

THE LIMITATIONS OF
PHENOMENOLOGICAL SOCIOLOGY

by

Thomas William Price

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APPROVAL

Name: Thomas William Price
Degree: Master of Arts (Education)
Title of Thesis: The Limitations of Phenomenological
Sociology

Examining Committee:

Chairman: Thomas J. Mallinson

Karl Peter
Senior Supervisor

Frederick J. Brown

Dorothy Smith
Associate Professor
The University of British Columbia,
Vancouver, B.C..

Date Approved: April 1946 1972
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ABSTRACT

The thesis consists of a comparative analysis of some of the methodological assumptions of Max Weber and Alfred Schutz. I am particularly concerned with the manner in which ideal types are interpreted in the theories of Weber and Schutz. In order to explicate the assumptions regarding the manner in which general terms may be interpreted, I introduce two basic distinctions. The first distinction is that between defining a general term intensionally and defining a general term extensionally via some ontologically significant referent. I define "ontologically significant referent" as "the object or collection of objects denoted by a general term". The second distinction is that between treating a general term substantively, that is, as being applicable to some observable, empirical objects or events, and treating a general term non-substantively.

I show that Weber recognizes two different kinds of concepts: the first is the kind of concept used in ordinary discourse, which I refer to as "generic concepts", and the second is the kind used in a social science, which I refer to as "constructed concepts". In Weber's methodology the general term associated with a generic concept may or may not have an ontologically significant referent, but, in any case,

is to be treated substantively. The general term associated with a constructed concept is to be treated substantively, but is not interpreted via an o. s. referent; it is to be defined intensionally.

It is shown that Schutz implies that both the concept of behaviour and the concept of action are to be understood in terms of the role played by mental objects in perception and reflection. Since in his methodology general terms "correspond to" mental objects, general terms must be interpreted via reference to mental objects, that is, via some ontologically significant referent. In Schutz's theory general terms associated with typified concepts (the concepts of social science as he conceives of them) are to be treated substantively insofar as they are applicable to social actions, and are to be defined extensionally via mental objects serving as ontologically significant referents.

Having established that both Schutz and Weber assume that ideal types (constructed concepts and typified concepts) are to be treated substantively but differ in their assumptions regarding ontologically significant referents, I consider the claim that Schutz's methodology provides a more adequate theoretical foundation for the use of ideal types in sociological theory than does Weber's. I conclude that Schutz, in assuming mental objects to be the ontologically significant referents of general terms, encounters conceptual

difficulties in determining the applicability of an ideal type to any given social situation. These difficulties can be overcome only by changing the role of mental objects within his theory. He thus fails to show the usefulness of his theory of ideal types for the solution of sociological problems.

As regards the methodological assumptions of Schutz and Weber concerning the nature of an ideal type, I conclude that Weber's assumptions provide a more adequate theoretical premise for the construction of a sociological science.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Section 1

The concept of an ideal type has played an important role in the development of sociological theory. Ideal types are a special case of the generic mode of typification, or constructive typology. On the importance of constructive typology McKinney states:

The procedural use of constructive typology has a long and productive history within the realm of scientific endeavor. The constructed type has been a useful tool in the hands of both the social scientist and the historian. The device has played an undeniable role in the growth of scientific knowledge despite the fact that it has frequently been misused, misinterpreted, or not even recognized by its users. A very great amount of historical and social scientific work has been done wherein the constructed type has remained merely an implicit aspect of the enterprise. There has also been a great deal of historical and social scientific work which explicitly recognized and developed the constructed type, particularly in recent years, but in much of this work the construction and adaptation of the type has not been carried out in the most rigorous and fruitful manner.¹

McKinney attests to the lack of attention to methodological assumptions in the development of sociological theory. He states that the failure on the part of many scientists to understand the role of ideal types may be attributed to a failure to recognize the conditional character of "predictive

¹John C. McKinney, Constructive Typology and Social Theory (New York, 1966), p. 1.

generalizations based on typological abstractions"2
He further states that it is the use of a typology that determines its scientific value: "There are certain things that it can and cannot do, and clear recognition of its functions and limitations is essential to the fulfillment of its potential."³

This thesis will contain an explication of one aspect of the theories of ideal types in the methodologies of Max Weber and Alfred Schutz. More specifically, it will be concerned with the manner in which ideal types may be interpreted in the theories of Weber and Schutz, and how these interpretations differ.

