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A. SCHUTZ'S CONTRIBUTION TO PHENOMENOLOGICAL THEORY OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY

The problem of intersubjectivity nowadays greatly influences our contemporary social thinking. The cause for this is that under post-modern conditions the concept of social reality includes multiple virtual realities, the majority of which are produced by computer activities. Such a virtual reality might include not only an imaginative animal of which we are able to take care, but even a spouse who – in contrast to a corporeal one – does not appeal to our feelings of responsibility or our sense of justice. Anyway, the efforts to tackle the problem of intersubjectivity seem to contribute both to the so-called mind-body problem and to the problem of a meaningful background of social communication as such.

I shall confine myself to the analysis of the most influential phenomenological approaches to the problem of intersubjectivity, derived from Husserl's transcendental theory of intersubjectivity (the Alter Ego problem). Phenomenology turns out to be one of the most significant aspects of modern philosophy and sociology due to the fact that phenomenology claims to reveal a solid background of human thinking as such and to constitute the deepest meaningful foundation of transcendental certainty. The general aim of phenomenology, as Husserl posited, was to shed light on the implicit presuppositions upon which any science, and even current philosophy are actually based. For this reason phenomenology ends where all the traditional philosophies begin. It poses the questions that cannot be answered by the methods developed within the framework of the social sciences themselves. And the question of how it happens that mutual understanding and communication in human society are possible at all, appears to be the most significant theoretically and the most practically oriented among them.

But could the problem of intersubjectivity have any satisfactory solution at all within the framework of transcendental philosophy? Husserl clearly sees the eminent danger of solipsism as a possible consequence of his conception of the phenomenologically transcendental reduction. A. Schutz points out that, when asked why he had refrained from publishing the second volume of his *Ideas of Pure Phenomenology* (Ideen), Husserl answered that at that time (1913) he did not find any satisfactory solution to the problem of intersubjectivity. The father-founder of phenomenology clearly recognized

that the attack on this problem presupposed carrying out still further analysis of the constitutive activities of consciousness. Husserl faithfully believed that he offered the desired solution of the *Alter Ego* problem in the Fifth of his *Cartesian Meditations*.¹ Unfortunately, he did not succeed there in eliminating some difficulties. The main difficulty consists in the fact that within the framework of transcendental philosophy the problem of intersubjectivity is inconsistent by its very nature. Having performed the phenomenologically transcendental reduction and analyzed the constitutional problems of the consciousness, built up by the activities of the transcendental subjectivity, Husserl singles out within the transcendental field what he calls "my own peculiar sphere" (primordial sphere) by eliminating all the constitutive activities which are related to the subjectivity of the Others. This could be done by abstracting from all the meanings referring to the Others. What still remains is strictly my private primordial sphere in the most radical sense of the word. In short, if the phenomenologically transcendental reduction brackets *the natural attitude*, in the framework of which the others are simply taken for granted, the so-called *thematic reduction* – as far as I can see it – seems to be a kind of cognitive activity within this particular sphere aimed at solving the problem of intersubjectivity as it were.²

Husserl presupposes that within the primordial sphere there can be singled out the object which can be controlled by the activities of meditating ego. He calls it "my own body" and ascribed to it all the sensorial fields. The essence which functions in my body and controls its gestures Husserl suggested calling "my personal I." If a resembling object emerges within my primordial sphere, it is interpreted by means of the so-called "passive synthesis" (also called "pairing" or "coupling") as analogous to my own body and therefore apperceived as other people's bodies. This means that two objects are presented in the unity of consciousness by means of associations. The psychical nature of the Other's corporeality manifests itself in changing but always concordant gestures. In this way the Other appears to be appresentatively constituted as an *Alter Ego*. As far as I can see it, *it is not only the resemblance of bodies, but rather the ability to control them, which constitutes an Alter Ego in the precise sense of the word.* But Husserl himself did not clearly formulate this conclusion.

This Second Ego is the Other, which in accordance with its constitutive sense refers back to what Husserl calls "the first creation." He stresses that the Second Ego is an *Alter Ego*, i.e. the alien corporeality. It can be apperceived in the mode of another spatial dimension, namely, "there" (*illic*)

instead of "here" (*hic*). Thus, according to Husserl, in transcendently and thematically reduced spheres we are able to grasp an *Alter Ego* by means of *an analogical projection*.³ And this is precisely the point, where Ortega-y-Gasset deviates from Husserl's view. According to Ortega, the Other's human life is to me latent and hypothetical. His reality is of a special kind, namely a "second degree reality." Even though the Other's body belongs to my world, his world remains strange to me. For this reason Ortega criticized Husserl's theory of the constitution of the *Alter Ego* as an analogical projection of my own body. Husserl (he thinks) fails to take into consideration that I observe merely the exteriority of the Other's body, whereas I experience my own body "from within." Never can this difference be reduced to the spatial perspectives of Here and There. For this reason, Ortega insists that the Other's radical reality remains inaccessible to me as well as mine to him.

