TOWARD AN EXISTENTIAL BASIS WITHIN PHENOMENOLOGICAL SOCIOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

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By

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The fundamental concern of this paper is with the development of an orientation in sociology that attempts to understand how meaning arises from social life. The efforts of the paper may be considered to fall within the tradition in sociology that is generally referred to as the sociology of knowledge.

The dominance of an empirical orientation in sociology may be attributed, in large part, to the development and refinement of methodological tools that are appropriate for empirical research. Questions of meaning, which generally lie outside the limits of empirical study, are quite often associated with such vague notions as "intuition" or "verstehen". It is the contention of this paper that "meaning" and "behavior" cannot be separated arbitrarily; accordingly, rather than disregard questions of meaning due to the vagueness that has hitherto been associated with interpretive sociology, the efforts contained herein are devoted to developing a systematic foundation for considering these questions.

The main interest of the paper is in exploring the rich insights that have been developed in a fairly recently emerging continental philosophy, viz. phenomenology. The paper attempts to briefly review the development of phenomenology, paying particular attention to the major existentialist philosophers who have advanced that line of thinking. After a consideration of phenomenology as philosophy, the paper then turns to an examination of current efforts to incorporate a phenomenological perspective into sociology, hopefully suggesting some directions that these efforts might take.

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By

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INTRODUCTION

Stephen Toulmin once made a distinction between the "Babylonian" emphasis on foresight in science and the "Ionian" concern for understanding.[1] The distinction refers to the period between 600 B.C. and 400 B.C., in which the Babylonians and Ionians were concerned, though in quite different ways, with the science of astronomy. On the one hand,

> . . . in calculating the times and dates of astronomical events . . . the Babylonians were masters. . . . Yet they achieved all this without (to our knowledge) having any very original ideas about the physical nature of the heavenly bodies.[2]

They were able to attain their tremendous predictive capabilities, according to Toulmin, because " . . . they computed the celestial motions in a purely arithmetical way."[3]

> Like men who prepare tide-tables, or economists working on "time-series", they analysed each of the celestial motions into a set of independent variables, each changing in a regular, predictable manner. Once this was done, they could calculate the variables separately, and recombine them so as to determine beforehand (or after the event) on which days in a given year the new moon would appear for the first time, and whether at a particular opposition between the Sun and Moon there would be a lunar eclipse.[4]

"The astronomy of the Early Ionians, on the other hand, consisted almost entirely of speculation, theory, and interpretation, and scarcely at all of 'prediction'. . . ."[5] They were primarily concerned with "understanding" phenomena; e.g., they resorted to the use of such analogies as "'circular tubes full of fire, with small holes through which the fire was visible as stars' . . . or (more acceptably to modern eyes) 'the Moon borrowing its light from the Sun and lacking any light of its own'"[6] to account for celestial phenomena. Yet, in spite of the fact that the Ionians could not approximate the predictive achievements of the Babylonians, they had made advancements in theoretical concerns which were sorely lacking in Babylonian astronomy:

> . . . When it came to interpreting the heavenly motions, (the Babylonians) showed just how devoid of a theoretical basis their forecasting techniques were. Nobody having a proper conception of the differences between eclipses and earthquakes, plagues of locusts and political disasters, could for a moment suppose that they were all alike predictable by the same kind of arithmetical analysis. The Babylonians acquired great <u>forecasting-power</u>, but they conspicuously lacked <u>understanding</u>. To discover that events of a certain kind are predictable—even to develop effective techniques for forecasting them—is evidently quite different from having an adequate theory about them, through which they can be understood.[7]

Without taking the analogy too literally, it could be argued that sociology has also had its Babylonian and Ionian traditions. The Babylonian positivism which emerged from mid-nineteenth century France, e.g., had emphasized the predictive value of the natural sciences,[8] while mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century German sociologists

argued that the "cultural sciences" in particular demanded a special type of "understanding" (verstehen).[9] Those traditions continue today in the debate over the issue of whether sociology is essentially a predictive, empirical science or primarily a human science with concerns that extend beyond the limits of the methods of the physical sciences.[10]

Especially in American sociology, where the emphasis on empirical Methods tends to dominate,[11] the importance of the Ionian tradition has been minimized, among other reasons,[12] for its failure to develop any sophisticated methodology based in "intuition" or "verstehen". There seems to be developing, however, a renewed emphasis on "understanding" based in an attempt to re-evaluate the question of "what it means to be a human being living in the world". There is evidence of such a trend in psychology, where Maslow has spoken of a "Third Force"[13] which, by refusing to be content with behaviorist or Freudian "explanations", attempts to understand how it is that a human being experiences the world; vide the writings of such people as Carl Rogers,[14] Rollo May,[15] or R.D. Laing.[16] In sociology there is similar evidence manifest in the recent development of ethnomethodology[17] or the renewed interest in the sociology of knowledge (particularly as formulated in Berger and Luckmann's The Social Construction of Reality[18]).

It is especially interesting to note that these new Ionian impulses in the midst of the Babylonian Captivity are generally based in a common philosophical foundation, viz. phenomenology. The writings of Edmund Husserl and his successors[19] have particularly provoked a good deal of interest among those who take seriously the challenge of not only attempting to understand "what it means to be a human being" and how our relationships to the world arise out of what that implies, but also of providing that understanding with foundations which are somewhat more systematic than conventional notions of "intuition".

It will be the purpose of this paper to undertake a tentative exploration of phenomenological philosophy as the foundation for a sociological perspective. One of the main obstacles to beginning such an undertaking, however, is that of knowing where to begin, especially since, as Merleau-Ponty has suggested,

> . . . the opinion of the responsible philosopher must be that phenomenology can be practised and identified as a manner or style of thinking (and) that it existed as a movement before arriving at complete awareness of itself as a philosophy. It has been long on the way, and its adherents have discovered it in every quarter, certainly in Hegel and Kierkegaard, but equally in Marx, Nietzsche and Freud.[20]

Given the practical limitations of this paper, however, it is necessary to decide upon a beginning point that is most appropriate for the intended discussion. Accordingly, since it was with Husserl that phenomenology first became a self-conscious philosophical method, and since it is with

Husserl that phenomenology is generally associated, then it is with Husserl that this paper will begin. There is, however, additional justification for considering Husserl's[21] phenomenology, resting largely in the fact that Husserl has been very important in shaping the nature of phenomenological sociology. The writings of Alfred Schutz,[22] a Husserlian disciple, have done much to bring phenomenology and sociology together; in addition, the compatibility with the symbolic interactionist tradition[23] in American social psychology suggests that a foundation has already been established for its inclusion, thereby providing a receptive environment for an exchange between Husserl's phenomenology and sociological theory.

Husserl's phenomenological philosophy, however, has not been accepted without modification among some of those who claim to base their own philosophies in his writings. Particularly interesting are the modifications suggested by three philosophers often referred to as "existentialists" or "existential phenomenologists"—specifically, Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.[24] They are interesting not only in terms of their effect on Husserl's phenomenology, but also for the implications for phenomenology as a sociological disposition.

It will be the contention of this paper that much of the basis for understanding the implications of the existentialist modification of Husserl's phenomenology in terms of establishing an orientation in sociology can be

discovered in Marx's critique of Hegel and the "Young Hegelians".[25] (The parallel is clearly not coincidental since Hegel was, in fact, the first to characterize his philosophy as phenomenology.[26]) Especially important is Marx's notion of "praxis".[27]

Accordingly, the chronology of this paper will be somewhat as follows: The first section will be devoted to an exposition of Husserl's phenomenology, followed by a review of the existentialist critique; the second section will then attempt to incorporate the existentialist critique of Husserl, particularly that of Merleau-Ponty, into a phenomenological disposition within sociology, specifically by considering Berger and Luckmann's philosophical orientation in The Social Construction of Reality in light of the critique implicit in Marx's polemical writings on the "Young Hegelians".

CHAPTER I

HUSSERL'S PHENOMENOLOGY AND EXISTENTIAL CRITICISMS

Husserl's Efforts to Establish Philosophical Foundations

From very early in his career it was Husserl's intention to develop philosophy "as a rigorous science."[28]

> Explaining this standpoint, Husserl stressed that, since its beginning in Greece, philosophy has always aspired to be an all-encompassing, intellectually justified knowledge of all that is. . . . Husserl seriously wanted to attain the goal by means of his phenomenology. Through a rigorously critical and systematic investigation, Husserl's phenomenological philosophy wanted to attain absolutely valid knowledge of things.[29]

To say that philosophy should become a rigorous science, however, is not to say that philosophy and science are the same; on the contrary, Husserl says, it is the goal of philosophy to investigate the presuppositions upon which the sciences are based:

> Philosophy . . . lies in an entirely different dimension. It needs entirely new starting points and an entirely new method, which is in principle different from those of any "natural" science. A philosophy (can) not naively begin at once, like the positive sciences do, which base themselves on the presupposed foundation of experience of the world as something that is pre-given as obviously existing. Its aim as philosophy implies a radicalism of foundation, a reduction to absolute presuppositionlessness, a fundamental method through which the philosopher at the beginning secures an absolute foundation for himself.[30]

How does one go about establishing an "absolute foundation"? That question has always been at the heart of epistemology, especially since Descartes. Due in large part to the success of the physical sciences and the implications for "what it is that can be known" and "how it is that one can know it," post-medieval philosophers generally attempted to establish philosophical foundations by developing a method whereby certain indubitable truths could be established as the basis of knowledge (as distinct, e.g., from opinion).[31] The goal of such efforts is to take what we normally consider to be true in our everyday lives and subject that to philosophical scrutiny in order to discover the basis of our claims to having "true knowledge." The purpose of establishing a method is to facilitate knowing how and where to begin.

Descartes, e.g., in attempting to avoid the traditional prejudices of common sense, established certain rules for his philosophical inquiry; among them was the decision to accept nothing which he did not recognize "clearly and distinctly" to be so.[32] To arrive at those principles which were most clear and distinct could only be achieved, according to Descartes, by doubting everything that he believed to be true; consequently, the only thing that could not be doubted was the fact that Descartes, the doubter, exists:

> . . . I noticed that whilst I thus wished to think all things false, it was absolutely essential that the "I" who thought this should be somewhat, and

> remarking that this truth "I think, therefore I am" (cogito ergo sum) was so certain and so assured that all the most extravagant suppositions brought forward by the skeptics were incapable of shaking it, I came to the conclusion that I could receive it without scruple as the first principle of the Philosophy for which I was seeking.[33]

For Descartes, this discovery indicated the existence of a thinking "mind," a substance distinct from the body;[34] furthermore, it also indicated to him that the basis of true knowledge can only be found in the mind, as opposed to, e.g., direct bodily sense-experience.[35] We have knowledge of the real external world, not because we apprehend the world through the senses, but because, provided that our ideas are clear and distinct, God guarantees them, and God is no deceiver.[36] Thus, in terms of Descartes' subject/object dualism, the Cartesian method entails a turn to subjectivity, based upon the notion that knowledge of the world is a product of the mind.

Whereas Descartes attempted to avoid the prejudices of common sense by subjecting everything to doubt, Hume

> . . . proposed to use the "experimental method"—the putting of philosophical claims to the test of experience, by seeing whether the ideas on which they were based could themselves be derived from experience.[37]

According to Hume, our ideas are merely higher order abstractions from basic sense experience (impressions).[38] Much of what we believe to be true about the world is a result of the imagination, which ". . . like a galley put in motion by the oars, carries on its course without any new impulse."[39] The imagination and convention lead

us to believe in the existence of relationships between objects which simply do not exist in the real world.