Weber is a major advocate of the use of ideal types in social science; his name is "invariably linked" with the concept of an ideal type.⁴ The methodological assumptions of Alfred Schutz have played an important role in recent sociological theory, especially in the areas of phenomenological sociology and ethnomethodology. In The Social Construction of Reality Berger and Luckmann state that they are indebted to Schutz for the fundamental insight into the necessity for a "far-reaching redefinition of the scope of

²McKinney, Constructive Typology, p. 18.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., pp. 21-22.

the sociology of knowledge"5 Denzin claims that: "At the heart of the ethnomethodologist's position lie a series of assumptions taken from Schutz"6 Again, McKinney, in reference to ethnomethodology, states that it stands "in a clear and salient relationship to the phenomenological approach of Schutz."<7 Schutz's importance in the field of phenomenological sociology has even led one writer to claim that Schutz "has developed a sociology of common-sense knowledge that involves a complete reconstruction of the sociological framework."<8

In The Phenomenology of the Social World⁹ Schutz is concerned with an explication of the notion of an ideal type insofar as it is a methodological tool for explaining the phenomena of social action. This explication takes the form of a critique of the methodological assumptions of Max Weber. In reference to The Phenomenology Natanson observes that:

⁵Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality (New York, 1966), pp. 15-16.

⁶Norman K. Denzin, "Symbolic Interactionism and Ethnomethodology: A Proposed Synthesis," American Sociological Review, 34 (1969), 929.

⁷John C. McKinney, "Sociological Theory and the Process of Typification," in Theoretical Sociology, ed. John C. McKinney and Edward A. Tiryakian (New York, 1970), p. 253.

⁸John Heeren, "Alfred Schutz and the Sociology of Common-sense Knowledge," in Understanding Everyday Life, ed. Jack D. Douglas (Chicago, 1970), p. 45.

⁹Alfred Schutz, The Phenomenology of the Social World, trans. George Walsh and Frederick Lehnert (Evanston, Illinois, 1967), hereafter referred to as The Phenomenology.

"Although Schutz accepts and follows Weber's postulate of the subjective interpretation of meaning (the meaning which the actor bestows on his own act and for which he is responsible as distinguished from the interpretation which the observer makes), he presents some salient qualifications."¹⁰ In considering the methodological assumptions of the two theorists, I shall be concerned with the nature of these "salient qualifications" insofar as they have implications for the manner in which ideal types are interpreted in the theories of Schutz and Weber.

Section 2

I wish to make explicit that the thesis is not intended to be a comprehensive examination of all the methodological assumptions of Weber and Schutz, nor is it intended as a comprehensive overview of the sociology of either theorist. Rather, it is a consideration of only some of these assumptions, that is, those assumptions which are directly relevant to that aspect of the methodology of each theorist dealing with the interpretation of ideal types. To this end the methodological assumptions to be considered will be limited to the explicit and implicit assumptions contained in two primary sources: The Phenomenology of the Social World,

¹⁰Maurice Natanson, "Alfred Schutz on Social Reality and Social Science," in Phenomenology and Social Reality, ed. Maurice Natanson (The Hague, 1970), p. 104.

by Alfred Schutz, and The Methodology of the Social Sciences, by Max Weber.¹¹ I shall draw upon additional material only insofar as it is necessary to clarify the methodological assumptions of Schutz and Weber found in these sources.

The thesis is not intended as an analysis of the import of Schutz's and Weber's methodologies as such for sociological theory. It is intended as a primary step towards the clarification of one of the many problems in the theory of ideal types in sociology. The primary emphasis will be directed towards Schutz's theory of ideal types.

Section 3

The method by which this thesis is developed is that of a comparative analysis of some of the methodological assumptions of Schutz and Weber. This analysis will proceed via a detailed explanation of the relevant assumptions.

¹¹Max Weber, The Methodology of the Social Sciences, trans. and ed. Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch (New York, 1949), hereafter referred to as The Methodology.

CHAPTER II

THE RELEVANT ASSUMPTIONS OF MAX WEBER

Section 1

In this chapter I shall set out the conceptual tools for distinguishing between constructed concepts and typified concepts. The notion of a constructed concept will serve as a paradigm of an ideal type in Weber's theory, and the notion of a typified concept will serve as a paradigm of an ideal type in Schutz's theory.¹

In section 2 I shall examine the concept of an ontologically significant referent of a general term. This concept will be used to distinguish between a constructed concept and a typified concept.

