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## THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE SELF: CONTRIBUTION OF SOCIAL PHENOMENOLOGY

The meaning of the Self is situated at the heart of our consciousness as the central referential point of our social being. On the one hand, human life and personality are dramatically shaped by social interrelations. The relationship we have with Others serves as a means of social identification of the Self. On the other hand, the nature of the Self can be conceptualized only in the way of its differentiation from the Others. An individual is a causal agent for these relationships in a sense that one's individual existence is intrinsically linked to various social configurations. This duplicity is inherent to the problem of the Self.

While the Other is the overt part of our conceptualizations, attention to the Self tends to be tacit or subsidiary. When we enter social interactions, we rather draw attention to what we are (or what we represent), so the constitutional nature of the Self remains in the "blind spot" of our reason.

Our Self-perspective is usually presented by an ambiguous mix of singular and plural tenses. Our language reflects this duplicity in the usage of the terms "I", "we", "me" and "us". Appealing to the cultural context for the purpose of social identification and Self-maintenance, we tacitly refer to the mix of our individuality, sociality and humanity. We tend to take their unity for granted and are not usually motivated for *a priori* distinction of them. Rather the meaning of the Self emerges by means of *a posteriori* reflection. Our Self appears as the outcome of the conceptualization of the bonds of agency, interests and circumstances which find their locus in the psychical and conscious being of an individual.

### 1. EGO AND ALTER EGO AS A CONSTITUTIVE PROBLEM OF TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGY

The basic insight which gives rise to social phenomenology traced back to E. Husserl's works. He was the founder of phenomenology, who declared the life-world (*Lebenswelt*) to be the finite province of meaning of human

reason and activity. But for the present study it is more significant that not wanting to be accused of solipsism, in his latest work (*The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*) E. Husserl turns to the cognitive procedure which is not *reduction*, but *production*. While in his early works (*Logical Investigations, Ideas to Pure Phenomenology*) he seeks to find the basic, unquestioned foundation of human cognition, i.e. implicit presuppositions upon which any science and philosophy are actually based, his latest work (*Crisis*) was inspired by the opposite intention. He seeks to make a phenomenological description of constitutive process which give rise to intentional objects, the Other (Alter Ego) being the most significant among them.

Edmund Husserl clearly sees the eminent danger of solipsism as the possible consequence of his conception of the phenomenologically transcendental reduction. Alfred Schutz reminded, when asked why E. Husserl refrained from publishing the second volume of his *Ideas to Pure Phenomenology (Ideen)*, he answered that at that time (1913) he did not find any satisfactory solution to the problem of intersubjectivity, or Alter Ego existence. The founding father of phenomenology clearly recognized that the attack on this problem presupposed carrying out still further analysis of the constitutive activities of consciousness. Edmund Husserl faithfully believed that he offered the desired solution of the *Alter Ego* problem in the Fifth of his *Cartesian Meditations*<sup>1</sup>. 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 nature. Having performed the phenomenologically transcendental reduction and analyzed the constitutional problems of the consciousness, built up by the activities of the transcendental subjectivity, E. 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 Others. This could be done in the way of abstracting from all the meanings referring to 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 such.

Edmund Husserl presupposes that within the primordial sphere, the object which can be controlled by the activities of the meditating ego can be singled out. He calls it "my own body" and ascribes to it all the sensorial fields.

The essence which functions in my body and controls its gestures is, as E. Husserl suggested to call, "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. It 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 by changing, but always concordant, gestures is being, who is also able to control his bodily movements. 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 world*. But E. 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 E. 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 E. Husserl, in transcendently and thematically reduced spheres we are able to grasp an Alter Ego by means of *analogical projection*<sup>2</sup>. And this is precisely the bifurcation point where some of his followers deviate from his view. According to Ortega-y-Gasset, for example, the Other's human life is to me latent and hypothetical. His reality is of a special kind, namely a second degree reality. I agree that even though the Other's body belongs to my world, his inner world remains strange to me. Edmund Husserl does not 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 the Other's radical reality remains inaccessible to me as well as mine to him.