Thus, the real basis of our knowledge of the world lies in direct sense-experience and not, as Descartes would have it, in the mind. In fact, Hume argued that the notion of "mind" itself is a product of the imagination:

> . . . What we call a mind is nothing but a heap or collection of different perceptions, united together by certain relations, and supposed, though falsely, to be endowed with a perfect simplicity and identity.[40]

Against this background of the rationalism of Descartes and the empiricism of Hume, Husserl suggested that a proper foundation in philosophy could only be found in a reformulation of certain basic assumptions. Descartes, e.g., based his entire philosophy on a principle which assumed a dualism between subject and object. In his attempts to establish the "cogito" as a basis of certitude, Descartes failed to accurately understand its implications. As Husserl argued,[41] it is the nature of the subject/object relationship that the subject has an object and that the object has a subject, i.e. every "cogito" has a "cogitatum." We never "think" in the abstract sense, we only "think of" something; therefore, the "cogitatum" is given in every "cogito."[42] The subject/object relationship, then, is not a dichotomy, but a polarity.

Hume's efforts to deny consciousness in favor of a world of independent objects was subject to similar criticism. To speak of a world of independent objects

whose seeming coherence is a result of a posterieri constructions of the imagination fails to recognize that the essence of our experience of the world is not the raw data of our senses, but the meaning which permeates that sense-experience. To argue, e.g., that our notions of spatial and temporal relationships are not contained in the direct sense-experience of the world of independent objects is to separate the world from our consciousness of it when in fact there is only a world of objects for a subject, and our sense-experience of the world is necessarily mediated through the meaning that world has for us.

> Thus, for Husserl . . . true knowledge of reality, then, is the knowledge of the sense of, the signification of, things. But the sense of things, their signification, is not to be found in a contingent world of things existing independently of consciousness; it is to be found precisely in consciousness itself, where admittedly significance is concentrated. Kant had made it clear, and in this Husserl agrees with Kant, that the sense of things is precisely contributed to them by the consciousness which a subject has of them.[43]

In spite of the fact that Husserl's disagreements with Descartes and Hume are similar to Kant's, Husserl rejected Kant's distinction between phenomenon (from which the term "phenomenology" is derived[44]), or appearance to consciousness, and noumenon, or "thing-in-itself":

> He agrees with (Kant) in asserting that only phenomena are given, but he will claim that in them is given the very essence of that which is. Here there is no concern with reality as existing, since existence is at best contingent and as such can add to reality nothing which would be the object of scientific knowledge. If one has

> described phenomena, one has described all that can be described, but in the very constant elements of that description is revealed the <u>essence</u> of what is described. Such a description can say nothing regarding the existence of what is described, but the phenomenological "intuition" in which the description terminates tells us <u>what</u> its object <u>necessarily</u> is. To know this is to have an "essential" and hence a "scientific" knowledge of being.[45]

In sum, Husserl's attempts to establish a foundation for his philosophy led him to reformulate traditional conceptions of the relationship between subject and object. A proper philosophical foundation can take as its starting point neither the world nor consciousness in isolation from each other without destroying the very nature of their relationship. Kant had likewise argued such a position;[46] however, it was his contention that our consciousness of the world was of "appearances" and not of "things-in-themselves." Husserl, on the other hand, argued that we cannot even speak of the existence of a world independent of consciousness since any assertion about existence is contingent to our consciousness of it. Furthermore, he contended, it is in that "consciousness-of" the world that we can arrive at "essential" knowledge:[47]

> It is in this sense that phenomenology is to be understood. An act of consciousness is that in which an object "appears"; it is the "appearance" of an object. If one prescinds from the whole question of whether this object also "exists" independently of consciousness—and this, according to Husserl, we must do, since such existing would be at best contingent and thus of no importance to <u>strict</u> science—then, with nothing but the act of consciousness to go on, one can determine adequately the essence of that which is in consciousness.[48]

Given the foundations of his philosophy, then, the project of Husserl's phenomenology is to arrive at a "scientific knowledge of essences"[49] which is free of all contingency:

> All this . . . would be without significance if it were not aimed at discovering "objective" essences, which are what they are not only independent of contingent existence but also independently of any arbitrary meaning which a subject wants to give them. Though it is of the essence of an object to be related to a subject, the phenomenologist will deny that "things" act upon the subject in such a way as to engender this relation or that subjects simply "produce" objects. He will insist that by investigating pure consciousness he can discover a relationship which is truly objective in the sense that its validity is not derived from the conscious act wherein the relationship resides, and is necessary, in the sense that it could not be otherwise, no matter who the subject grasping the object may be.[50]

The next problem to be considered, then, must be the appropriate method for arriving at a scientific knowledge of essences.

Husserl's Phenomenological Method

If the phenomenological search for essences begins with our consciousness of the world, then before any further analysis can be carried out the essence of consciousness must first be clearly understood. Husserl explained that the essence of consciousness is that it is "consciousness-of" something, i.e. consciousness is intentional, and in that intentionality we can discover the essence of our knowledge of the world:

> . . . Husserl sought to discover the essence of consciousness . . . and he came to the conclusion

> that all consciousness is necessarily "consciousness-of" something. In speaking thus, he was saying that the "of" is inseparable from every act of consciousness, which was but another way of saying that consciousness is essentially oriented toward an object. Now, this orientation, which is to be found in every act of consciousness, is its intentionality, which is discovered not by some impossible analysis of what is outside consciousness but simply from an analysis of consciousness itself. Thus, without emerging from the reflexive circle, Husserl is convinced that he can discover all that is to be discovered regarding both subjectivity and objectivity—neither of which has significance without the other.[51]

In this sense, Descartes was correct when he returned to "consciousness" as his starting point; however, he erred when he failed to properly understand that the essence of consciousness is its intentionality and that, therefore, the foundation of his philosophy could be found in the "cogito" and not derived from it.[52] According to Husserl, Descartes' faulty interpretation of the "cogito" resulted from his method of doubt.[53] To doubt is to take a position in regard to existence, i.e. to say that "I doubt the existence of that table which appears to me" is similar to saying that "the table exists" in that both are assertions about whether or not the table exists. This we must never do, according to Husserl, because the existence of an object is at best contingent to our consciousness of it; instead, with regard to existence, we must take no position. It is only within this disposition that we can attend directly to our "consciousness-of" the world.

Accordingly, the initial step in Husserl's phenomenological method is what he calls the "suspension

of the thesis of the natural standpoint," "placing the world in brackets," or "the phenomenological epochē."[54] ("Natural standpoint" refers to that disposition toward the world which results from the complex of meanings the world has taken on for us over our lifetimes, i.e. it is what we take-for-granted, the "fact-world": "This 'fact-world,' as the word already tells us, I find to be out there, and also take it just as it gives itself to me as something that exists out there. . . ."[55]) The epochē requires that we

> . . . put out of action the general thesis which belongs to the essence of the natural standpoint, we place in brackets whatever it includes respecting the nature of Being(;) this entire world, therefore, which is continually "there for us," "present to our hand. . . ." If I do this, as I am fully free to do, I do not then deny this "world," as though I were a sophist, I do not doubt that it is there, as though I were a sceptic; but I use the "phenomenological" epochē, which completely bars me from using any judgment that concerns spatio-temporal existence. . . .[56]

It is within the epochē, or the suspension of belief in the existence of the world we take-for-granted, that the whole of phenomenological investigation is carried out,[57] i.e. the negativity of the epochē provides the basis for further phenomenological investigation:

> Since the epochē is negative . . . it functions as a condition for a knowledge of essences, not as a positive factor in grasping essences as they are; it simply assures that no foreign elements shall be admitted into the analysis; it says nothing positive with regard to what is there. If the phenomenological investigation is to be fruitful, the epochē must have its positive counterpart.[58]

The "positive counterpart" of the epochē, operating within a disposition which has suspended belief in an independently existing world which we have come to experience as "real," is concerned with " . . . the gradual penetration into the purified essential residue, gradually revealing the pure subjectivity as the exclusive source of all objectivity."[59] Penetration to pure subjectivity, then, reveals "essential" knowledge because, stripped of all contingency, the knowledge the subject has is necessarily as it is.

> Here the relation of necessity and objectivity becomes extremely important. If the subject can see that things cannot be otherwise, it has guaranteed the objectivity of its own grasp of things.[60]

(It must be understood here that, for Husserl, "objectivity" does not imply that our consciousness of the world corresponds to some world in its independent existence; rather, the only world we can know is "that world which appears to consciousness," so that "objectivity" refers to an understanding which has penetrated the confusion of the natural standpoint and arrived at a consciousness-of the world which "cannot be otherwise.")

Husserl introduced several reductions,[61] the purpose of which was to further purify subjectivity within the epochē. The first of these was " . . . concerned with the phenomenon of consciousness itself and with its idealization."[62]

> Only, says Husserl, if the essence of consciousness can be disengaged from its factual concretizations,

> can we escape the relativism inherent in the multiplicity of contingent subjects, each of which has its own experiences, without being capable of guaranteeing that its experiences have any universal validity. A multiplicity of subjects makes for a multiplicity of opinions, and a multiplicity of opinions makes for doubt. Only the unity of a sort of Platonic form of consciousness makes for the elimination of doubt.[63]

Whereas the first reduction was concerned with "disengaging consciousness from its factual concretizations," the second, known as the "eidetic" reduction, attempted to look

> . . . at consciousness precisely insofar as its essence is to be consciousness-of something, thus purifying not only its "operations" . . . but also the term of that operation which is the object precisely as immanent in consciousness. We might say that the first reduction purifies the cogito, whereas the second reduction purifies the cogitatum.[64]

The notion of "immanence" introduced here is important because it helps explain Husserl's conception of the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity. To say that something is immanent in consciousness means, roughly, that it is "given" in consciousness.

> Husserl could not conceive of ideas existing somewhere apart, nor could he conceive of them as being mere functions of a physical subject. . . . They had to have a being all their own, and this they have as immanent, objective terms of pure consciousness.[65]

Thus the first two reductions bring us to a point where: 1) we are led to understand that the epochē, or suspension of the thesis of the natural standpoint, does not reveal a multiplicity of subjects with completely

private experiences, but rather a certain unity in forms of consciousness; and 2) that the forms of our "consciousness-of" the world are immanent in that consciousness.

The remaining reductions are further attempts to move toward an "intuition of essences" by understanding "immanence" in an even more intensely purified subject.

> . . . (They are) somewhat less easy to distinguish clearly, and there is even a faint suggestion of arbitrariness in their division. It may be that Husserl did not so much consider them as distinct steps in a reductive process as concomitant factors in a total framework of purification.[66]

The first of these[67] is an attempt to discover a "pure" subject which is in no sense objectified. However, that presents a difficult problem. If, in this sense, the "pure" subject is one which is aware of an object, the mere act of reflecting objectifies the subject. For instance, if my "awareness" of this piece of paper constitutes "pure" subjectivity, any effort to reflect on that awareness treats the original awareness as an object in reflection. The "pure" subject then becomes the awareness I have in reflecting, and so on.

> The "I" that I am is not the "me" that I know, but the wherewith and the whereby that the "me" is known.[68]

Thus subjectivity cannot, in this sense, be known; it can only be "knowing."

