher will behave in a given situation in such a manner which is not expected from him by the other members of the same situation. Experimental break down of the taken-for-granted norms of a particular situation may reveal how the taken-for-grantedness of them is constituted as well as manoeuvred by other members. As for example a researcher may behave in his own home as if he is a stranger and see the attitude of the members of family. 'Documentary interpretation' is a third method which is to take behaviour, statements, etc. and other external appearances of the other as a 'document' or reflection of an underlying pattern used to interpret appearances. Finally, a significant interest exists in linguistics as communication of meaning, with special attention placed upon the relationship between linguistic form and the structure of social interaction. To the ethnomethodologist, symbols and meanings have no existence apart from their being interpreted by persons engaged in interaction situation.

Ethnomethodologists reject the basic assumption of the traditional sociology that there is a sufficiently stable system of shared meanings in a society to provide a basis for meaningful

responses to questionnaire or interviews or any type of research method in which the researcher fits subjects' responses or behaviours into predetermined conceptual framework. One of the particularly problematical factors in their methodological process is their emphasis upon the uniqueness of each and every interactive situation and their suspicions about all generalizable similarities between interactive situations. And what is most readily observable and hence real, to them, are the attempts by interacting humans to persuade each other that there is an order to specific social settings and to a broader society — instead of a social and cultural world capable of being objectively studied by scientific methods. Husserl's phenomenological method speaks of "bracketing" or epoche' of the natural attitude about the existence of the external world per se while studying the emmanent form of experiences as a purified stream of consciousness. But the ethnomethodologists propose of a specific bracketing of the social order something as an objective and stable reality while studying intersubjective consciousness in particular and unique interactive situation. Instead of studying the social order per se or empirically ascertaining objective reality, ethnomethodology seeks to understand how people in interaction create and maintain a conception of social reality. So, the ethnomethodological framework may be regarded as turning to subjectivistic, privatistic and individualistic phenomena in the social arena.

The nature of ethnomethodological reduction has been described by George Psathas as follows: "The ethnomethodologist suspends belief in society as an objective reality, except as it appears and is 'accomplished' in and through the ordinary everyday activities of members themselves. That is he does not suspend belief in members' beliefs or in their practices as being themselves in the world of everyday life" ³².

Thus for both phenomenological sociology and the ethnomethodologists, there is no need for assuming a real world, rather what is 'thought to be there' by a social group is central. But what distinguishes each other is their variant forms of reductionism. Phenomenological sociology reduces the things in the 'real' world to things of immediate consciousness whereas ethnomethodologists reduce objectivized things of the social environment to the processes by which folk or people construct a sense of real and stable order 'out there'. In this respect ethnomethodology is free from the threat of solipsism for their presupposition that the social continuum depends on an intersubjective agreement.

Now let us have a discussion about the methodological features of the ethnomethodologists. One of their implicit assumption is that 'social reality' or properly saying 'people's way of believing it', is descriptive rather than explanatory. Because for them social-scientific explanation rests on some basic unanalysable descriptive elements, which the former wanted

to elucidate. Preference to observation in a face-to-face situation is thus implied by the descriptive orientation of them. This is why 'participant observation' is an adoptable method of the ethnomethodologists involving the researcher's first-hand stepping in a member's practical circumstances.

But what is the guiding note for an ethnomethodologist for behaving in a situation? It aims at bringing about some incongruities so that people 'expose the inarticulated knowledge and presupposition underlying their routine accomplishment'.³³ About the 'documentary interpretation' Garfinkel remarks that it considers, "... an actual appearance as the 'document of', as 'pointing to' as 'standing on behalf of' a presupposed underlying pattern. Not only is the underlying pattern derived from its individual documentary evidences, but the individual documentary evidences, in their turn, are interpreted on the basis of 'what is known' about the underlying pattern".³⁴

Some ethnomethodologists, getting attracted by the publicness and taken-for-grantedness of language, develop another method of conversational analysis. Among them Aaron Cicourel is a prominent one. For them, "Conversational analysis focuses on member's natural language practices".³⁵

The applicability of ethnomethodological attitude is not confined to the world of everyday life merely rather extends to the social sciences too. Professional social scientists, in spite of their theoretical occupation, are members of society. They too take the help of commonsense but in an untraceable

way. At this point Psathas comments : "The ethnomethodological attitude as we noted, makes as a topic of study, any and all practices for constituting knowledge in the world of everyday life. When applied to the work of the social sciences, the topic is not so much the structures of knowledge developed by the social sciences about social life but the methods used to accomplish such knowledge whether these be member's methods or social scientists' methods"³⁶. Psathas also defines it to be a dialogical and reflexive social practice.³⁷

On account of this reflexive character of such ethnomethodology, the man who practices it can effect a shift of perspective. As a result of this shift only one can see one's immersion in common-sense understanding and reasoning. Horizons of a particular situation come under inspection. This facilitates the trans-situational knowledge of invariant features. Collins is also concordant with such a point of view, that is expressed by his remark : "Garfinkel's method was perhaps more a teaching device than an experiment for a scientific audience. The object of studying phenomenology is to learn about the structures of one's own consciousness. Doing these experiments, as Garfinkel would say, is 'good for one's soul' "³⁸.