Alfred Schutz also points out several difficulties in E. 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 by the sources of Ego's intentionality and does not lead to the real existence of an Alter Ego. This objection against E. Husserl's transcendental theory of intersubjectivity is by now widely shared by many philosophers. Furthermore, I tend to agree with A. 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 process of phenomenologically transcendental reduction,

E. Husserl feels induced to elaborate on the device of abstracting the meaning of the Others again, in the process of the so-called thematic reduction, which opens the door to the primordial sphere. This fact seems to confirm the above-mentioned difficulty rather than refute it. In other words how to single 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 (A. Schutz suggests) whether the problem of intersubjectivity and therefore sociality is a problem of the transcendental sphere at all, or whether it does not rather belong exclusively to the mundane sphere of our life-world<sup>3</sup>.

## 2. SOCIOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTIVISM: M. WEBER'S VERSTEHEN-SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL PHENOMENOLOGY<sup>4</sup>

The object of sociology is human behavior, human actions, its forms and organizations and social relations here involved. They can be grasped by means of the so-called ideal types. Ideal types in sociology play a role similar to that of the ideal objects (such as material particle) in natural sciences. But as we can see later, there are highly important differences in ideal-typifying methodology in social sciences. Using ideal types allows sociologists to go beyond the present situation and to describe the class of resembling situations in which the actor is motivated in a similar way.

Based upon Kantian presuppositions, M. Weber considered ideal types as the products of constructive activity of human reason (in contrast to Marxist "reflections" of real objects, based upon the materialistically interpreted Hegelian assumption of identity of being and thought). His ultimate goal was to understand human action through its *subjective meaning* (the meaning ascribed to the action by the actor himself). But M. Weber's ideal type is essentially ambivalent. On the one hand ideal type can be viewed as articulation of common traits of the actors which can be recognized as typical for all of them, i.e. as generalization of empirically observed characteristics. In such a way, historical ideal types are usually produced. Max Weber uses historical ideal types in his description of "the spirit of capitalism". Historical ideal types are essentially derived from practical observation as typically inherent to this or that kind of actors. But historical ideal type as the set of rationally organized empirical data may serve to produce only probable knowledge. It is not still able to produce *Verstehen* in the proper sense of the word, which M. Weber seeks to achieve in his theory of the social action. Rather it has to be confirmed by means of statistic methods developed in empirical sociology.

In contrast to historical ideal type, logical ideal type is purely theoretical construction. It is not contaminated by the empirical data, in the sense that it does not originate in empirical generalization. Rather, it is the product of rationally organized fantasy, which transcends all the observations.

The content of logical ideal type is determined by theoretical context. It corresponds to reality in a highly complicated indirect way as an element of a more complex theoretical construction. It can by no means be identified with the real subject of action, rather it is a puppet created by the scientists. Its motives have already been predefined by the scientist as relevant for his research.

Being more abstract than historical ideal type, logical ideal type covers family resemblance of situations in which the actor is motivated in a similar way. It implies that logical ideal type predefines the scope of empirical research in the sense that any discrepancy between ideal construction and the real state of affairs creates the problem, which should be studied by means of empirical methods. Thus, in contrast to Marxist priority of practice over theory, Kantian preconditions of Weber's ideal type methodology made him to consider any divergence of theoretical model from reality not as deficiency in theory (incompleteness, imperfectness etc.) but rather *as theoretically determined field of research*.

Alfred Schutz set aside E. Husserl's consideration of Self and Alter Ego as a purely transcendently phenomenological problem. The founder of social phenomenology studies the problem of intersubjectivity within the framework of "natural attitude". According to the phenomenological theory of reflection, the vivid present of our Self is inaccessible for natural attitude, and it is only our reflectively conceived past which gives us access to our own Self. In contrast to our Self, the Other may be experienced in his or her vivid present or in mutual simultaneity ("General thesis of Alter Ego's existence"). Respectively, he defines the Alter Ego as "that subjective stream of consciousness, which can be experienced in its vivid present". His own approach to the problem of intersubjectivity consists of descriptive analysis of typifications.