For Husserl, however, there is still a sense in which the subject can be known as subject:

> "Object" is an essentially relative term; there can be no object which is not object <u>for</u> a subject. Hence, if an object is genuinely <u>given</u> as object, it is given as object for a subject, and thus the subject, too, is given; it is a datum of consciousness. . . . So long as the term of this reference is not objectified it is "pure subject."[69]

In this sense, the subject " . . . is known and it is known in consciousness, but it is not known as that <u>of</u> which one is conscious; it is simply known as that which is conscious. . . ."[70]

Accordingly, if we think of the subject in this sense, i.e., that we do not <u>know</u> the subject but rather know <u>what it is to be subject</u>, then the next reduction is based on the claim that the subject can subsequently be objectified and made the object of reflection, thereby allowing us to know subjectivity better and to arrive at a knowledge of its essences.[71] Reflecting on the "pure subject" within this reduction arrives at a transition from "pure subject" to "pure transcendental ego."[72] (As Quentin Lauer has argued,[73] there seems to be little difference between this reduction and the previous one, except that in this reduction the subject is universalized by being objectivated.)

Arriving at the "pure transcendental ego" does not mean, however, that essences are discoverable within the intentional consciousness of the "pure transcendental ego" simply because that consciousness reproduces an existing object or because an object is produced by consciousness;

> . . . An intention is not merely a mental relation; instead it is an ideal immanent term of consciousness. By the very fact that consciousness itself has been idealized in the way we have seen, its term, too, must be idealized. The result is an immanent object which is neither the reproduction of an existing object (which would require an unprovable relation of causality between object and consciousness); nor is it a term projected, as it were, by consciousness. Rather it is a term "constituted" <u>in</u> consciousness.[74]

It is very difficult, as Lauer has pointed out, to grasp the notion

> . . . that such a "constitution" should be neither a production nor a reproduction, . . . but Husserl maintained this interpretation from 1922, when he first introduced it, to the very end of his life.[75]

It is in this "constitution," however, that the pure ego is transcendental and, thereby, the <u>a priori</u> source of all objectivity. Accordingly, in

> . . . knowing the transcendental ego we know objectivity; there is no other way of knowing it. The rest of phenomenology is but an explication of this. One knows an object in knowing the subject because to know a subject is to know it as essentially having a determined object. This transcendental subject, then, is the <u>a priori</u> source of objectivity; not only of the formal objectivity of reason, as it is for Kant, but also of the objectivity of experience, since ultimately that only can be an object which is constituted in the transcendental ego, the source of that intentionality without which there are no objects.[76]

But how is it that phenomenology can become a "science of essences," i.e. even though the "essential" nature of consciousness can supposedly be discovered within the pure transcendental ego, how can we discover what these essences are? This "intuition of essences" is realized through a process of "ideation."

> The epochē and the reductions insure that only phenomena will enter into the consideration, but of themselves they give no assurance that there will be a penetration of these phenomena to the very essences contained in them. The process, then, of making essences stand out in consciousness begins with an "original" phenomenon, whether it be one of perception or of imagination. This original appearance serves merely as an "example" upon which the process of ideation can be built. The process itself consists in submitting the original perception or imagination to a series of "free" variations, wherein the object is viewed from various "aspects" (perceptual and imaginative).[77]

For example, there are many ways we can be conscious-of a cube-shaped object; we can view it from the "front," or the "top," or the "back," etc. We can also construct an image of a cube in our imagination. Husserl would argue that within the variations there is a basic commonality, an essence which is the foundation of these varied perspectives.

> In this process of variations the possibilities are, so to speak, infinite, but it is not necessary to go through the infinite variety of possible aspects of the object; somewhere along the line it will be "seen" that there is an identical element underlying all variations, actual as well as possible. This identical element is the "sense" or essence of the object under consideration. . . . Lest there be any doubt as to the justification for calling the result of this process the essence sought for, Husserl simply defines essence as that which remains identical in all possible variations of that which is being investigated.[78]

For the purpose of developing an overall sense of Husserl's philosophy as it provides the basis for the remaining discussion in this paper, it would be beneficial at this point to attempt to extract and briefly summarize some of the more important aspects of Husserl's

phenomenological method as it has been presented thus far.

What must be emphasized as being of utmost importance is the notion of intentionality, i.e. the idea that the relationship between subject and object is not merely incidental but that, on the contrary, the relationship is such that one cannot speak of subject or object in isolation from each other. The world exists for us, the meaning it takes on arises from our involvement. Be it at the level of perception or of conscious activity, that meaning arises neither from a world-in-itself nor a consciousness which creates a world, but from the mutual compenetration of consciousness and the world we are conscious-of. Accordingly, it is important that we attempt to understand the basis of meaning, i.e. we must know how to distinguish between the contingent meaning of everyday life and that which is essential in our relationship to the world.

For Husserl, that is only possible if we first suspend, or bracket, all of our assumptions about an existing world. From within that disposition we can then discover what remains as the very basis upon which we develop meaning and significance. Through this "placing the world in brackets," we are saying that any assertion about existence is contingent to our consciousness-of the object of our assertion, thereby requiring that we concern ourselves solely with that "consciousness-of."

After the phenomenological bracketing, then, the task becomes one of trying to find, in consciousness, that which is essential.

An awareness of what is essential is only possible if we first recognize that, should we start with a multiplicity of subjects, i.e. should we say that everyone simply has his own perspective or opinion, we can never emerge from the emptiness of relativism. We must instead look for that which is given (immanent) in consciousness, that which is independent of the contingency inherent in a multiplicity of subjects.[79]

Such a level of understanding is conceptually possible provided that one keeps in mind the essential nature of the subject/object relationship. We cannot, in fact, know subjectivity, i.e. our efforts to reflect on an original experience necessarily objectify that experience; accordingly, the essence of an objectified experience is contained in the reflection and not in the experience. On the other hand, we can know that any experience is only possible if there are subject and object in relation to each other, and based on that assertion it is argued that we can know what it is to be subject. Provided that subjectivity is understood in this sense, then, it can be objectified in reflection, thereby making it possible to arrive at a knowledge of what is essential.

Subjectivity thus objectified terminates in the "pure transcendental ego," within which essences are

"constituted." The notion of constitution does not imply that consciousness produces its objects, merely that objects acquire their essential nature as objects <u>for</u> a transcendental ego, i.e. the transcendental ego is the <u>a priori</u> source of objectivity. Accordingly, by knowing the transcendental ego we know subjectivity and objectivity as one, we know that which is the foundation of the "sense" of things. All further refinements in the phenomenological method pertaining to "knowing" essences are predicated on the assertion that one must look to the transcendental ego.

<u>The Existentialist Critique</u>[80]

<u>Martin Heidegger</u>. Heidegger's basic criticism of Husserl centered primarily around the notion of "bracketing" existence.

> Husserl . . . had taken the object of phenomenology to be the grasping of the <u>essential</u> character of the Ego and its experience of the world. . . . Heidegger as philosopher . . . is unable to take phenomenology <u>just</u> as an investigation of essential characteristics of the Ego and experience because it is his intent to reawaken the problem of the meaning of Being itself, traditionally the fundamental problem of philosophy, especially of ontology. Phenomenology, in other words, as conceived by Husserl identified Being only with <u>essential</u> being, that is, the <u>universals</u>, the general qualities which are capable of being inherent or ingredient in particular things or events. But to deal only with essential character is, as Husserl was fully aware, to leave outside consideration the question of existence and of nonexistence.[81]

Knowing "what it is to be subject" <u>in an ontological sense</u> is not the same as knowing "what it is to be subject"

as consciousness. Since Heidegger was concerned with developing " . . . an ontological reexamination of the question of Being by way of a study of the human Person (Dasein), . . ."[82] then Dasein had to be understood in its full implications. If the first step in one's phenomenology is to suspend all judgments about existence, i.e. to "place the world in brackets," then any attempt to uncover the essence of Dasein is necessarily confined to an investigation of consciousness. But the essence of Dasein is not to be found exclusively in consciousness; on the contrary, "the essence of Dasein lies in its existence."[83]

Heidegger's opposition to Husserl concerning the "bracketing of existence" was based upon a different conception of the term "existence."

> Heidegger is careful to distinguish his use of "existence" (Existenz) from "existence" in the sense of Thomas' existentia. The latter term would be translated as "existing" or "being actual"; its opposite would be "not existing" or "not being." But existence as Heidegger uses the term is the character or essence of the Person (Dasein). To say that the essence of the Person is his existence is not to say that a Person essentially is, but rather to say that a Person is defined in terms of possible ways for him to be.[84]

Husserl had viewed "existence" in terms of "being" or "not being," thereby arguing that any assertion about existence is contingent to our consciousness-of the object of our assertion. In other words, " . . . 'being' means 'being an object for consciousness.'"[85] The purpose of the phenomenological epochē, then, was to free consciousness

from contingent existence in order to discover the essence of being within the immanent structure of the constituting transcendental ego, a position that Heidegger clearly rejected.

> The whole of Husserl's method is characterized by this transcendental reduction in which the whole realm of being is placed between parentheses in order to yield the transcendental ego. But Heidegger makes no use of these reductions. . . . While Husserl tries to free the transcendental ego from the world by means of his reductions, Heidegger sees Dasein as the being that discloses the world. The relationship of Dasein and world is of such importance in Heidegger that he defines Dasein as being-in-the-world. Husserl's "pure ego" is an abomination to Heidegger, a mere artificial abstraction which only hampers our understanding of man as concrete ek-sistence, that is to say of man as "standing out" toward things in the world and, in the final analysis, to the world itself.[86]

This notion of ek-sistence, or "standing out toward the world," is crucial to Heidegger's philosophy inasmuch as it elaborates his conception of the nature of "being" as "being-in-the-world."

> The hyphenated form of the phrase "being-in-the-world" . . . is meant to emphasize that to be in the world, in the primary meaning which this notion is to have in Heidegger's analysis of existence, does not mean to be physically in the universe. On the contrary, being-in-the-world is a "unitary phenomenon. . . ."[87]

The world has unity for us because we are involved in it, i.e. it is the nature of Dasein " . . . to exist in the execution of intentional acts."[88] As a result of our involvement in the world through activity, "being-in-the-world" can never imply that we merely exist in a world of independent objects (in the empiricist sense):

> The world is not the world of things that are at hand, the things which, by virtue of their objectivity, a Person is not. Rather, the world is, in a sense to be specified, an aspect of the Person himself.[89]

The assertion that the world is "an aspect of the Person himself" is similar to Husserl's contention that the "sense" of the world, i.e. the meaning it has for us, can only be discovered by considering the subject and object in relation to each other. Heidegger argues, however, that the relationship is not primarily one of "consciousness," wherein essential meaning can be discovered. "What concerns Heidegger is . . . the world which gives itself to us as an immediate component of our basic situation, being-in-the-world."[90] (my emphasis)

The problem of explicating the nature of "being-in-the-world" as our basic situation, i.e. as ontology, can only be approached phenomenologically:

> With the question of the meaning of Being, our investigation comes up against the fundamental question of philosophy. This is one that must be treated phenomenologically. . . . The expression "phenomenology" signifies primarily a methodological conception.[91]

Phenomenology as a "methodological conception" in Heidegger's sense, however, clearly implies something different than that which Husserl had in mind.

The precise nature of that difference can be seen in Heidegger's etymological analysis of the term "phenomenology."

> The Greek expression . . . to which the term "phenomenon" goes back is derived from the verb . . . which signifies "to show itself." Thus . . . (it) means that which shows itself, the manifest. . . .[92]

As Husserl had used the term "phenomenon," it referred to "appearances." Heidegger's conception of the term, however, " . . . must clearly be distinguished from the term appearance. Phenomena are not simply appearances, but rather that which appears or that which shows itself."[93]

The second half of the term "phenomenology," derived from the Greek Logos, is interpreted by Heidegger to mean "discourse"; more specifically, Logos " . . . as 'discourse' means . . . to make manifest what one is 'talking about' in one's discourse."[95] Thus the project of phenomenology is " . . . to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself."[96]

Husserl's phenomenological method, based on the notion of phenomenon as "appearance," was concerned with discovering the essence of "that which appears to consciousness" by an analysis of the intentional structure of consciousness itself. Heidegger, on the other hand, argues that intentionality, or involvement, is not limited merely to consciousness.