Schutz also points out several difficulties in Husserl's transcendental theory of intersubjectivity. Some difficulties arise from the very conception of the transcendental reduction. First of all, this transcendental intersubjectivity exists within the consciousness of the meditating ego. It was constituted exclusively from the sources of Ego's intentionality and does not lead to the real existence of an *Alter Ego*. This objection against Husserl's transcendental theory of intersubjectivity is by now widely shared by many philosophers. Furthermore, I tend to agree with Schutz, that it is hard to understand how the abstraction from all the meanings referring to Others could be performed in the required radical manner. Having suspended human belief in the real existence of the Other, as well as in the real existence of an outer world in the very process of the phenomenologically transcendental reduction, Husserl feels induced to elaborate within this reduced sphere the device of abstracting from the meaning of the Others again, in the process of thematic reduction, leading to the primordial sphere. This fact seems to confirm the aforementioned difficulty, rather than refute it. In other words, where is the demarcation line that singles out my primordial sphere? Hence, some meanings related to Others must be necessarily presupposed in the very criterion of non-reference to Others. Finally, it is in no way established (suggests Schutz) whether the problem of intersubjectivity and therefore sociality is a problem of the transcendental sphere at all, i.e. whether it does not rather belong exclusively to the mundane sphere of our life-world.⁴

M. Scheler greatly contributed to the solution of the problem of intersubjectivity.⁵ He was convinced that the failure of all the efforts to deal with

this topic has been caused by the lack of clear distinctions between the different questions here involved. He enumerates the following questions:

1. The ontological problem. Is the relation between man and fellow-man just a factual one or does the concept of man already presuppose society quite independently of the factual existence of a concrete ego within a concrete social world?
2. The logico-epistemological problem. How does the reality of another's consciousness become accessible to me?
3. The problem of transcendental psychology. Which individual experiences must be presupposed and which activities of consciousness must be considered as already performed before the knowledge of Alter Ego might emerge at all?
4. Some metaphysical problems are also involved in the theory of the Alter Ego. M. Scheler has in mind here the Cartesian assumption of two separate substances influencing each other.
5. At last, some value problems are also connected with the problem of intersubjectivity. It obviously cannot be contested that such moral acts as love, responsibility, duty, gratitude, etc., refer by their nature to the existence of Alter Egos. Scheler calls them "essentially social acts" because they cannot be construed as pre-social. According to him, this means that each individual sociality always presents a part of society. For this reason the sphere of the "We" is given to us prior to the sphere of the I. Scheler admits that there can be situations where we cannot clearly distinguish whether a thought is actually ours or not. And he even goes a step further. Basing his conclusion on the results of modern child psychology, which clearly reveals that the discovery of the child's own individuality is a relatively late one, whereas the existence of others is simply taken for granted, he maintains that man lives from the very beginning rather in other people's experiences than in his individual sphere. He argues, furthermore, that the traditional identification of inner experience (inner perception) and self-experience is wrong. Scheler puts forward the perceptual theory of the Alter Ego, which stresses the role of the body in the process of experiencing other people's physical life. We experience our bodily movements by sensation, whereas other's people gestures are given to us as optical phenomena, having no analogy to our kinesthetic sensations. For this reason, it is exactly bodily feelings, he thinks, which constitute the separation between a man and a fellow-man. But as far as man lives only in his bodily feelings, he cannot find any approach to the

life of an Alter Ego. Only if he elevates himself as a person does he gain the experience of the Other – without empathy and inference by analogy.

The very perceptions of the Other are viewed as rather complicated. If we really ask what the object of our perception the Other is, we have to answer that we perceive neither the Other's body, nor his Soul or Self or Ego, but a totality, undivided into objects of outer and inner experiences. By no reasoning might it be interpreted as "expressions" of the Other's thought, which cannot be broken down into parts of expressive character.

But does Scheler's perceptual theory of intersubjectivity greatly contribute to the solution of the transcendental problem? As Schutz points out, Scheler has supported this theory not by analysis within the transcendental sphere, but by references to the empirical facts, taken from the psychology of children and primitives. He was convinced – and I tend to agree with him – that for transcendental phenomenology (as a science based on accurate analysis of the transcendental field) Scheler's hypothesis does not offer the desired solution.