Importantly, A. Schutz postulates the difference between natural and social worlds. The world of natural sciences is by no means meaningful. Observational field of natural sciences does not "mean" anything to molecules, atoms and electrons therein, and the field of research does not have an inherent relevance structure. It acquires its meaningful and relevant structure only in the framework of scientific contemplation. It is the natural scientist who imposes a meaningful relevance structure over the object under consideration.

In contrast to the world of natural sciences, the social world is necessarily meaningful. It acquired its meaning-structure before social scientists began to

study it. It does “mean” something and has its immanent relevance structure for the human beings living, thinking and acting therein. They have interpreted this world in common-sense constructs of daily life, and it is this knowledge which determines their acts and behavior. In a word, everyday knowledge helps them to come to terms with and to adjust to the socio-cultural environment. It is this world, pre-interpreted and pre-structured in everyday thinking, which the social scientist has to study. Accordingly, the main problem of social sciences is to develop a method to study subjective meanings of human action in an objective way. For this reason, A. Schutz insists, the thought objects of social sciences have to be based upon and remain consistent with the thought objects of common sense, formed by men in everyday life in order to come to terms with social reality.

Alfred Schutz creates social phenomenology in the way of theoretical synthesis of Husserl’s constitutive phenomenology and Weber’s theory of social action. His social methodology has been enriched by E. Husserl’s theoretical discoveries. To be typical, he defines in Husserl’s terms means to carry along an open horizon of anticipated similar experiences.

Typifying process is peculiar to both everyday and scientific knowledge. We experience the outer world in everyday thinking as not individual unique objects, but as typified constructs, namely “houses”, “animals”, “fellow-men” etc. Actual experience may or may not confirm the anticipation of typical conformity. If partly confirmed, the content of the anticipated type will be widened or even split into sub-types, if not, we have to look for another type. Nevertheless, the real object proves to retain its individual characteristics – the typifying process reduced to the form of typicality.

Typically apperceived object may serve as an *exemplar* of the general type, if man is not motivated to study the unique features of this particular object. In “natural attitude” people are basically concerned with the objects which stand out of the field of unquestioned objects. Guided by prevailing system of relevance, the selecting activity of our reason determines which particular traits of the object are individual and which are typical ones. More generally, people are merely concerned with selected aspects of the typified object. Thus, asserting of the object *S* that it has the characteristic property *P*, the form “*S* is *P*” is necessarily an elliptical statement. For *S* is not merely *P*, but also *Q* and *R* etc. The full statement should be read as “*S* is, among many other things, also *P*”. The assertion that “*S* is *P*” implies that under prevailing circumstances the sociologist is interested only in the *P*-being of *S*, disregarding as not relevant its being as *Q* and *R*. It is the system of relevance which determines what elements have to be made a substratum of generalizing typicality, which traits of these elements have to be selected as

characteristically typical and which others as unique and individual. A change in the system of relevance made us to be concerned with the *Q*-being of *S*, while its *P*-being becomes irrelevant.

There are some other constructs which emerge in everyday knowledge if we take into account intersubjectivity of the social world. In the framework of “natural attitude” we usually take for granted that we are not alone in the world. The Others do exist. It implies that common-sense thinking is essentially shared with others, i.e. socialized. Schutz’s consideration of this problem is founded upon three basic assumptions:

1. The reciprocity of perspectives or the structural socialization of knowledge.

It means that the difference in our visual perspective, originated from spatial positions (“here” and “there”), is irrelevant to the commonly-shared system of typical constructs.

2. The idealization of the interchangeability of the standpoints.

It implies that our spatial positions, if changed, remain unchanged our commonness of typifications i.e., the difference of our spatial position is irrelevant to commonly shared system of typified objects.

3. The idealization of congruency of the system of relevances.

It means that it is taken for granted that even though our biographically determined situations are essentially different, we are able to select and interpret common objects and their features in an identical manner sufficient for all practical purposes.

The typifying medium, by which socially derived knowledge is transmitted, is obviously the vocabulary and syntax of everyday language. The vernacular of everyday life, which contains names, named things and relationships, seems an unexhausted source (“treasure house”) of everyday generalizations and typifications, referring to the relevance system prevailing in the linguistic group. These preconstituted types are socially derived and carry along an open horizon for further experience.