> For Heidegger . . . the intentional structure is present not only in the realm of consciousness, understood in terms of man's cognitive and theoretical relation to his world, but already in the whole of man's pre-cognitive awareness. Man "intends" his world not only in perceiving and judging, but also in the use of tools or utensils in his daily practical concerns, and in his encounter and response to other selves who share his world, which Heidegger calls personal concern.[97]

Accordingly, if phenomenology is concerned with ontology, and not simply consciousness, then a phenomenological method

must attempt to make evident "that which shows itself" as it is actualized in ek-sistence,[98] i.e. phenomenology must attempt to explicate the essence of the meaning the world takes on for us as it develops in our everyday activity.

> With this in mind we can easily understand that Heidegger's intentional analysis can never take the form of a constitutive analysis as we find it in Husserl. This is also the reason why Heidegger will have nothing to do with a phenomenological or transcendental reduction, with a transcendental subjectivity, with a theory of the ego as "disinterested observer," or with a complete and universal reflection. In sum we may say that Heidegger rejects Husserl's method because it did not take sufficient note of Dasein's original experience of itself as Being-in-the-world. Husserl's method cannot fully penetrate Dasein in the originality of its ek-sistence. It can lead only to an idealized subject, never to Dasein's essence, to its ek-sistence. The subjectivity in its most essential meaning is thus bypassed. Once the true meaning of subjectivity is revealed, we immediately become convinced of the impossibility of a statement that equates Being with object. With that insight the possibility of Husserl's transcendental idealism comes to an end.[99]

Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre was in substantial agreement with Heidegger that the project of phenomenology, rather than being one of attempting to discover "essences" within the "constituting transcendental ego" as Husserl would have it, should instead focus upon the explication of the nature of "being";[100] however, the influence of Hegel, particularly his notion of a dialectical process arising from the negating power of consciousness,[101] led Sartre in somewhat different directions than Heidegger.

In terms of understanding what these directions were, one can find early indications in Sartre's article, "The Transcendence of the Ego."[102] Therein he took up the question of " . . . whether it makes sense, after the phenomenological reduction, to speak of a 'transcendental ego' which precedes consciousness."[103] (At the time he wrote the article, he was in substantial agreement with Husserl's phenomenology,[104] with the exception of that aspect being considered in the article itself. Accordingly, when Sartre questioned whether one could speak of a transcendental ego, he was assuming the validity of the other reductions, including the epochē.) The question at the heart of the article appeared in the following form:

> Like Husserl, we are persuaded that our psychic and psychophysical me is a transcendent object which must fall before the epochē. But we raise the following question: is not this psychic and psychophysical me enough? Need one double it with a transcendental I, a structure of absolute consciousness?[105]

Sartre argued that, not only the me, but the I is a construction of consciousness. It is only when I reflect on an experience that I am aware of an "I" who was having the experience.[106] In an immediate experience, my consciousness is involved with the experience; in reflection, my consciousness also constructs an "I" who was having the experience.

To deny the existence of the "ego," however, is reminiscent of Hume and, after all, it was Kant's critique of Hume on precisely that point that played a major part

in establishing the phenomenological tradition. But Sartre in no way intended his rejection of the ego to imply a move toward empiricism; on the contrary, he argued that the very essence of consciousness, as Husserl had so eloquently pointed out, is its intentionality, and that, therefore, there is no need to speak beyond that of an "ego" as providing the unity of my experiences:

> It is ordinarily thought that the existence of a transcendental I may be justified by the need that consciousness has for unity and individuality. It is because all my perceptions and all my thought refer themselves back to this permanent seat that my consciousness is unified. . . . Now, it is certain that phenomenology does not need to appeal to any such unifying and individualizing I. Indeed, consciousness is defined by intentionality. By intentionality consciousness transcends itself. It unifies itself by escaping from itself. . . . The object is transcendent to the consciousnesses which grasp it, and it is in the object that the unity of the consciousnesses is found.[107]

What remains after the phenomenological reductions, then, is not a transcendental ego, " . . . but a pure transcendental field of consciousness. . . . It is simply pure spontaneity, a mere activity transcending itself toward mundane things."[108] Accordingly, one cannot speak of discovering essences within the immanent sphere of consciousness:

> To Sartre's way of thinking Husserl's concept of intentionality surpasses any idea of immanence, since consciousness as consciousness-of refers necessarily to something beyond itself and thus, as such, expels all things from it. . . . Consciousness is congenitally oriented toward being-other-than-itself; it does not constitute, but it reveals being.[109]

If essences are not immanent in consciousness, and if consciousness is congenitally oriented toward "being-other-than-itself" such that consciousness reveals being, then the problem to be considered is the relationship between consciousness and "being-other-than-itself." It is with Sartre's "phenomenological ontology" in Being and Nothingness that his criticism of Husserl moves toward actualization in concerns similar to Heidegger's.

Sartre begins his analysis by establishing what he calls the "ontological proof":

> Consciousness is consciousness of something. This means that transcendence is the constitutive structure of consciousness; that is, that consciousness is born supported by a being which is not itself. This is what we call the ontological proof.[110]

He makes " . . . a distinction in the realm of Being between the for-itself and the in-itself."[111] The latter is the world in itself, the total context within which the for-itself moves and brings being into consciousness.

Whereas Heidegger's human Person (Dasein) was involved in the world in a pre-conscious awareness resulting from intentional activity, Sartre, in the tradition of Hegel, saw in the negating power of consciousness (for-itself) the ability to place the world (in-itself) at a distance.

> . . . Insofar as the questioner must be able to effect in relation to the questioned a kind of nihilating withdrawal, he is not subject to the causal order of the world; he detaches himself from Being. This means that by a double movement of nihilation, he nihilates the thing questioned in relation to himself by placing it in a neutral state, between being and nonbeing—and that he nihilates himself in relation to the thing questioned by wrenching

> himself from being in order to be able to bring out of himself the possibility of nonbeing. Thus in posing a question, a certain negative element is introduced into the world. We see nothingness making the world irridescent, casting a shimmer over things.[112]

> Finally, it is from the indissoluble link between the radically incommunicable in-itself and the for-itself that Sartre derives the two fundamental aspects of subjectivity, namely its negativity and its freedom.[113]

That is to say, through nihilation consciousness is free to choose its object.

In terms of a phenomenological method and its fundamental purposes, then, Sartre has withdrawn his earlier acceptance of Husserl's reductions.

> In Sartre's opinion, if there is no transcendental ego <u>in</u> consciousness, . . . then the Being of objects cannot be constituted by a transcendental ego with the help of contents of consciousness. The Being of objects is either dis-covered, as Heidegger puts it, or it can never be found by any act of consciousness. . . . In trying to isolate consciousness from that toward which it is <u>essentially</u> oriented, such a reduction necessarily would annihilate consciousness. The world cannot be in consciousness, as Husserl would have it, but consciousness is in the world, as Heidegger has shown.[114]

Thus if one also keeps in mind the fact that consciousness (for-itself) is free to choose its objects, then the proper concern for a phenomenology must be that of revealing the essence of meaning as it is actualized in the freedom of human existence.[115]

<u>Maurice Merleau-Ponty</u>. Merleau-Ponty, like Heidegger and Sartre, was impressed with Husserl's arguments focused around the notion of "intentionality" and its importance

in reconsidering the nature of the relationship between subject and object; also like Heidegger and Sartre, he rejected Husserl's assertion that the essence of intentional relationships can be discovered within the immanent sphere of a "pure transcendental ego." If phenomenology is to be productive as a philosophical method, it must concern itself with questions about the fundamental nature of being.

In this regard, Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger had much in common. Heidegger, it will be remembered, argued that Dasein's involvement in the world (being-in-the-world) implied more than an involvement of consciousness; the unity of meaning the world takes on for us arises out of Dasein's ek-sistence, insofar as the essence of Dasein is defined in terms of its "possibilities" as they emanate from the situation of our intentional activity.

Merleau-Ponty likewise takes such a position in his major work, Phenomenology of Perception. As the title may indicate, he turns his phenomenological analysis to the investigation of perception as the pre-conscious foundation of meaning.

> Perception is not a science of the world, it is not even an act, a deliberate taking up of a position; it is the background from which all acts stand out, and is presupposed by them.[116]

Perception is not taken to mean "sensation" as the empiricists would have it, nor is it meant to indicate the exclusive activity of "pure consciousness"; rather, perception is a " . . . living system of meanings which makes the concrete

essence of the object immediately recognizable, and allows its 'sensible properties' to appear only through that essence."[117] This "living system of meanings" does not emanate from a "transcendental ego" or from "pure consciousness," but from the body's involvement in the world.

To say that the body is "in the world" is to be interpreted in Heidegger's sense and not in the empiricists' sense. The body does not exist passively in the midst of a world of independent objects; rather, the body is the locus of "lived experience," as "body image"[118] it situates experience.[119] On the one hand, I am a body, i.e. my body makes the world of objects possible for me; on the other hand, I have a body in the sense that I am aware of its presence in the world. It is this body image, then, that makes it possible to say that the body ek-sists in the world:

> . . . If my body can be a "form" and if there can be, in front of it, important figures against indifferent backgrounds, this occurs in virtue of its being polarized by its tasks, of its existence towards them, of its collecting together of itself in its pursuit of aims; the body image is finally a way of stating that the body is in the world.[120]

Consider, for example, Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the relationship of the body image to perception of spatial relationships.[121] The world of objects exists for us as being spatially arranged, but how, he asks, do our notions of space arise? They are not merely a priori categories of the mind, nor are they "constituted" within

the immanent sphere of consciousness; rather, notions of spatial relationships arise out of "lived experience" and refer to the body image. If I place my arm down on the top of a desk, on which there are several books, a typewriter, a coffee cup, etc., I do not experience my arm as one of many "objects" on the desk. On the contrary, it is first and foremost my arm, it is part of the image I have of my body as the locus to which all other objects refer. The typewriter, the books, the coffee cup, etc. are arranged spatially in relation to my body: in essence, " . . . there would be no space at all for me if I had no body."[122] Consequently, as I move about in my activity, the world of objects takes on spatial significance in relation to my body and its intended activity.

In the same sense that objects about me take on spatial significance in relation to the activity of my body, it may be said that the meaning my consciousness of the world takes on develops in relation to my activity.

> . . . The things of experience (are) recognized to be objects-for-man. The symbolic activity in virtue of which they are such is treated as a practice—he usually says praxis—which brings things to their fulfillments. . . . Merleau-Ponty prolongs this conception of praxis into the description that is given of work—"the ensemble of activities by which man transforms physical and living nature . . ."—and on beyond this to that giving of meaning that Phenomenology of Perception found to be the definitive character in man.[123]

In essence, the meaning the world takes on for us arises out of the involvement of our activity. Intentionality

becomes an ontological relationship[124] which implies not merely a relationship of consciousness, but of consciousness that is oriented to the world through our activity.