Section 3 will consist of an examination of the relevant methodological assumptions of Max Weber.

Section 2

In this section I shall present the notion of an ontologically significant referent, which will be used to distinguish between constructed concepts and typified concepts.

¹The most concise statement of Weber's methodological premises is contained in a collection of essays in The Methodology. I refer the reader particularly to "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy," The Methodology, pp. 49-112. Schutz's methodological premises are exhaustively covered in The Phenomenology.

We may distinguish between defining a general term denotatively and defining a general term non-denotatively, the former being an extensional definition and the latter being an intensional definition. An extensional definition is one in which the general term in question is explained by referring to or denoting an object or class of objects.² A general term "denotes the objects to which it may correctly be applied, and the collection or class of these objects constitutes the extension or denotation of the term."³ It is important to note that within this thesis the term "class of objects" is to mean nothing more than "collection or group of objects" (following Copi's usage). I am concerned only with the notion of an extensional definition in which what is denoted is ontologically significant. The term "ontologically significant" is used in this context to distinguish those things which obviously exist from those 'things' which obviously do not exist. For example, such things as trees obviously exist and are therefore ontologically significant, while 'the average Canadian family consisting of 3.5 people' obviously does not exist and therefore is not ontologically significant. (In the case of such things as mental images, or configurations of sense-data, there is some dispute as to their ontological significance. I wish to point out, however,

²Irving M. Copi, Introduction to Logic, 3rd ed. (Toronto, 1968), p. 103.

³Ibid.

that I am concerned only with the assumptions of the theorists dealt with, and the implications of their assumptions.)

I define the term "ontologically significant referent" as "the object or collection of objects denoted by a general term."⁴ I wish to make explicit that it is part of the meaning of the term "o. s. referent" that the object or collection of objects denoted is used to explain the general term in question.

In the empiricist tradition it is assumed that some general terms denote some datum of sense-experience. Locke, for example, sometimes relies on the proper name theory of general terms: "Words, in their primary or immediate signification, stand for nothing but the ideas in the mind of him that uses them"⁵ He assumes that some general terms, for example, "yellow" and "white", are understood only as names of "simple ideas of sensation", that is, as referring to mental images.⁶

When I use the general term "tree", what meaning does it have for me? It might be supposed that the meaning of the general term "tree" is understood by its reference to a

⁴I shall hereafter abbreviate "ontologically significant referent" to "o. s. referent".

⁵John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, collated and annotated by Alexander Campbell Fraser (New York, 1959), book III, chap. ii, section 2.

⁶See Locke, book III, chap. iv, sections 5 and 7.

mental image of a particular tree, that is, that I see in my 'mind's eye' a particular tree, an image of an existing tree which I have perceived. But if I assume that this mental image constitutes the o. s. referent of the general term "tree", I am obliged to confront the problems posed by those instances in which this simple one-to-one correspondence does not occur. If I assume that one and the same mental image appears consistently as the o. s. referent of the general term "tree"⁷, then I must explain those instances in which I call something a "tree" which is very unlike that image of a particular tree which I assume to be the o. s. referent explaining the general term "tree", and also those instances in which the image I have of the particular tree is very different from the image of a particular tree which another person has as the o. s. referent explaining the general term. Consider: if my image of the particular tree is an image of a particular pine tree, and if I use this image as the o. s. referent of the general term "tree", how can I call some other kinds of things, which are very unlike the particular pine tree, trees (for example, fir trees, oak trees, etc.)? If I conclude that there are a multitude of different mental images (for example, mental images of

⁷A mental image is here considered as a mental object (as the content of a mental event which [content] can re-occur in other mental events of the same kind), and not as a temporally unique mental event.

fir trees, oak trees, etc.) any one of which may serve as the referent of the general term "tree", then I must conclude that a mental image of a particular tree cannot adequately serve to explain the general term "tree".