Everyday knowledge is necessarily socially distributed. The stock of everyday knowledge differs from one man to another, and common-sense knowledge takes this distribution into account. “Not only *what* an individual knows differs from what his neighbor knows, but also *how* both know the same fact.”<sup>5</sup> The social distribution of knowledge determines the particular structure of the typifying construct, i.e. the assumed degree of anonymity of personal roles, standardization of the action-patterns and constancy of motives. Moreover, knowledge is asserted to have many degrees of clarity, distinctness, precision and familiarity. These degrees are to a great extent predetermined by personal biography. All this refers to everyday thinking and its constructs.

Turning to the position of the social scientists, it is necessary to make a few remarks concerning the very position of the social scientist in the social world. He is certainly a human being, living and acting among the others. This world is the theater of his actions and interrelations. But to deal with scientific research in the social world, the scientist has to adopt a specific scientific attitude toward the object of his study. Namely, he has to "bracket" (suspend) his natural attitude, his everyday system of in-group relevance and typifications which he obviously shares with other people in order to occupy the position of "disinterested observer". It implies that he is not involved in the observed situation. It has only cognitive, not practical interest for him. It is not a field of his activity, but the object of his scientific consideration.

By adopting the disinterested position of scientific observer, the social scientist also detaches himself from his biographical situation within the social world – for the purpose of the scientific problem to be solved. What is taken for granted in the biographical situation of daily life may be put into question in the scientific position. By making up his mind to carry out scientific research, the scientist has entered a field of knowledge, namely the corpus of his science. He has to adhere to the rules of scientific method. It is his scientific problem alone which determines what is and what is not relevant to its solution, what has and what has not to be taken for granted and finally the set of abstractions, generalizations, formalizations and idealizations to be used for considering the problem. The problem is, so to speak, the locus of all possible constructs relevant to its solution.

Accordingly, there is a difference between common-sense and scientific ideal types which originates in the shift from biographically determined to the scientific situation.

The corpus of science contains the rules of procedure, including the method of forming the constructs in a scientific way. The scientist begins to construct typical course-of-action patterns corresponding to the observed events. Then he ascribes to this action pattern a personal type, i.e. the model of an actor, whom he imagines as being gifted with consciousness. Yet, it is a consciousness restricted to the elements relevant to the performance of the action pattern under observation. He ascribes to this fictitious consciousness a set of typical motives, corresponding to the goal of the observed course-of-action pattern.

It goes without saying that this model of an actor is not a portrait of a human being, living in the social world. This "actor" does not have any biography and the situation in which he is placed is totally defined by the social scientist. It is the scientist who created this puppet for the scientific

purpose. A merely specious consciousness is attributed to the puppet in such a way as if it would make subjectively understandable actions.

But the puppet and his artificial consciousness is not subjected to the ontological conditions of human beings. The puppet was not born, it does not grow up, and it will not die. It has no hopes and fears, it does not know of anxiety of its deeds. It is not free in the sense that it could not go beyond the limits placed by the scientist. It cannot have motives and interests other than those the social scientist has ascribed to it. It can not err, if making errors is not prescribed by the scientist. And above all, it cannot choose, except among the alternatives which the social scientist has put before it. At last, while the human being enters any social relation merely with a part of his Self, the puppet is involved therein in its totality. It is nothing else but the bearer of its typical social functions. Its artificial consciousness contains merely those elements which are necessarily presupposed to make performed actions subjectively meaningful.

The scientist determines the stock of knowledge which a puppet has supposedly at hand. The relevance system by which the scientist is governed in doing his work determines its structure, i.e. the elements which the puppet is supposed to know. And it is this system of relevance which determines the various degrees of clearness and preciseness of this knowledge.