Merleau-Ponty points out, however, that there is a certain freedom in consciousness. The notion of an absolute freedom of consciousness (for-itself) in its relationship to the world of things (in-itself) was, as mentioned earlier, the central concern of Sartre. Merleau-Ponty takes issue with Sartre's notion of freedom;[125] his

> . . . own option is for a conditioned (therefore not absolute) freedom as the only one that is genuinely efficacious, and he insists upon the mediation of the opposition of for-itself and in-itself by the generalized and pre-personal engagement in the world.[126]

For Merleau-Ponty, " . . . intentionality is a dialectic relationship within which meaning originates. It is an interaction through which an organism makes its material surroundings its situation."[127] To speak of an absolute freedom in Sartre's sense would be to speak of a freedom which would be

> . . . impotent and meaningless. The transcending <u>cogito</u> must have <u>some</u> foothold in the world if the meanings that it is to establish are to take hold there. . . . Freedom, in short, must be power and power must be something more than refusal of relation, something more than the ability to slip from behind any concrete act. Choice must also be choice of something. . . .[128]

In essence, "being-in-the-world" implies <u>situation</u>. The notion that freedom of consciousness lies in its power to negate its object, thereby establishing alternative

possibilities from which one is free to choose, must be modified to account for the limits on the range of possibilities as they are defined by involvement in the world through intentional activity.

Given the nature of his intellectual relationship to Husserl, Heidegger, and Sartre, then, it is possible to go on to consider the implications of Merleau-Ponty's reflections for phenomenological philosophy. He addresses himself to that specifically in the preface to Phenomenology of Perception, entitled "What is Phenomenology?". He begins by laying the groundwork for all further discussion:

> Phenomenology is the study of essences; and according to it, all problems amount to finding definitions of essences: the essence of perception, or the essence of consciousness, for example. But phenomenology is also a philosophy which puts essences back into existence, and does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man and the world from any starting point other than that of their "facticity." It is a transcendental philosophy which places in abeyance the assertions arising out of the natural attitude, the better to understand them; but it is also a philosophy for which the world is always "already there" before reflection begins—as an inalienable presence. . . . It tries to give a direct description of our experience (of the world) as it is, without taking account of its psychological origin and the causal explanations which the scientist, the historian, or the sociologist may be able to provide.[129]

The phenomenological study of essences thus conceived " . . . is accessible only through a phenomenological method(,)"[130] the purpose of which is to describe experience as it is lived, not as it is explained through science. Indeed, phenomenology must be concerned with ek-sistence as that which science itself seeks to explain:

> The whole universe of science is built upon the world as directly experienced, and if we want to subject science itself to rigorous scrutiny and arrive at a precise assessment of its meaning and scope, we must begin by reawakening the basic experience of the world of which science is the second-order expression. Science has not and never will have, by its nature, the same significance qua form of being as the world which we perceive, for the simple reason that it is a rationale or explanation of that world. I am, not a "living creature" nor even a "man," nor again even a "consciousness" endowed with all the characteristics which zoology, social anatomy or inductive psychology recognize in these various products of the natural or historical process—I am the absolute source, my existence does not stem from my antecedents, from my physical and social environment; instead, it moves out towards them and sustains them, for I alone bring into being for myself (and therefore into being in the only sense that the world can have for me) the tradition which I elect to carry on, or the horizon whose distance from me would be abolished—since that distance is not one of its properties—if I were not there to scan it with my gaze.[131]

In essence, phenomenology must turn to

> . . . that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always speaks, and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign-language, as is geography in relation to the countryside in which we have learnt beforehand what a forest, a prairie or a river is.[132]

It is only in this sense that the phenomenological reductions are to be understood. If the purpose of the phenomenological method is to describe the nature of our experience of the world as it is lived, then we must suspend our taken-for-granted explanations of the world so that a description of lived experience is possible:

> It is because we are through and through compounded of relationships with the world that for us the only way to become aware of the fact is to suspend the resultant activity, to refuse it our complicity . . . or yet again, to put it "out of play."[133]

The disposition one establishes is not, however, that of Husserl's epochē ("placing the world in brackets"). It is not meant to confine the study of essences to the immanent sphere of consciousness.

> Reflection does not withdraw from the world towards the unity of consciousness as the world's basis; it steps back to watch the forms of transcendence fly up like sparks from a fire; it slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world and thus brings them to our notice; it alone is consciousness of the world because it reveals that world as strange and paradoxical.[134]

The intentional threads are slackened, but they are never severed; indeed, " . . . the most important lesson which the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction."[135] The reduction always reveals "being" as "being-in-the-world,"[136] such that essences always have a foothold in existence.

The relationship between consciousness and the world of which we are conscious is a dialectical one; not in the sense that consciousness freely negates the world of objects, but in the sense that the essential meaning within consciousness is an expression of a lived situation. Consciousness, through language, objectifies our experience such that it prevails over its mere facticity, but it is our experience of the world which makes it possible for there to be any meaning at all.[137] Consequently, it is an error to conceive of essences as being separate from existence:

> The separated essences are those of language. It is the office of language to cause essences to exist in

> a state of separation which is in fact merely apparent, since through language they still rest upon the ante-predicative life of consciousness. In the silence of primary consciousness can be seen appearing not only what words mean, but also what things mean: the core of primary meaning round which the acts of naming and expression take shape.[138]

Accordingly, a phenomenology which is concerned with the existential determination of meaning

> . . . is distinguished from traditional "intellection," which is confined to "true and immutable natures," and so phenomenology can become a phenomenology of origins. Whether we are concerned with a thing perceived, a historical event or a doctrine, to "understand" is to take in the total intention—not only what these things are for representation (the "properties" of the thing perceived, the mass of "historical facts," the "ideas" introduced by the doctrine)—but the unique mode of existing expressed in the properties of the pebble, the glass or the piece of wax, in all events of a revolution, in all the thoughts of a philosopher.[139]

CHAPTER II

IMPLICATIONS OF THE EXISTENTIALIST CRITIQUE FOR PHENOMENOLOGICAL SOCIOLOGY

What Merleau-Ponty said about phenomenology "existing as a movement before arriving at complete awareness of itself as philosophy" is likewise appropriate when making reference to "phenomenological sociology." To characterize a particular approach to sociological theorizing as "phenomenological" is not to suggest that it is founded solely in the writings of Husserl; on the contrary, the sociological traditions emanating from Marx, from German "interpretive" sociology, or from symbolic interactionism are just as likely to be the source. On the other hand, when particular sociologists begin to refer to their own work as "phenomenology," it may be inferred that their philosophical foundations are, at least in part, based in Husserl's phenomenological philosophy. Alfred Schutz's Phenomenology of the Social World, e.g., prompted Husserl to remark that Schutz was one of the few who had penetrated to the core of meaning of his life work.[140]

Largely as a result of Schutz's writings, a growing number of sociologists are turning to phenomenology as a systematic attempt to rethink the problem of the relationship

between the social world we take as the object of sociological analysis and the meaning it has for people living in that world. A major contribution to such efforts is provided in Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's The Social Construction of Reality. They characterize their work as an attempt to "engage in systematic theoretical reasoning"[141] through the "phenomenological analysis of everyday life."[142]

In addition to being an influential book,[143] The Social Construction of Reality offers a convenient basis—because of its fairly systematic discussion—for examining the manner in which the "phenomenological analysis of everyday life" is taking shape within American sociology. It will be the project of the second part of this paper to consider Berger and Luckmann's philosophical foundations, in light of the existentialist critique of Husserl's phenomenology, for the purpose of offering some suggestions as to the nature of further developments within "phenomenological sociology."

On "Placing the World in Brackets": A Review and Criticism of Berger and Luckmann's Philosophical Foundations

Berger and Luckmann take as their starting point a synthesis of what was loosely referred to earlier as the "Babylonian" and "Ionian" traditions in sociology, insofar as the former consists of an emphasis on the observation of social "facts" and the latter refers to efforts to understand subjectice "meaning." They argue that it is

the proper concern for sociological theory to consider the challenges proposed in both traditions:

> One was given by Durkheim in The Rules of Sociological Method, the other by Weber in Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Durkheim tells us: "The first and most fundamental rule is: Consider social facts as things." And Weber observes: "Both for sociology in the present sense, and for history, the object of cognition is the subjective meaning-complex of actions." These two statements are not contradictory. Society does indeed possess objective facticity. And society is indeed built up by activity that expresses subjective meaning. . . . It is precisely the dual character of society in terms of objective facticity and subjective meaning that makes its "reality sui generis. . . ." The central question for sociological theory can then be as follows: How is it possible that subjective meanings become objective facticities?[144]

Berger and Luckmann characterize their efforts to understand how "subjective meanings become objective facticities," i.e. how "reality" is socially constructed, as a "sociology of knowledge."[145] They define "reality" as " . . . a quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition," and "knowledge" as " . . . the certainty that phenomena are real and that they possess specific characteristics."[146] In essence, as human beings we "make sense" of the world such that it appears to have an independent being, i.e. we take-it-for-granted. It is this "knowledge" of the world, then, that provides the context for our everyday activity, and it is the task of the sociology of knowledge to understand how that comes to be.

Berger and Luckmann take great care to point out that the sociological investigation of the knowledge that guides

everyday life is to be distinguished from the philosopher's attempts to establish criteria for what constitutes "true" knowledge.[147] The sociologist is only concerned with how particular taken-for-granted realities emerge from particular social situations. Breaking with the tradition since Mannheim that has sought to include epistemological questions within the sociology of knowledge, Berger and Luckmann suggest that "to include epistemological questions concerning the validity of sociological knowledge in the sociology of knowledge is somewhat like trying to push a bus in which one is riding."[148] As a consequence, they argue that the sociology of knowledge as they define it moves " . . . from the periphery to the very center of sociological theory,"[149] i.e. it is concerned with everyday "knowledge" as the context of activity, not with the validity of theoretical knowledge.

Although the sociological analysis of the "reality" of everyday life does not include epistemological questions, Berger and Luckmann realize the need to establish a philosophical foundation for that analysis:

> . . . Our purpose is not to engage in philosophy. All the same, if the reality of everyday life is to be understood, account must be taken of its intrinsic character before we can proceed with sociological analysis proper. . . . Before turning to our main task we must, therefore, attempt to clarify the foundations of knowledge in everyday life, to wit, the objectivation of subjective processes (and meanings) by which the intersubjective commonsense world is constructed.[150]

As a consequence, their first chapter is devoted to a philosophical analysis of the foundations of knowledge

as they originate in everyday life; they suggest that it is offered as "philosophical prolegomena"[151] to the later sociological analysis proper.

"The method we consider best suited to clarify the foundations of knowledge in everyday life (they argue) is that of phenomenological analysis. . . ."[152] Furthermore, they " . . . refrain from any causal or genetic hypotheses, as well as from assertions about the ontological status of the phenomena analyzed. . . ."[153] They argue that " . . . if we are to describe the reality of commonsense we must . . . take account of its taken-for-granted character—but we do so within phenomenological brackets."[154]

By placing the world-we-take-for-granted "in brackets," our essential relationship to the world is discovered in the intentionality of consciousness. "Consciousness is always intentional; it always intends or is directed toward objects."[155] Consciousness may be directed toward the "reality" of dreams, the "reality" of anxiety, the "reality" of physical objects, etc. In essence, we are " . . . conscious of the world as consisting of multiple realities."[156]

> . . . (However,) among the multiple realities there is one that presents itself as the reality par excellence. This is the reality of everyday life. Its privileged position entitles it to the designation of paramount reality.[157]

The nature of the reality of everyday life is such that I apprehend it

> . . . as an ordered reality. Its phenomena are prearranged in patterns that seem to be independent

> of my apprehension of them and that impose themselves upon the latter. The reality of everyday life appears already objectified, that is, constituted by an order of objects that have been designated as objects before my appearance on the scene.[158]

In sum, consciousness is intentional, i.e. it is directed toward a world that we generally take-for-granted. That world seems to be "out there" as an object-world, it imposes its patterns on us. In order to understand how that world <u>becomes</u> an objective "fact," however, we must "place it in brackets," i.e. refuse it our complicity. By so doing, it is possible to understand how that world is constructed in our consciousness. Berger and Luckmann do not suggest that it is merely a matter of understanding the "constitution" of the world in consciousness, however; on the contrary, they attempt to understand our consciousness of the world—our "knowledge" of "reality"—by seeking the foundations of knowledge in everyday life.