According to Schutz, it is in no way established whether the existence of Others is the problem of the transcendental sphere at all, whether the problem of intersubjectivity does exist between transcendental egos or whether intersubjectivity and therefore sociality does not belong exclusively to the mundane sphere of our life-world. Schutz clearly suggests taking the problem of intersubjectivity not as a transcendental, but rather as a mundane problem.⁶

And if we take this problem as belonging to the life-world, the first question is, whether Scheler's proposition, that the sphere of We is pre-given to us, proves true. Schutz maintains that within the natural attitude the existence of Others is simply taken for granted and is no more questionable than the existence of an outer world. As long as we stick to the natural attitude we have no doubt that intelligent fellow men do exist. So far, we may agree with Scheler, that the sphere of "We" is pre-given to the sphere of the I. But in this naive attitude I am not aware of myself. My own stream of thought seems to be an anonymous flux. Schutz suggests that still remaining in the natural attitude and without performing the transcendental reduction, I may always turn in the act of reflection from the objects of my acts and thoughts to my acting and thinking. Only in this reflective turn does my Self emerge (hidden yet by the objects of my acts and thoughts). It does not merely enter the field of my consciousness; rather, it constitutes this field. But the fact is that in his perceptual theory of Alter Ego Scheler does not distinguish between the naive attitude of living in the acts and thoughts and

the attitude of reflection upon those acts and thoughts. Taking the distinction between these two attitudes into account, Schutz made the following objections to Scheler's theory:

1. The statement that we live rather in Other's than in our own stream of consciousness becomes true only for the naive attitude.
2. There is no such experience that would not indicate which individual stream of consciousness it belongs to. I might feel doubtful whether the origin of my thought lies within my stream of consciousness, but both this thought and my doubt belong to the content of my experience.
3. At last, the results of modern studies in the psychology of children and primitives, supporting that they only slowly become aware that they are individuals, only prove that the technique of reflection is acquired very late by children and primitive men.⁷

Furthermore, Schutz points out that the time-structure of both attitudes is quite different. He supposes that in adopting the natural or naive attitude we live in our present and are directed towards the immediate future, which we anticipate in our expectations (Husserl calls them "protentions" as the counterpart of "retentions"). Schutz calls the elements of our present, referring to the immediate future, "vivid present." But according to the phenomenological theory of reflection, what we grasp by the reflective act is by no means the present of our stream of thought – it is always its past. In other words, self-consciousness can only be experienced in the past tense, as "lived through." But – and this point is decisive for Schutz – in contrast to our own, in face-to-face situations other people's behavior and thoughts we experience in the vivid present, as a vivid simultaneity. This conclusion leads Schutz to a definition of the Alter Ego: the Alter Ego is that subjective stream of thought which can be experienced in its vivid present. The Alter Ego, therefore, is that stream of consciousness whose activities I can grasp in their present by my own simultaneous activities. This experience of the Other's stream of consciousness in vivid simultaneity Schutz calls *The General Thesis of the Alter Ego's Existence*. This present, common to both of us, Schutz calls "the pure sphere of the We." And if we accept this definition, we can agree with Scheler, that the sphere of the We is pre-given to the sphere of the Self, but in quite a specific sense, which Scheler himself never had in his mind.

To the best of my knowledge, I cannot entirely share Schutz's criticism concerning Scheler's theory of the Alter Ego. It is based upon the distinction between the naive and the reflective attitudes. But the matter is that the aforementioned distinction itself should be viewed as a kind of a strong

idealization, which belongs not to the natural attitude, but to the field of reflection itself. In other words, within the sphere of the life-world taken for granted we never "simply live," just as we never "only think." Both processes seem to be simultaneous, and can be divided into parts only by means of reflection. But Schutz is absolutely right in saying that the general thesis of Alter Ego referring to the mundane sphere of the life-world opens the door for constituting a sufficient frame of reference for the foundation of the social sciences. It is just what should be done in the process of further development of theory of intersubjectivity.

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NOTES

- ¹ Husserl, E. *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vortrage* (Haag, 1950), V Meditation, S. 121–177.
- ² Husserl, E. *Cartesianische Meditationen*. Sec. 44.
- ³ Husserl, E. *Cartesianische Meditationen*. Sec. 50.
- ⁴ Schutz, A. *Collected Papers* (The Hague, 1962), Vol. 1, pp. 141–149.
- ⁵ Sheler, M. *The Nature of Sympathy* (New Haven, 1954), pp. 213–264.
- ⁶ Schutz, A. *Collected Papers*, pp. 167–172.
- ⁷ Schutz, A. *Collected Papers*, pp. 170–171.