If such a model of an actor enters in interactions with the other puppets, the general thesis of reciprocal perspectives comes into play. The course-of-action and personal types are supposedly formed by the puppet due to his partners, including the definition of the system of relevances, roles and motives, which may or may not be fulfilled by further events. But the model of an actor has obviously neither anticipations of the Other's reactions nor self-typifications. "All standards and institutions governing the behavioral pattern of the model", A. Schutz believes, "are supplied from the outset by the constructs of the scientific observer."<sup>6</sup>

Alfred Schutz has not been satisfied by M. Weber's ideal types' ambivalence. According to the socio-phenomenological approach, as we have seen, ideal type is a purely theoretical construct. It has been created by social scientists for the purpose of theoretical contemplation. While Weber's historical ideal type refers to empirical data and logical ideal type refers to the theoretical context, A. Schutz's ideal type refers to practice and theory simultaneously, but in quite a specific meaning. Alfred Schutz declared that the constructs of social sciences are necessarily rooted in "natural attitude" – everyday (pre-reflexive) knowledge of people living in the social world. In contrast to the thought objects of everyday thinking, the model constructs of the social

sciences have to meet the following requirements, i.e. have to be formed according to the following postulates:

1. The postulate of logical consistency.

It means that the system of typical constructs must be fully compatible with the principles of formal logic.

2. The postulate of subjective interpretation.

The social scientist has to attribute to the constructed model of the individual mind that typical content which explains the observed facts as the result of the activity of such a mind in an understandable relation.

3. The postulate of adequacy

Each term in a scientific model of human action must be constructed in such a way that a human act, performed by the actor in the way indicated by the typical construct, would be understandable for the actor himself (as well as for his partners) in common-sense interpretation of everyday life.

The first postulate is obviously common to each social science. 'To be scientific' means to be rational (but not vice versa), i.e. to comply with the postulate of logical consistency. Scientific activity is rational by definition. Fulfillment of this postulate warrants the objective validity of the thought objects, constructed by the social scientist. Strictly logical character is one of the most significant features by means of which scientific thought objects may be distinguished from the common-sense thought objects which they seek to supersede.

The second postulate is obviously shared with M. Weber's theory of social action. It implies (to both of them) that to understand human action is to ascribe subjective meaning to the actor. In the pure rational action, Weber asserts, subjective intention of the actor coincides with the meaning ascribed to the action by the social scientist. It is this subjective meaning, M. Weber believes, which is the ultimate goal in understanding the social world. For A. Schutz there is an essential gap (split) between the so-called subjective and objective meaning, the latter alone being open to the scientific observer. Pure rational action in a sense of optimal end-means relationship is an exceptional case. It is an unwarrantably strong idealization for everyday thinking. This divergence of subjective and objective meaning has been conceptualized as "in-order-to-motives" (which govern the actor in the course of his action performance) and "because-motives" which are open to the partner or scientific observer. For example, if said that someone committed a crime *because* of the need for money, that would be a phenomenologically incorrect statement. The correct version should be "he committed a crime *in order to* steal the money". Because-motive does not constitute the project of action. Rather, it explains why this action is performed in such a way. In the given example,

because-motive explains what past ("sedimented") experience of the actor made him to steal the money instead of earning them. The compliance with this postulate warrants the possibility of referring all kinds of human actions to the subjective meaning of the actor.

At last, the postulate of adequacy is peculiar to social phenomenology. It constitutes the main difference between classical and phenomenological sociology.

The former tacitly presupposes that there is an unbridgeable gap between everyday and scientific knowledge. In contrast to this presupposition, the latter tries to bring to light the roots of scientific constructs in everyday thinking, to trace back the meaning sedimentation process of scientific constructs. Alfred Schutz presupposes that both common-sense and scientific thinking are based upon creative capacity of human mind, by which we form a set of abstractions, generalizations, formalizations, relevant to respective level of thought organization. Alfred Schutz believes that there are no such things as facts, pure and simple. All facts are from the outset abstracted from a universal context by the activities of our mind. They are, therefore, always pre-selected and pre-interpreted. Phenomenologically, they carry along their interpretational inner and outer horizon. It does not mean, he explains, that we are not able to grasp the reality of the world. Rather it means that we have to keep in mind that what we actually grasp is merely certain aspects of the world which are relevant to our daily life or scientific practice.