These foundations, they suggest, lie in social interaction and language.[159] The world seems to impose its patterns on me, e.g., because my interaction with other people tends to be "typified"—I relate to other people's actions as "types." Typification is a process that originates in social interaction whereby people begin to respond to each other with a degree of consistency that indicates a reciprocity of meaning. Typifications exist in a continuum, from the most immediate face-to-face situation to the most distant abstract relationship. The

sum total of these typifications provides the structure of the social world:

> Social structure is the sum total of these typifications and of the recurrent patterns of interaction established by means of them. As such, social structure is an essential element of the reality of everyday life.[160]

The structure of the world is made possible because human beings are able to express themselves; furthermore,

> . . . human expressivity is capable of objectivation, that is, it manifests itself in products of human activity that are available both to their producers and to other men as elements of a common world. Such objectivations serve as more or less enduring indices of the subjective processes of their producers, allowing their availability to extend beyond the face-to-face situation in which they can be directly apprehended.[161]

"The reality of everyday life is not only filled with objectivations; it is only possible because of them."[162]

"A special but crucially important case of objectivation is . . . the human production of signs."[163] Signs serve as an "index of subjective meanings."[164] "Signs are clustered in a number of systems,"[165] the most important of which is language, the system of vocal signs.[166] Language, as a sign system, originates in a social situation as an expression of subjective intentions. Language also " . . . has the quality of objectivity. I encounter language as a facticity external to myself and it is coercive in its effect on me. Language forces me into its patterns."[167]

The establishment of patterns makes it possible for us to "go beyond" our most immediate experience.

> Because of its capacity to transcend the "here and now," language bridges different zones within the

> reality of everyday life and integrates them into a meaningful whole. The transcendences have spatial, temporal and social dimensions. Through language I can transcend the gap between my manipulatory zone and that of the other. . . . As a result of these transcendences language is capable of "making present" a variety of objects that are spatially, temporally and socially absent from the "here and now."[168]

"Any significative theme that thus spans spheres of reality may be defined as a symbol, and the linguistic mode by which such transcendence is achieved may be called symbolic language."[169]

Because of language's symbolic quality, we are able to " . . . soar into regions that are not only <u>de facto</u> but <u>a prieri</u> unavailable to everyday experience."[170] As a result, through the use of language we are able to " . . . construct immense edifices of symbolic representations that appear to tower over the reality of everyday life like gigantic presences from another world."[171] However,

> . . . language is capable not only of constructing symbols that are highly abstracted from everyday experience, but also of "bringing back" these symbols and appresenting them as objectively real elements in everyday life. In this manner, symbolism and symbolic language become essential constituents of the reality of everyday life and of commonsense apprehension of this reality.[172]

Our "knowledge" of the "reality" of everyday life " . . . is structured in terms of relevances,"[173] i.e. the socially available stock of knowledge emanates from the activity of our everyday life. Consequently, the foundations of knowledge in everyday life lie in the structure that is

immanent in typified interactions and the objectivated meanings of language as they reflect everyday life.

Although there is no intention here to force Berger and Luckmann's explication of their philosophical foundations into a strict Husserlian mold (as it was presented in the first chapter of this paper), it still may be argued that Berger and Luckmann leave one with the same sense of frustration that is felt when considering Husserl's phenomenology. By "placing the world in brackets," Husserl was forced to ease out of a consideration of how essences "get into" consciousness or why the essences discovered are as they are by contending that essences are simply "constituted within the immanent sphere of consciousness."

In a similar sense, by "placing the world in brackets" and by refraining from ontological questions, Berger and Luckmann exclude the possibility of considering why it is that a particular "reality" is constructed or how that "reality" has come to be shared by a particular group of people. In spite of their efforts to discover the foundations of our "knowledge" in social interaction and language, they only attempt to understand our "knowledge" of the world, and not the world of which our "knowledge" is an expression. As Hans Peter Dreitzel has suggested:

> As long as sociological analysis is confined to the study of the reality construction procedures, while leaving the <u>existence</u> of the constructed reality to one side, it remains within the limits of the phenomenological analysis of consciousness.[174]

To say that the phenomena of the world appear to be "prearranged in patterns" and that these patterns emanate from social interaction and language is insufficient. Dreitzel is justified in asking, "Where do they come from?",[175] i.e. how is it that these particular patterns emerged and why do they continue (or fail to continue)?

Richard Lichtman has suggested that "the quest for a suspended ontology is a delusion."[176] Lichtman argues that Berger and Luckmann, by "placing the world in brackets," have actually offered an idealist theory.[177] Although Lichtman may have overstated his case,[178] it is at least possible to suggest that, given the nature of their phenomenological disposition, it is very difficult for Berger and Luckmann to escape the idealist implications of that disposition when they attempt to develop foundations for sociological analysis.

In what sense does the existentialist critique of Husserl's phenomenology provide the basis for a modification of Berger and Luckmann's philosophical orientation? One position held in common by all three existentialist philosophers mentioned earlier is the contention that phenomenology implies the investigation of ontological concerns. Involvement in the world (Heidegger's ek-sistence, "being-in-the-world") is more than an involvement of consciousness. Phenomenology is concerned with explicating "that which shows itself as it is actualized in ek-sistence,"

Accordingly, phenomenology must first take up the question of the nature of "being" as "being-in-the-world."

It is possible, for the purposes at hand, to suggest three basic concerns which Berger and Luckmann's phenomenological orientation cannot consider: 1) As human beings, we are engaged in the world through intentional activity. What, then, is the relationship between our intentional activity and the realities that we construct?; 2) What are the implications of the human capacity to negate the world, i.e. to place the taken-for-granted-world at a distance in such a manner that it becomes one alternative among other possibilities?; and 3) What is the relationship between the human capacity to place the taken-for-granted-world at a distance and our pre-conscious involvement in the world?

It will be suggested, by considering Berger and Luckmann's sociological analysis of the social construction of reality in light of Marx's critique of the "Young Hegelians," that the proper concern for phenomenological sociology is the comprehension of "praxis" and the manner in which "knowledge" is its expression.

On the Analysis of How Reality is Socially Constructed

After having established the foundations of knowledge in everyday life within phenomenological brackets, Berger and Luckmann then remove the brackets " . . . with an interest in the empirical genesis . . ."[179] of socially

constructed realities. Given their philosophical disposition as it was developed within brackets and as it refrained from ontological questions, however, their sociological analysis of how realities are socially constructed is inadequate for understanding the existential basis of these realities.

Berger and Luckmann suggest, e.g., that in contrast to the "species-specific environment" of other animals, " . . . man's relationship to his environment is characterized by world-openness,"[180] i.e., " . . . there is no human nature in the sense of a biologically fixed substratum."[181] Order and stability are not the direct products of biological factors. On the other hand,

> . . . empirically, human existence takes place in a context of order, direction, stability. The question then arises: From what does the empirically existing stability of human order derive?[182]

> . . . (Berger and Luckmann argue that) world-openness, while intrinsic to man's biological make-up, is always pre-empted by social order. One may say that the biologically intrinsic world-openness of human existence is always, and indeed must be, transformed by social order into a relative world-closedness.[183]

The question, then, is: How does social order itself arise?

> The most general answer to this question is that social order is a human product, or, more precisely, an ongoing human production. It is produced by man in the course of his ongoing externalization. . . . Social order exists <u>only</u> as a product of human activity. No other ontological status may be ascribed to it. . . .[184]

Thus, social order is humanly produced in the process of externalization. The "inherent instability of the human

organism" makes it "imperative" that human beings "provide a stable environment" for themselves.[185] Beyond that, no ontological assertions can be made.

Is it really the case that no other ontological assertions can be made? What of the nature of human "activity"? As Marx has suggested, " . . . the first premise of human existence . . . (is) that men must be in a position to live. . . . But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things."[186] Thus the primary example of "externalization" is " . . . the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself."[187]

As a result of human externalization in the production of material life, " . . . new needs are made."[188] In addition, " . . . men, who daily remake their own life, begin to make other men, to propagate their kind: the relation between man and wife, parents and children, the FAMILY."[189]

> These three aspects of social activity (the production of material life, the production of new needs, and the production of human life) are . . . to be taken as . . . three "moments" which have existed simultaneously since the dawn of history and the first men, and still assert themselves in history today.[190]

Thus, it may be said that, due to the exigencies of human needs, the "openness" of the world is limited before the specific "forms" of social order arise.

What difference does it make to suggest that it is essential to understand the very nature of human "activity" itself?

Berger and Luckmann contend that a main factor in the establishment of society as "objective reality" is the process of institutionalization.

> All human activity is subject to habitualization. Any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern, which can then be reproduced with an economy of effort and which, ipso facto, is apprehended by its performer as that pattern.[191]

> Institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualizaed actions by types of actors. Put differently, any such typification is an institution.[192]

By way of illustrating the process of institutionalization, Berger and Luckmann offer a hypothetical situation involving two actors, A and B:

> As A and B interact, in whatever manner, typifications will be produced quite quickly. A watches B perform. He attributes motives to B's actions and, seeing the actions recur, typifies the motives as recurrent. As B goes on performing, A is soon able to say to himself, "Aha, there he goes again." At the same time, A may assume that B is doing the same thing with regard to him. From the beginning, both A and B assume this reciprocity of typification. In the course of their interaction these typifications will be expressed in specific patterns of conduct. That is, A and B will begin to play roles vis-a-vis each other. . . . Thus a collection of reciprocally typified actions will emerge, habitualizad for each in roles, some of which will be performed separately and some in common.[193]

Which actions are likely to be reciprocally typified in this manner? Berger and Luckmann devote one paragraph to suggesting that "the general answer is, those actions that are relevant to both A and B within their common

situation."[194] By earlier placing the possibility of explicating the nature of that situation "in brackets," not much more can be said.

Berger and Luckmann's description of the process of institutionalization is subject to the same criticism that Engels levied against Ludwig Feuerbach (a criticism that fairly well summarizes the meaning of Marx's Theses on Feuerbach):

> In form he (Feuerbach) is realistic, since he takes his start from man: but there is absolutely no mention of the world in which this man lives; hence, this man remains always . . . (an) abstract man. . . .[195]

In a similar sense, Berger and Luckmann's analysis of the process of institutionalization is realistic in form, i.e. they begin with human beings in social interaction; however, there is no mention of the world in which that interaction takes place.

To suggest that institutionalization results from the reciprocal typification of social interaction is to deny the possibility of understanding the existential basis of these typifications. To be human is to be social; but, it is more than that. A and B interact with each other, but they also interact with the world in their struggle for existence. The typifications that arise are not merely the result of creative actors, but of creative activity stimulated by human needs. "Relative world-closedness," seen in this light, is not merely the product of the institutionalization of social interaction; it is the

limitation on possible forms of institutionalization implicit in the needs, and available means to satisfy those needs, of human beings. As Marx has suggested,

> . . . the production of life, both of one's own in labour and of fresh life in procreation, appears as a double relationship: on the one hand as a natural, on the other as a social relationship. . . . It is quite obvious from the start that there exists a materialistic connection of men with one another, which is determined by their needs and their mode of production, and which is as old as men themselves.[196]

Thus, any analysis of the construction of social order must be concerned with the nature of being and its relationship to the order that is constructed. Why that is the case becomes even more apparent as Berger and Luckmann develop their argument further.