This conclusion may seem to be countered by the argument that, while the theory of a recurring mental image of a particular tree cannot serve to explain the general term "tree", the fault lies not in the assumption that a general term is explained via an o. s. referent as a mental image, but rather in the mental image's being of a particular tree. It may then be argued that the general term "tree" can be explained via a mental image of a tree bearing all and only those properties which are common to all trees. I might, for example, submit that the o. s. referent of the general term "tree" is a mental image of a tree which has only the properties of (1) having leaves, (2) having roots, (3) bearing fruit, (4) having bark, and (5) being of a certain minimal size. But this theory too has deficiencies. The objection may be raised that there are obviously those things which have all the properties mentioned except one but which we all call "trees". Furthermore, there are obviously things which have all the properties mentioned but which are not "trees" (a vine, for example). Again, how could the tree in the image have leaves as a feature common to all trees since it makes no sense to say that the image-tree has leaves without its having leaves of a particular shape and a particular

colour? I conclude that there are obvious deficiencies in assuming that a general term can be explained by referring to an o. s. referent either in the sense of a mental image of a particular thing of the kind in question or by referring to a mental image of a thing having all and only those features assumed to be common to all things of the kind.

It can be seen that in the two above-mentioned methods of explaining a general term, two basic difficulties are encountered. In the first method, that of denoting a mental image of a particular tree as the o. s. referent, the image is found to have too much detail in the sense that it cannot cover an instance of a tree which does not conform exactly to the given image. In the second method, that of denoting a mental image of a tree bearing all and only those properties common to all trees, the mental image has too little detail in that one is obliged to try to make sense of an image-tree having leaves without their being of a certain shape and colour.

There is a third method by which we may attempt to preserve the notion of explaining a general term via some o. s. referent. In this third example of an extensional definition we may denote the class of all those objects which, by virtue of their possessing common characteristics, lead us to apply the same general or class term to them. In this sense the o. s. referent of the general term is the class of all the objects. Here again several difficulties are

encountered. One difficulty lies in the fact that in listing all the members of the class now extant, there is no provision for the classification of objects which may come into being in the future, so that to explain the general term "tree" by denoting all those objects of that class is to leave problematic the classification of something appearing in the future. If we attempt to avoid this difficulty by denoting all those members of the class which now exist or may possibly exist, then it follows that we must provide the criteria by which we may decide whether or not a thing belongs within the class of "trees", and this is to provide an intensional, or connotative definition of the general term "tree". An extensional definition of a general term must be supplemented by some intensional type of definition. If this is not done, ambiguity may arise from the fact that it is possible for two general terms to have the same extension and yet have different intensions. For example, suppose that at some time in the world's history the class of leafed things is the same as the class of rooted things (that is, suppose that the general terms "leafed things" and "rooted things" have the same extension). The two general terms involved nevertheless do not mean the same; their intensions are different. Such a contingency as the one described does not affect the fact that the intensions of the two general terms are not the same. Moreover, there are obvious cases where no extensional definition can be given,

for example, in the definition of the general term "unicorn", where the general term has no extension.

I shall now argue that it is not necessary to posit the existence of an o. s. referent to explain a general term. There are at least two methods of explaining a general term which do not utilize the notion of an o. s. referent, that of explaining the general term via necessary and sufficient conditions, and that of giving the general term a "cluster" definition.⁸

Explaining a general term by listing the necessary and sufficient conditions which entitle us to apply the general term correctly to an object is one type of intensional definition. The criteria we give in such a definition serve as the rules by which we delimit the class of objects to which the term can be correctly applied without necessarily denoting any particular member of that class. We give two types of criteria: 1) the necessary conditions, which are the conditions without which we are not entitled to apply the general term, and, 2) the sufficient conditions, which are the conditions which, if satisfied, allow us to apply correctly the general term in question. We can now define a general term via necessary and sufficient when we can draw up a list of necessary conditions which are jointly sufficient

⁸See, for example, Hilary Putnam's use of "cluster concept", "The Analytic and the Synthetic," in Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science, vol. III, ed. Herbert Feigl and Grover Maxwell (Minneapolis, 1962), p. 378.

for the correct application of the term. There may be several necessary conditions which, occurring separately, are not sufficient for the object in question to fall under the scope of the general term. For example, we may define the term "Euclidean triangle" by listing the necessary conditions: 1) A Euclidean triangle is an enclosed figure; 2) it has three straight sides; and, 3) it lies in a plane. In this example conditions (1), (2), and (3) are each necessary, and together they constitute a sufficient condition for correctly applying the general term "Euclidean triangle". None of conditions (1), (2), and (3), although each is a necessary condition, constitutes of itself a sufficient condition for calling a thing a Euclidean triangle.