Among the thinkers who employ phenomenology on the 'social', Peter L. Berger (born 1929) and Thomas Luckmann (born 1929) are two eminent phenomenological sociologists of knowledge and they founded notably on Schutz's phenomenological analysis of life-world, intersubjectivity and the natural-attitude. But before looking into the conceptual framework

of Berger and Luckmann, some attention must be focused upon Karl Mannheim (1893-1947), who is the first to think on sociology of knowledge as its expositor. Husserlian philosophy and Mannheimian sociology, both may be said to be the doctrinal matrix within which phenomenological sociology and ethno-methodology found roots and sprang to life. Mannheim was highly influenced by the philosophical writings on hermeneutics of Dilthey, and thereby conceived knowledge as product of one's own social and cultural settings. Thus Mannheim was exclusively interested in the socio-historical matrix of intellectual knowledge in his claim that human consciousness is ever permeated by non-theoretical elements arising both from man's participation in social life and in the streams and tendencies of willing which work themselves out contemporaneously in that life. For him, "... all knowledge, or at least knowledge of things human must be situation-bound (situationsgebunden) — that is tied to a given constellation of socio-historical circumstances"³⁹, which is located at a specific point along a unilinear, ever-progressing and never-retreating temporal continuum — history. Each age develops its own style of thought, some tending towards status quo and some tending to change. Commitment to conservation tends to produce 'ideologies' while intentness on change is apt to produce 'utopias'.

Anticipating Berger and Luckmann, Mannheim opines that between ideology and utopia there is at least the possibility of completely realistic (situationsgerecht) thought that functions

without friction within the given framework of life, and is set neither on pushing ahead nor on pulling back the development of society. But Mannheim emphasizes little on this possibility of elaborating a 'total perspective' which would synthesize the contemporary but conflicting world views and thereby neutralize, and to some extent overcome their one sidedness and partiality. He replaced the notion of truth of any world-view to be conceived in terms of correspondence of thought-and-reality by that of genuineness by examining the correspondence of thought-and-situation.

Berger and Luckmann concentrates deeply in their work upon the question of how whatever is accepted as knowledge in a society has come to be accepted as such. In their own compositions, they have maintained that the sociology of knowledge is concerned with the analysis of the social construction of reality. "Everyday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by men and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world. Thus, society is actually constructed by activity that expresses meaning"⁴⁰. In his Invitation to Sociology; A Humanistic Approach, Berger characterizes sociology as a form of consciousness with debunking abilities. He also explores the reality of the social world as objective, i.e., as common, taken-for-granted facticity, as well as, as subjective i.e., as facticity imposing itself on individual consciousness.

In this way having departed from the traditional empirical bases of scientific sociology, the phenomenologically

oriented sociologists hold the reality of the social world in abeyance, preferring to focus not upon 'social facts' so called, rather upon the structure of intersubjective consciousness and the creation of social meaning in human interaction. For a foundation of scientific knowledge of whatever, more is required than a science that analyses 'nature' and its structure, man as a part of nature and every-day life. This is but a philosophy that provides clear and reliable methods of reflection on the nature of the evidence on which various sciences are founded. Such a philosophy must not stop short of an investigation of those activities that are the basis for theory of any kind, including scientific theory, called praxis — which refers to the full range of human conscious activities in the intersubjective and historical world of everyday life. So a radical return to the immediate evidence of conscious experience provides an evidential starting point unavoidable in common sense and scientific theory. "An alternative and methodologically controlled, reflexive account of the constitution of the domain and its elementary structures is provided by the phenomenology of the Lebenswelt" ⁴¹ .

MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY'S PHENOMENOLOGY BASED
ON PRIMACY OF PERCEPTION

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) made a great contribution to philosophy through the phenomenological study of perception. He tried to find a mid-way between transcendence and crude naivete by reconciling philosophy and science. But he was not any sociological theorist in giving an outline of social science as such. Nevertheless, in his phenomenological analysis we may obtain some insightful points, particularly that of body-subjectivity and related elements. His views about the relation between philosophy and social sciences, and the especiality of human sciences are found in some articles.⁴²

Merleau-Ponty envisaged it to be a very unfortunate happening that philosophy and sociology have been mutually divorcing each other. Philosophy is dependent on abstraction and ideas, while sociology or other social sciences satisfy themselves on facticity. The result has been a 'cold-war within human mind'. He writes; "The interaction of facts and ideas is rejected as a bastard procedure — neither science nor philosophy—which would deprive scientists of the final interpretation of the very facts they themselves discovered, while confronting philosophy with the threat of the ever-provisional results of scientific research..."⁴³ Out of this combat mankind as a whole has been deprived of a meaningful existence. Neither extreme exteriority nor extreme interiority can prove benevolent. But to diminish the distance initial effort should begin on behalf of philosophy. A dialogue between philosophy

and science, has been conceived by him as follows: "... it is necessary for the philosopher to express not merely certain natural or historical conditions external to him but also a direct and internal contact of the mind with itself, an 'intrinsic' truth which seems impossible so long as research in the field of the human sciences shows that at each moment this mind is externally conditioned".⁴⁴

Husserl has been appreciated by Merleau-Ponty because the former was concerned with the question 'how philosophy, science and the sciences of man might be possible'. According to him, Husserl throughout his career tried to discover a way out between logicism on the one hand and psychologism or sociologism on the other, in order to transform 'automatic conditioning' into a 'conscious conditioning'. These three disciplines are in a state of crisis the result of which is irrationalism. Merleau-Ponty described Husserl's phenomenology in such words; "The philosophical task to which he devoted himself was, rather the establishment of an integral philosophy which would be compatible with the development of all the different investigations on the conditioning of man"⁴⁵. So the question arises as to what may be an adequate method to this end.

It is quite obvious that Merleau-Ponty might not refrain from subscribing to a phenomenological method, but in a critical way. He rejected Husserl's pure *epoché* or phenomenological reduction for generating inauthentic experiences. For him, reduction can lead us to a basic and minimal experiential context where the unity of men's being with the being of the world is revealed through

a pre-reflective sense-knowledge. This world is the unbracketable part of men's experience. This world, for phenomenology, is not a world of pure being. The same is about our social world. So, he nicely expresses; "The greatest lesson of the reduction is the impossibility of a complete reduction ..."⁴⁶

Merleau-Ponty however accepted what Husserl called Wessenschau or essence-intuition with much sincerity and some modification. It is not so stringently eidetic as was conceived by Husserl in his earlier philosophy — to be bereft of facticity or any link with it. He puts it as: "The insight into essences rests simply on the fact that in our experience we can distinguish the fact that we are living through something from what it is we are living through in this fact"⁴⁷.

Now let us see what did Merleau-Ponty elicit after carrying out the eidetic investigation in the social world. Social world, for him, is a permanent field or dimension of existence from which one can not withdraw the relation of being situated and influenced. To place ourselves in society as objects among other objects is as false as to place society within ourselves as an object of thought. In unison with Husserl, he admits : "... while it is true that the empirical subject is a part of the world, it is also true that the world is no more than an intentional object for the transcendental subject"⁴⁸.

Unlike the natural world, Merleau-Ponty hence held the social to be an indispensable part of our existence. But what is that through which an interiority can dwell within the exteriority.

Here comes his concept of body as the most privileged organism within a perceptual field. His Phenomenology of Perception focuses on the body-subject of perceptual experience, the structure of the perceived world, and the relations between them. But according to Merleau-Ponty, all these are at least partially hidden from us if we approach the study of perception, armed only with the tools of 'objective thought'. 'Objective thought' objectivises body and endorses a mechanistic interpretation of it. Also this approach finds in the world a collection of independent things with fully determinate properties. Hence 'objective thought' either conceives the subject in the net-work of causal relationship between the objective body and the physical world or else frees the subject so entirely from the world of objects that perception is dominated 'from above' and any real inherence of the subject in the perceived world becomes incomprehensible.