Having similar origin, scientific constructs are designed to supersede the constructs of common sense. Let me cite this passage at length:

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 his fellow-men. Thus, the constructs used by the social scientist are, so to speak, constructs of the second degree, namely, constructs of the constructs, made by the actors on the social scene, whose behavior the scientist observes and tries to explain in accordance with the procedural rules of his science<sup>7</sup>.

It is upon the latter that the former are founded.

### 3. PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE SELF: DOES IT PAVE THE WAY TO POSTMODERN DECONSTRUCTION?

Contemporary approaches in the study of the Self in psychology are to a great extent inspired by the critique of methodological foundations of the so-called traditional Self-models. The latter are essentially based upon commonly shared initial presupposition that the object of Self may be presented in

theory as a highly specific entity which could be exhaustively defined and conceptualized. In other words, Self is alleged to have its own nature, and it is this nature that should be discovered and described by the scientists<sup>8</sup>. Beside well-known behaviorism, classical theories of Self embrace theory of traits (strains), theory of social roles, humanist theory of Self, etc.

In the above-mentioned theory of traits, for example, Self is generally viewed as nothing but a set of traits, capacities and constitutional biases, which make Selves of what they are. These traits may be observed, compared and fixed in inquirers and question forms by means of scientific methods. Variations of these traits are supposed to be an individual response to the challenge of society.

Human behavior is to a great extent predetermined by these traits which seem to play a more important role than the whole situational context. Human Self thus interpreted may have only one identity composed by totality of traits.

It is easy to see that theory of traits is based upon a very strong methodological assumption which is not evident in itself, namely: to study human Self we should do nothing but to study his or her set of traits which seem to be sufficient for scientific explanation of the Self. From this point of view it does not make sense to speak about Self's internal conflicts and controversies, different orders' stratification – in a word, about "identity crisis" (Z. Bauman, J. Habermas *Bauman-Z* Postmodernity and its Discontents. Cambridge, 1998; Habermas J. Legitimation Crisis, L, 1976), which is widely recognized as the distinguishing feature of postmodern condition. For the theory of traits, Self may have only one ("true") identity. Any discrepancy between theory and observed behavior is alleged to be the shortcomings of the explanatory scheme which should be improved. Furthermore, the theory which seeks to reduce Self to totality of traits is not able to grasp situational variations of human behavior, or the simple fact that the same human being may reveal different traits in different communicative situation's, say, to demonstrate both an introvert and extravert set of traits in different contexts.

Theory of social roles seeks to eliminate this imperfection. Role is alleged to delineate social claims in regard to definite social positions. It implies the set of activities, styles of behavior and social expectations. All of them are of impersonal, formal character. Theory of roles maintains that human Self is exhaustively defined by social position. Only by playing the role, say, of a doctor, teacher, father, friend or public figure, the human being acquires access to the society as a whole. And only in this way is he able to articulate his personal features as totality of Self by means of socially approved forms of self-expressions.

It is easy to see that according to this view the human being lacks sincerity in his public manifestations. And importantly, it tacitly assumes that his real, authentic hidden Self is necessarily distant from what is publicly presented. The former takes responsibility only for choosing the role and controlling the way of its presentation.

But in trying to eliminate obvious imperfections in the theory of traits, the theory of social roles creates its own shortcomings. Some of them have already been criticized by social phenomenologists when analyzing T. Parson's structural functionalism. Alfred Schutz calls role-specific Other "a partial Self"<sup>9</sup>. These arguments Parsons T. The Structure of Social Action. N-Y., 1937: The Social System, N-Y., 1951. retain their power in regard to psychological role-theory. The core of them could be formulated as follows:

1. Choosing between socially pre-given roles which we play in different contexts depends on personal definition of the situation, which is not taken for granted but is being constituted in the process of meaningful construction of reality. If we lack a meaningful context (as A. Schutz described in his study of speech disturbances) we fail to take a role.
2. The main psychological shortcoming of the theory of roles consists in the fact that it does not draw due attention to the process of an individual's appropriation of roles, making role-specific knowledge a component of his stock of personal knowledge. For this reason, it fails to explain how social requirements are being transformed into internal rules of human behavior.
3. At last (but not least) the theory of roles is based upon tacit presupposition that social position, to which social role has to correspond, is firmly fixed or completely defined by all of the people. But such public consensus is rather a dream than the real state of affairs.