There may be instances in which defining by necessary and sufficient conditions is too limiting and we may wish to explain a general term by referring to a number of criteria, none of which is necessary or sufficient in itself for the application of the term. In such cases it may be possible to define the term via a cluster of criteria. For example, we may wish to explain the general term "tree" by giving a list of criteria such as: 1) having leaves, 2) having roots, 3) bearing fruit, 4) having bark, and 5) being of a certain minimal size. The possession of all these characteristics may not be necessary for calling a thing a "tree" (for example, we may well wish to call some things "trees" which do not bear fruit or which are not of the minimal size). Nor

are these criteria exhaustive; we might decide to include a number more. Nor are they jointly sufficient for calling a thing a "tree"; they may equally serve as a cluster of criteria for defining the general term "vine". The given criteria constitute an arbitrarily delimited list which is usually assumed to be adequate for calling a thing a "tree". In those instances where one or more of the usual criteria is lacking we have the option of reconsidering as supplementary criteria those which we previously omitted. For example, in the instance where we must decide whether or not to call a thing a "tree" which does not bear fruit, we may apply the supplementary criteria of 6) producing food by photosynthesis, and 7) acquiring water by the process of osmosis.

In this section it has been shown that there are two distinct methods of explaining a general term, that of defining a general term extensionally, and that of defining a general term intensionally. Defining via an o. s. referent implies defining extensionally. It was shown that it is not necessary to assume an o. s. referent of a general term if the term is defined intensionally.

Section 3

In this section I shall consider the assumptions which Max Weber makes in his consideration of the methods of interpreting the concepts of social science. I shall show that Weber utilizes two distinct notions of the manner in

which such concepts may be interpreted. The recognition of the difference between the two notions is necessary for an understanding of the notion of an ideal type in Weber's theory.

Parsons categorizes Weber's assumptions according to their similiarity or dissimiliarity to the methodological premises of the doctrines of objectivism and intuitionism.⁹ In Parsons' view the methodological premise of objectivism is the rejection of the possibility of acquiring knowledge of historical phenomena by generalizing. According to this doctrine, the only adequate methodological tool for grasping the individuality of historical phenomena is the process of describing those phenomena. In a similiar manner the doctrine of intuitionism has as a methodological premise the rejection of the possibility of acquiring theoretically useful information about human action through the use of general concepts.

Parsons summarizes the methodological conclusions upon which Weber bases his rejection of the methods of these two doctrines. In rejecting the objectivist claims Weber concludes that the more specific claims of radical empiricism must be rejected. He argues for the necessity of the use of abstract concepts in acquiring knowledge. He also argues for the consequent necessity for a "term of reference" (that is,

⁹See Talcott Parsons, The Structure of Social Action (New York, 1949), pp. 581-591.

a method of explanation) other than the notion that the general terms of a science denote a "reflection" of the experienced reality to be used in interpreting those abstract concepts.¹⁰ Weber rejects the intuitionist doctrine by insisting on distinguishing between the process by which knowledge is arrived at and the criteria by which a claim to knowledge is tested.¹¹

Let us consider the manner in which Weber's understanding of the nature of the "raw material of experience" relates to his assumptions regarding the interpretation of general terms. He asserts that there is a fundamental distinction between the raw material of experience (which, in social science, takes the form of historical data) and an understanding of that material. In immediate experience,

. . . life confronts us in immediate concrete situations, it presents an infinite multiplicity of successively and coexistently emerging and disappearing events, both "within" and "outside" ourselves. The absolute infinitude of this multiplicity is seen to remain undiminished even when our attention is focused on a single "object,"¹²

Regarding this infinite multiplicity of data, Weber asserts that there may well be internal relations of some kind, but that there is no inherent meaning in the mere perception of the data. Rather, "the perception of [the data's]

¹⁰Parsons, p. 585, on Weber's attack on objectivism.

¹¹Ibid., p. 587, on Weber's attack on intuitionism.