Thus Merleau-Ponty's theory of perception is based on a 'bodily subjectivity'. ~~Alongwith their~~ concept of body he rejected the behaviouristic theory of language too. His theory of language presupposes speech as an existential and social extention of men's being through his body. The relation of thought to language was a problem for Husserl but he told of it beautifully; "The relation of language to thought is here comparable to that of body to consciousness...."⁴⁹

Depending on the primacy of perception and the notion of body-subjectivity, Merleau-Ponty analysed well Husserl's two positions regarding the awareness of 'alter ego'. Husserl's earlier position is that, "... my relation to another person

consists only in conceiving, or 'apperceiving', back of the body-object a thinker who is not mixed with his body and is not altered by being joined to it"⁵⁰. Again the experience of the 'other', as found in the Cartesian Meditations, is prompted by the spontaneity of the body of 'I'. One's body by itself feels a sort of affinity to other's corporeality, by taking into cognizance other's actions. This is an 'intentional transgression', a property of the 'body' being a gateway between the subject and its situation. Body as such indicates on both directions through transcendence. According to Merleau-Ponty the dialectic of the ego and the alter ego is possible only provided that the ego and the alter ego are defined by their situation and not freed from all inherence. To quote from Merleau-Ponty again: "... in the perception of another, I find myself in relation with another 'myself', who is, in principle, open to the same truths as I am, in relation to the same being that I am. And this perception is realized. From the depths of my subjectivity I see another subjectivity invested with equal rights appear, because the behaviour of the other takes place within my perceptual field"⁵¹.

According to Merleau-Ponty all consciousness is perceptual including the consciousness of ourselves. But both perception and the perceived thing is paradoxical. What is the paradox here? He replies : There is a paradox of immanence and transcendence in perception. Immanence, because the perceived object cannot be foreign to him who perceives; transcendences because it always

contains something more than what is actually given". The paradoxicality of perception may be verified in any study - e.g. on my body, the natural world, my birth and death, my past. The only perplexing question in any case would be 'how I can be open' to the phenomena that transcends me and which nevertheless exist only to the extent that 'I take them up and live them'. Thus the notions of one's past, birth and death etc. may be shown to be transcendental to oneself.

Our individual past cannot be given to us either on the one hand by the actual states of consciousness or paths left over in the brain, or by a consciousness of the past which constitutes it, on the other hand. In either case what we lack is any sense of past, otherwise the past would be present. If anything of the past is to exist for us it can be only in an ambiguous present. "I grasp time through my present and by being present, in the tension of an experience which transcends itself"⁵³. Similarly the world stands for mere probabilities and conditional truths. "Certainly, the world which we thus find is not absolutely reassuring"⁵⁴.

So the past and the world are theoretically immanent in that they can be only what I see behind and around me as an apperceptual backdrop; and factually transcendent in that they exist in my life quite before appearing as objects of my explicit acts. Following the same line of argument we may say that my birth and death can not be objects of thought for me. Being established in my life and fastened down in this transcendental field with

perceptual openness, I enjoy a sort of diffusion and eternity. In other words the beginning and the culmination of my life is but perceptually inexperiencible to me. This is the limit of the body subject's capacity of grasping and transcending itself. But at the same time I live in an environment saturated with the odour of mortality. Perhaps the body-subject is affected by the scene of birth and death of other corporealities lying in vicinity. Here the impression of impermanency may be "intentionally transgressed" from the 'other', just as sentience is imposed upon the 'other'. Such a dialectic between 'ego' and 'alter ego' is constitutive of an adequate sense of there-being in either of them.

Now let us return to Merleau-Ponty's proposed eidetic approach to social cognition. He intends to apply the principle of Wessenschau here also : "... if we are trying to conceive the essence of a 'social process', we will represent to ourselves a social process in which we have participated or concerning which we have some historical understanding. That which does not vary through all conceivable variations will be the essence"⁵⁵ . Merleau-Ponty's recurrent insistence is that there should be a blending of thinking the essence and experiencing the fact. In this regard phenomenology and anthropology may work together maintaining sympathy for each other. It is sympathy that can reduce distance between any couple-be it man and man, or philosophy and science. To cite from his own : "Sympathy does not presuppose a genuine distinction between self-consciousness and consciousness of the other. It is the simple fact that I live in the facial expressions

of the other, as I feel him living in mine. It is a manifestation what we have called, in other terms, the system 'me-and-other' ⁵⁶ ". A proper method equipped with Wessenschau and sympathy may lead to an unprecedented sort of self-awareness. In it ego attains emancipation from false definitiveness resulted by logicism, psychologism or sociologism. We can obtain his view from the following passage : "I am not a 'living being' or even a 'man' or even a 'consciousness' with all the characteristics which zoology, social anatomy or inductive psychology attributes to these products of nature or history. I am the absolute source. My existence does not come from my antecedents or my physical and social entourage, but rather goes toward them and sustains them" ⁵⁷ . Merleau-Ponty in the last step, anchored on the transcendental subjectivity as the source of meaning-accomplishment and hence not only essence-intuition but essence-creation too.

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5. CP, II, p. 33
6. CP, III, p. 76
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9. Schutz in his writings used first person sentences frequently to describe we-relation. In the present writing it has been avoided.
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