The process of institutionalization, they continue, establishes the social world as an "objective facticity" when transmitted to a new generation:

> . . . In the process of transmission to the new generation(,) the objectivity of the institutional world "thickens" and "hardens. . . ." The "There we go again" now becomes "This is how things are done. . . ." For the children, the parentally transmitted world is not fully transparent. Since they had no part in shaping it, it confronts them as a given reality that, like nature, is opaque in places at least. Only at this point does it become possible to speak of a social world at all, in the sense of a comprehensive and given reality confronting the individual in a manner analogous to the reality of the natural world.[197]

In spite of the fact that the institutional order is presented as a "facticity" akin to the natural world, however, it must never be forgotten that the objective character of the social world is a human production;

i.e. the relationship between human beings and the world they produce is a dialectical one:

> It is important to keep in mind that objectivity of the institutional world, however massive it may appear to the individual, is a humanly produced, constructed objectivity. . . . It is important to emphasize that the relationship between man, the producer, and the social world, his product, is and remains a dialectical one. That is, man (not, of course, in isolation but in his collectivities) and his social world interact with each other. The product acts back upon the producer. Externalization and objectivation are moments in a continuing dialectical process. . . . Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product.[198]

". . . Only with the transmission of the social world to a new generation . . . does the fundamental social dialectic appear in its totality."[199]

The transmission of the social world over generations requires a set of explanations as to why the institutional order is as it is. Certain "legitimating formulas" that are "consistent and comprehensive in terms of the institutional order" are established.[200] Legitimation, in essence, justifies the presence of institutions.

How is it possible that such legitimations will be accepted as appropriate explanations of the institutional order?

> There is no a priori reason for assuming that these processes will necessarily "hang together" functionally, let alone as a logically consistent system. . . ; nevertheless, the empirical fact remains that institutions do tend to "hang together." If this phenomenon is not to be taken for granted, it must be explained.[201]

The explanation is contained in the fact that through the " . . . meaningful reciprocity in processes of

institutionalization,"[202] institutions have some relevance to the members of a collectivity.[203]

While the presence of a cohesive institutional order is based in its relevance to certain reciprocities of meaning that exist between members of a collectivity, the "logic" of that institutional order is established in reflection:

> The logic does not reside in the institutions and their external functionalities, but in the way these are treated in reflection about them. Put differently, reflective consciousness superimposes the quality of logic on the institutional order.[204]

The establishment of a "logic" is made possible through the availability of language:

> Language provides the fundamental superimposition of logic on the objectivated social world. The edifice of legitimation is built upon language and uses language as its principal instrumentality.[205]

As a consequence of that language being shared by the members of a collectivity, the "logic" of the institutional order is taken-for-granted as part of the knowledge of everyday life.

> The "logic" thus attributed to the institutional order is part of the socially available stock of knowledge and taken for granted as such. Since the well-socialized individual "knows" that his social world is a consistent whole, he will be constrained to explain both its functioning and malfunctioning in terms of the "knowledge."[206]

Accordingly, since the logical integration of the institutional order is contained in "knowledge," an analysis of the "knowledge" is essential for an understanding of the institutional order:

> . . . Institutions <u>are</u> integrated. But their integration is . . . brought about in a derivative fashion. Individuals perform discrete institution-

> alized actions within the context of their biography. The biography is a reflected-upon whole in which the discrete actions are thought of not as isolated events, but as related parts in a subjectively meaningful universe whose meanings are not specified to the individual, but socially articulated and shared. Only by way of this detour of socially shared universes of meaning do we arrive at the need for institutional integration. . . .
> If the integration of an institutional order can be understood only in terms of the "knowledge" that its members have of it, it follows that the analysis of such "knowledge" will be essential for an analysis of the institutional order in question.[207]

Thus, if we wish to understand the presence of a seemingly cohesive institutional order, we must concern ourselves with the "knowledge," based in our understanding of its foundations in the reciprocity of meanings resulting from social interaction and the use of language, which makes it possible for us to understand the meaning of the social world as both the expression of, and context for, everyday life.

Marx, on the contrary, has argued that

> . . . the production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. . . . Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc.—real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process. . . . We do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process.[208]

Berger and Luckmann are not pure idealists; in their discussion of how our consciousness ("knowledge") of the world has its foundations in every day life, they argued that the meaning that is constructed is relevant to a particular situation. Given the nature of their phenomenological orientation, however, the possibility of explicating that <u>situation</u> is lost when they opt for an analysis of "knowledge." As Merleau-Ponty has suggested, the proper concern for phenomenology must be " . . . that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always <u>speaks</u>. . . ."[209]

The importance of Marx's argument is particularly evident when confronting the problem of how it is that our "knowledge" (the certainty that phenomena are real) of the social world loses its foundation in "real-life processes" and gives rise to new interpretations. Berger and Luckmann discuss the genesis of "subuniverses of meaning"[210] that develop within a given social order; however, there is no reference to the existential basis of these subuniverses in the sense that one may develop into the dominant definition of "reality." They merely suggest that " . . . the relationship between knowledge and its social base is a dialectical one, that is, knowledge is a social product <u>and</u> knowledge is a factor in social change."[211] It was the understanding of the <u>existential basis</u> of knowledge as the antithesis in dialectical change, however, that was Marx's concern when, in his polemic against Hegel's

dialectic, he argued the necessity of discovering the "rational kernel within the mystical shell."[212]

What is crucial in Marx's arguments, and in the existentialist critique of Husserl's phenomenology, is the emphasis on continually viewing "knowledge" as the expression of concrete human existence. The concern of such an orientation is with the comprehension of what Marx referred to as "praxis."[213] Henri Lefebvre's attempt to define "praxis" is appropriate here:

> We must distinguish between activities concerned with physical nature and activities concerned with human beings. . . . Let us designate the two groups of activities by the terms poiesis and praxis, respectively. Poisis gives human form to the sensuous; it includes man's relations with nature, . . . and more generally, the appropriation of nature by human beings, both of the nature external to themselves and that which is internal to themselves. Praxis comprises interhuman relationships, managerial activities, and the functions of the state as they come into being. In a broad sense, praxis subsumes poiesis; in the strict sense, it only designates the pragmata, the matters actually deliberated by the members of society. . . .
> The fact is, praxis is first and foremost act, dialectical relations between man and nature, consciousness and things (which can never be legitimately separated, in the manner of philosophers who make them two distinct substances).[214]

Or, as Merleau-Ponty has suggested, praxis includes "the ensemble of activities by which man transforms physical and living nature."[215]

In essence, "praxis" refers to the social forms that are generated in the active human struggle to provide the means for existence. Institutionalization and "knowledge" of the social order must always be considered in the histor-

ical context of praxis. If sociology is to be concerned, not only with how "reality" is socially constructed, but with the historical contingency of that "reality," then the analysis of the "knowledge" that guides everyday life must seek its roots in praxis.

The importance of developing an existential basis within phenomenological sociology, i.e., of attending to the historical contingency of socially constructed "realities" as they are based in "praxis," is evident when considering the limitations of Berger and Luckmann's orientation. By "placing the world in brackets," Berger and Luckmann pay attention to how we constitute meaning in the world; however, they give us no concrete basis for understanding how that meaning is rooted in practical activity. As a consequence, their theoretical orientation provides very little insight into how socially constructed "realities" may come into conflict with the historical change in the nature of that activity, be it at the level of broad historical transformations, which was the concern of Marx, or at a very personal level, which Laing has written extensively about. The writings of Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, which take up the investigation of ontological questions, suggest certain directions that must be taken when pursuing attempts to understand how meaning is constituted, particularly when dealing with sociologically relevant questions relating to social change.

By way of summary, then, it may be suggested that, if sociology is to be concerned not only with the observation of the social world as object but with the understanding of how we "make sense" of the world and its relationship to our everyday activity, a perspective must be developed that is compatible with such efforts. Phenomenology, by refusing to consider the world or our knowledge of it in isolation from each other, offers a potentially important foundation. The purpose of the phenomenological reductions, notwithstanding differences over the nature of particular formulations, is to refuse to accept the world as it appears to us in order to understand how that world was constituted in our consciousness. Phenomenology thus becomes a philosophy of origins.

Phenomenology, as indicated in the first section of this paper, has been interpreted differently as to its more specific nature. Husserl's phenomenological epochē, or "placing the world in brackets," was an attempt to set aside questions of existence in order to understand the constitution of essential meaning in consciousness (more precisely, consciousness-of). The central argument of the existentialist critique, however, was that meaning originates in our involvement in the world; accordingly, phenomenology, rather than bracketing existence, must seek the origins of of meaning in existence (ek-sistence).

For the purposes of an approach to sociology that is based in a phenomenological perspective, then, the

existentialist critique suggests that it is insufficient merely to be concerned with "consciousness," "knowledge," or "reality construction processes" without asking how it is that they are expressions of existence. An existential phenomenological approach thus opens up the problem of investigating the nature of human activity itself, and the relationship between that activity and "consciousness," "knowledge," or "socially constructed realities."

The existentialist critique also has implications for the sociologist qua sociologist. By challenging the validity of a complete reduction in the epochē, the ideal of presuppositionlessness is also challenged. The assertions of a sociologist must always be considered in light of their existential basis. This is not meant to suggest, however, that all statements are relative; on the contrary, it is meant to suggest that, to whatever degree it is possible to understand what it is that is common in human beings and how they experience the world, it is then possible to transcend the limitations of relativism.

It is in this sense that phenomenological reduction is to be understood. By refusing our complicity to the world-we-take-for-granted, attention is then directed toward the origins of that world, toward a concern for what it means to be a human being living in the world. Phenomenology, then, is an attempt to make that process somewhat systematic. But philosophical inquiry is not an all-encompassing knowledge—it is a matter of broadening and organizing

possibilities for understanding. Its assertions must be considered in a dialogue with history and anthropology.

In essence, then, phenomenology must be considered to be a "style of thinking" (Merleau-Ponty) that, taken together with history and anthropology, attempts to broaden the sociologists understanding of the social world.