Regarding the way of Self-constitution in the theory of roles, we may add that there may be a lot of contesting personal identities, which may cause the split of personality and paralyze the process of choosing the role relevant to the present situation. Humanistic critique of the theory of roles insists that we should study not only the role-specific I, but also the authentic, "genuine" I, which is the only subject of self-consciousness and self-development.

In contrast to role-theory, which considered the Self as derivation of the present social order, postmodern constructive theories of the Self transcend the classical notion of sociality and postulate the variety of practices, both present and past, which contribute to theory formation of the Self. For example, tacitly presupposed "classical" assumption that an autonomous I can be regarded as a center of personal experience finds its relevance only in western industrial



society (Modernity), but it does not make sense in regard to the traditional society with its group-related identity.

Post-modern Self-conceptions are largely language-based and socially constructed. They start from the commonly shared assumption that any Self conceptualization has been to a large extent predetermined by the way of using the language in everyday life. It is language thus interpreted which creates a meaningful structure of the social world in everyday practices. By means of language they believe we ascribe meanings to our own and other's acts and behavior. In other words contemporary theories of the Self regard language as the main moderator of social interactions, as the social designer of reality.

Socially constructive theories of Self engage the sources of semiotics because they are focused not on the study of the essence of Self, but rather on the ways of its constitution by means of language. This "constitutive" perspective shifts the main problem from "what Self is" to "how we speak about Self" or even which discourses are relevant to Self-theory formation. In other words, *the way we speak about I* is of a key importance to understand the I. The meaning of Self is nothing but the locus of the present narrative practices.

But contemporary Self-conceptions admit that there is not a single I which is to be studied. Rather there are a variety of selves constituted by a multitude of social practices. It implies that in contrast to traditional Self-theories, postmodern ones do not seek to describe some basic, essential features of Self, rather they intend to develop conventional ways of description of Self in any relational context. And the concepts to be used for the description are in the focus of the study rather than in the expression of the essence of Self.

Psychological constructivism claims to produce Self-conception as socially approved ways of interpretations. That is why those who adhere to this view (Harre R. *Personal Being*, Cambridge, 1984) admit that we have to take into consideration the fact of multitude of Self-constructions, because any action does not predetermine the way of its interpretation. And the task of the social psychologist is not only to describe these variety of interpretations (proliferation of interpretations, as J. Derrida puts it), but also to study intersubjective and social functions of different interpretations.

In this respect, social phenomenology may be viewed as a bifurcation point in the developmental process of the idea of the social construction of the Self. To my knowledge, the role of social phenomenology in the history of ideas consists in the fact that it mediates (bridges a gap between) moderate ("classic") cognitive constructivism of the Self in European Philosophy and

its further developed radical forms which pave the way to the postmodern practice of deconstruction.

Accordingly, social phenomenology contains important resources for the immanent critique of postmodern deconstruction. It makes social phenomenology significant not only in its own right, but also as a means for deeper understanding of one of the most influential cognitive approaches in the New Age's theory of knowledge. And also in this respect "Phenomenology is *the Philosophy of our time*" (A-T. Tymieniecka).

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Husserl, E., *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorträge* (Den Haag, 1950).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, S. 121-127.

<sup>3</sup> Schutz, A., *Collected Papers* (The Hague, 1962), vol. 1, pp. 141-149.

<sup>4</sup> This part of research is financially supported by the Russian Foundation for Humanities. Grant N 05-03-03138a.

<sup>5</sup> Schutz, A., *Collected Papers* (The Hague, 1962), vol. 1, p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> Schutz, A., *Collected Papers* (The Hague, 1962), vol. 1, p. 42.

<sup>7</sup> Schutz, A., *Collected Papers* (The Hague, 1962), vol. 1, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Potter, J. and Wetherel, M., *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitude and Behavior* (London, Sage, 1987).

<sup>9</sup> Schutz, A., *Collected Papers* (The Hague, 1962), vol. 1, p. 19.