NOTES

NOTES

1. Stephen Toulmin, Foresight and Understanding, (New York, Harper and Row, 1961) pp.27-30
2. Ibid, p.28
3. Ibid
4. Ibid
5. Ibid, p.29
6. Ibid
7. Ibid, p.30
8. See, e.g., the discussion of August Comte in Irving M. Zeitlin, Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1968) pp.70-79
9. See, e.g., H. Stuart Hughes' discussion in Consciousness and Society, (New York, Vintage Books, 1958)
10. See Sidney Morgenbesser, "Is It A Science?", in Dorothy Emmet and Alasdair MacIntyre (eds.), Sociological Theory and Philosophical Analysis, (New York, MacMillan, 1970) pp.20-35, and Stephen Strasser, "Phenomenology and the Human Sciences", in Joseph Kockelmans (ed.), Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Its Interpretations, (New York, Doubleday, 1967) pp.503-532
11. See, e.g., Karl Mannheim, "American Sociology", in Maurice Stein and Arthur Vidich, Sociology on Trial, (New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1963)
12. If one accepts the notion that the multifarious activities of the social sciences, in addition to being extensions of particular intellectual traditions, are also located in specific historical situations, then it is insufficient to argue simply that the emphasis on empirical sociology is based upon the convenience of method; clearly, one must look at the total historical context to understand why the questions that are considered most important are entertained over others. See, e.g., Herbert Marcuse's discussion of the relationship between technological domination and positive science in One Dimensional Man, (Boston, Beacon Press, 1964); for a discussion of the ideological assumptions underlying different approaches to social science, see Trent Shroyer, "Toward A Critical Theory of Advanced Industrial Society", in Hans Peter Dreitzel, Recent Sociology, No.2, (London, MacMillan, 1970)

13. Abraham Maslow, Toward A Psychology of Being, (New Jersey, Van Nostrand and Co., 1962) p.ix
14. See, e.g., Carl Rogers, On Becoming A Person, (Boston, Houghton-Mifflin, 1961)
15. See Rollo May, Psychology and the Human Dilemma, (New Jersey, Van Nostrand, 1967)
16. See R.D. Laing, Politics of Experience, (New York, Ballantine Books, 1967)
17. See, e.g., Dreitzel, pp.vii-xxi
18. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality, (New York, Doubleday, 1967)
19. For an excellent review of Husserl's phenomenology, both in terms of detail and historical development in later philosophers, see Kockelmans.
20. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, (London, Routledge and Kegan-Paul, 1962)
21. See Joseph Kockelmans, "Some Fundamental Themes in Husserl's Phenomenology", in Kockelmans
22. See, e.g., Alfred Schutz, Phenomenology of the Social World, (Evanston, Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 1967)
23. Berger and Luckmann, e.g., credit Mead with influencing the theoretical basis of their Social Construction of Reality (p.17). Ethnomethodology also has joint origins in symbolic interactionism and phenomenology (see Dreitzel, p.vii).
24. See, e.g., the writings and interpretations of Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty in the context of the phenomenological tradition, in Kockelmans; see also, Fernando Molina, Existentialism As Philosophy, (New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1962) and Sources of Existentialism As Philosophy, (New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1969)
25. For a discussion of Hegel's philosophy and Marx's critique, see Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution, (Boston, Beacon Press, 1941); for a discussion of Marx's relationship to the "Young Hegelians", see Karl Lowith, From Hegel to Nietzsche, (New York, Doubleday, 1967); for Marx's writings, see esp. A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right and Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, in T.B. Bottomore (ed.), Karl Marx: Early Writings, (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1964), and Karl Marx, German Ideology, (New York, International Publishers, 1947) and Captial, I, (New York, Random House, 1906)
26. Quentin Lauer, Phenomenology: Its Genesis and Prospect, (New York, Harper and Row, 1958)
27. For a discussion of Marx's concept of "praxis", see Henri Lefebvre's Sociology of Marx, (New York, Random House, 1968) pp.25-58
28. Kockelmans, p.26
29. Ibid
30. Ibid, pp.28-29
31. See, e.g., D.W. Hamlyn, Sensation and Perception,

(London, Routledge and Kegan-Paul, 1967) pp.55-61
32. Rene Descartes, "Discourse on Method", in Ralph Eaton (ed.), Descartes: Selections, (New York, Scribners, 1927) p.17
33. Ibid, p.29
34. Ibid, pp.88ff
35. See, e.g., Hamlyn's discussion, pp.62-74
36. Ibid
37. Ibid, p.93
38. Ibid, pp.116-123
39. From David Hume, Treatise on Human Nature, quoted in Hamlyn, p.120
40. Merle B. Turner, Philosophy and the Science of Behavior, (New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967) p.34
41. See, e.g., Lauer's discussion of Husserl's Cartesian Meditations, in Lauer, pp.133ff
42. Ibid, p.47
43. Ibid, p.21
44. Ibid, pp.1-2
45. Ibid, pp.3-4
46. See, e.g., Hamlyn's discussion, pp.131-138
47. Perhaps the notion of "essence" can be demystified to a certain extent through the use of an example. One may ask how communication is at all possible; e.g., I may use the word "tree" in a conversation with you. In a sense, our images of "tree" may be very different, i.e., you may be thinking of a silver birch near your cabin while I am thinking of the big tree in my back yard. Husserl would contend, however, that there is, at the basis of our somewhat different images of a "tree", a common, essential understanding of "tree". It is Husserl's argument, then, that if we can penetrate the contingent meanings which surround our consciousness of an object, we can arrive at a knowledge of that object which is necessary, i.e. "essential". (See, e.g., Lauer's discussion, pp.20-22)
48. Ibid, p.39
49. From Edmund Husserl, Ideas, in Kockelmans, p.117
50. Lauer, pp.9-10
51. Ibid, pp.37-38
52. Ibid, p.134
53. From Husserl, Ideas, in Kockelmans, pp.75-76
54. Ibid, pp.68-79
55. From Husserl, Ideas, in Molina, Sources p.106
56. From Husserl, Ideas, in Kockelmans, p.78
57. Lauer, p.50
58. Ibid
59. Ibid
60. Ibid, p.51n
61. The reductions were introduced, throughout Husserl's works. For a convenient resume, see Lauer, pp.46-64
62. Ibid, p.51
63. Ibid

64. Ibid, p.52
65. Ibid
66. Ibid
67. Ibid, pp.52-53
68. Laing, p.179
69. Lauer, p.53
70. Ibid
71. Ibid, p.54
72. Ibid
73. Ibid
74. Ibid, p.55
75. Ibid
76. Ibid
77. Ibid, p.58
78. Ibid
79. To suggest that it is possible to speak of something that is "given" in perception was also characteristic of the rationalist and empiricist traditions. See Hamlyn.
80. The three philosophers discussed in this section as "existentialists" were not selected on the basis of a purely arbitrary choice. All three at one time of another characterized their philosophy as phenomenology and each has given testimonial to his indebtedness to Husserl. (See discussion of the relationship of Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty to Husserl, in Kockelmans, pp.221-410) Furthermore, all three share a common position in their rejection of Husserl's Platonic notion of essences as being independent of existence. (For a discussion of Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty as existential philosophers, see Molina, Sources . . . . pp.121-230.) The term "existentialist" as used in this paper should be taken in a very loose sense of the term. It refers here to the common emphasis on "existence" as being of primary importance. That emphasis has different implications for different existential philosophers, however, making it necessary to restrict the meaning of the term as it used in this paper to the general emphasis on "existence".
81. Molina, Existentialism p.54
82. Molina, Sources p.121
83. Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, in Molina, Sources . . . p.132
84. Molina, Sources p.54
85. Joseph Kockelmans, "Husserl's Phenomenological Philosophy in Light of Contemporary Criticism", in Kockelmans, p.226
86. Ibid, pp.226-227
87. Molina, Existentialism p.58
88. Ibid, p.57
89. Ibid, p.59
90. Ibid
91. From Heidegger, Being and Time, in Kockelmans, p.294

92. Ibid, p.296
93. Calvin O. Schragg, "Phenomenology, Ontology, and History in the Philosophy of Heidegger", in Kockelmans, p.279
94. From Heidegger, Being and Time, Ibid, p.302
95. Ibid
96. Ibid, p.306
97. Schragg, in Kockelmans, p.281
98. Ibid, p.284
99. Kockelmans, "Husserl's Phenomenological Philosophy . . ." in Kockelmans, p.229
100. Lauer, p.174
101. Kockelmans, "Husserl's Phenomenological Philosophy . . . ," in Kockelmans, p.319
102. See "Transcendence of the Ego", in Kockelmans, pp.324-338
103. Kockelmans, "Husserl's Phenomenological Philosophy . . . ," in Kockelmans, p.316
104. Ibid
105. Sartre, "Transcendence . . . ," in Kockelmans, p.327
106. Ibid, p.331
107. Ibid, p.328
108. Kockelmans, "Husserl's Phenomenological Philosophy . . . ," in Kockelmans, p.317
109. Ibid, pp.317-318
110. From Sartre, Being and Nothingness, in Molina, Sources . . . . , p.174
111. Kockelmans, "Husserl's Phenomenological Philosophy . . . ," in Kockelmans, p.319
112. Sartre, Being . . . . , in Molina, Sources . . . . , p.175
113. Kockelmans, "Husserl's Phenomenological Philosophy . . . ," in Kockelmans, p.319
114. Ibid, p.321
115. Sartre modified his notion of absolute freedom somewhat in Search For A Method, (New York, Random House, 1963)
116. Merleau-Ponty, pp.x-xi
117. Ibid, p.131
118. For a discussion of "body image", see Merleau-Ponty, pp.98ff; see also, John F. Bannan, The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, (New York, Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1967) pp.69-70
119. Merleau-Ponty, p.100
120. Ibid, p.101
121. See discussion of space perception, Ibid, pp.98-147, 243-298
122. Ibid, p.102
123. Bannan, p.194
124. Kockelmans, "Husserl's Phenomenological Philosophy . . . ," in Kockelmans, p.379
125. See discussion of freedom in Merleau-Ponty, pp.434-456
126. Bannan, p.134

127. Kockelmans, "Husserl's Phenomenological Philosophy . . . ," in Kockelmans, p.380
128. Bannan, p.135
129. Merleau-Ponty, p.vii
130. Ibid, p.viii
131. Ibid, pp.vii-ix
132. Ibid, p.ix
133. Ibid, p.xiii
134. Ibid
135. Ibid, p.ix
136. Ibid
137. Ibid, p.xv
138. Ibid
139. Ibid, p.xviii
140. George Walsh, translator's introduction to Schutz, p.xviii
141. Berger and Luckmann, p.18
142. Ibid, p.20
143. See Dreitzel, introduction
144. Berger and Luckmann, p.18
145. Ibid, p.1
146. Ibid
147. Ibid, p.2
148. Ibid, p.13
149. Ibid, p.18. Berger and Luckmann say they have no vested interest in the label "sociology of knowledge": rather, it was their interest in sociological theory that led them to it.
150. Ibid, pp.19-20
151. Ibid, p.20
152. Ibid
153. Ibid
154. Ibid
155. Ibid
156. Ibid, p.21
157. Ibid
158. Ibid
159. Ibid, pp.28-46
160. Ibid, p.33
161. Ibid, p.134
162. Ibid, p.35
163. Ibid
164. Ibid
165. Ibid, p.36
166. Ibid, pp.36-37
167. Ibid, p.38
168. Ibid, p.39
169. Ibid, p.40
170. Ibid
171. Ibid
172. Ibid, pp.40-41
173. Ibid, p.45
174. Dreitzel, p.xv

175. Ibid
176. Richard Lichtman, "Symbolic Interactionism and Social Reality: Some Marxist Queries", in Berkely Journal of Sociology, (1970)
177. Ibid
178. In assailing Berger and Luckmann's "idealism", Lichtman conveniently misquoted them. Lichtman quoted them as saying, "The world of everyday life originates in thoughts," when actually Berger and Luckmann stated that "The world of everyday life originates in thoughts and actions." (my emphasis) See Berger and Luckmann, p.20
179. Berger and Luckmann, p.vi
180. Ibid, p.47
181. Ibid, p.49
182. Ibid, p.51
183. Ibid
184. Ibid, p.52
185. Ibid
186. Marx and Engels, German Ideology, p.16
187. Ibid
188. Ibid, p.17
189. Ibid
190. Ibid, pp.17-18
191. Berger and Luckmann, p.53
192. Ibid, p.54
193. Ibid, pp.56-57
194. Ibid, p.57
195. Friedrich Engels, "Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy", in Lewis Feuer, Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy, (New York, Doubleday, 1959) p.219
196. Marx and Engels, German Ideology, p.18
197. Berger and Luckmann, p.59
198. Ibid, pp.60-61
199. Ibid, p.61
200. Ibid, p.62
201. Ibid, p.65
202. Ibid, p.64
203. Ibid, p.63
204. Ibid, p.64
205. Ibid
206. Ibid
207. Ibid, p.65
208. Marx and Engels, pp.13-14
209. Merleau-Ponty, p.ix
210. Berger and Luckmann, pp.85-87
211. Ibid, p.87
212. Marx, Capital, I, p.25
213. Marx developed the concept of "praxis" particularly in his "Theses on Feuerbach", in German Ideology
214. Lefebvre, pp.44-45
215. Bannan, p.194

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