¹²The Methodology, p. 72.

meaningfulness to us is the presupposition of its becoming an object of investigation."¹³

Weber further argues that the object of investigation in the natural sciences is logically distinct from the object of investigation in the cultural sciences. In the natural sciences the significance of some phenomenon is the possibility of its being understood as an instance of a certain kind of event explainable by reference to some scientific law. This is not the case for the phenomena of a cultural science: "Meaningfulness naturally does not coincide with laws as such, and the more general the law the less the coincidence. For the specific meaning which a phenomenon has for us is naturally not to be found in those relationships which it shares with many other phenomena."¹⁴ Rather, the significance of an object of investigation in the cultural sciences rests in the fact that the social scientist investigates configurations of historical data which he arranges in such a way as to form a phenomenon which has significance.

Weber's assumptions regarding the role of concepts in the cultural sciences are based on his understanding of the nature of experience (this has been mentioned above). He is concerned with the way in which comprehension of actions in the cultural sciences differs from comprehension of actions

¹³The Methodology, p. 76.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 76-77.

in daily life. In daily life comprehension may be a kind of understanding in which one person 'grasps' the significance of the actions of another without classifying them. In a cultural science the manner in which the investigator understands the subject matter of his discipline is through classifying some portion of the "infinite multiplicity". As one commentator states of Weber's notion of a cultural science:

. . . we must explain phenomena by propositions confirmed by experiment in order to have the feeling that we understand. Comprehension is . . . mediate; it occurs through the intermediary of concepts or relationships.¹⁵

Weber implies that there are different types of concepts, each of which necessitates a different manner of interpreting the associated general terms.¹⁶ He recognizes a type of concept which is applicable to both the natural and cultural sciences, the utilization of which is logically prior to any scientific knowledge. This type of concept is used in the interpretation of the general features of a class of social or historical facts, that is, it is descriptive in that it involves an analysis of the general aspects of phenomena or of their generic features. I shall refer to

¹⁵Raymond Aron, Main Currents in Sociological Thought, trans. Richard Howard and Helen Weaver, vol. II (New York, 1967), pp. 184-185.

¹⁶For example, see his examples of the "generic features of exchange" and the "cultural significance of the concrete historical fact" of exchange, The Methodology, p. 77.

this type of concept as a generic concept.

I have previously explained that there are two distinct methods of defining a general term, either extensionally (which, in my examples, was via some o. s. referent) or intensionally (implying stipulated criteria for delimiting a class of objects). I shall now consider the manner in which Weber interpretes the generic concepts of his methodology.

It might be assumed that Weber intends generic concepts to be interpreted extensionally. For example, when he speaks of the "general aspects of exchange" or the "generic features of exchange"¹⁷ it might be assumed that he intends these general terms to be explained either by reference to a mental image (for example, a mental image of a particular act of exchange or a mental image of an act of exchange having all and only those features common to all acts of exchange) or by reference to a class of "acts of exchange". Weber has explicitly rejected the notion that we can interpret a generic concept via an o. s. referent as a mental image reflecting a particular phenomena in his claims about the infinite quality of empirical phenomena:

The absolute infinitude of this multiplicity is seen to remain undiminished even when our attention is focused on a single "object," for instance, a concrete act of exchange, as soon as we seriously attempt an exhaustive description of all the individual components of this "individual phenomena,"¹⁸

¹⁷The Methodology, p. 77.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 72.

Weber does not explicitly reject the notion that a generic concept can be interpreted via a mental image of a particular phenomenon but he strongly suggests that he finds this notion unacceptable. He implies that since we can focus our attention on empirical data only by selecting and ordering there is a need for some criteria for that selecting and ordering and, therefore, that generic concepts should be defined intensionally.¹⁹ Although there is some confusion in Weber's methodology on this issue, I wish to point out that this confusion is satisfactorily resolved by Weber by his distinction between the generic concept and the second type of concept I wish to introduce, the constructed concept. For Weber, generic concepts have little import in the cultural sciences since they are used (in everyday language) in an unclear and ambiguous fashion. The development of a cultural science requires clear concepts of a special kind: ideal types.

Weber is ambiguous in his distinction between a generic concept (as I have defined this term) and the methodological tool he calls the ideal type.²⁰ This ambiguity appears especially in his assertion that an ideal type has both a generic and a genetic function. I wish to clarify Weber's distinction between a generic concept and an

¹⁹See The Methodology, p. 77.

²⁰For a brief treatment of this ambiguity in Weber, see Rolf E. Rogers, Max Weber's Ideal Type Theory (New York, 1969), especially pp. 78-90.

ideal type by introducing the notion of a constructed concept as a paradigm of an ideal type. I shall stipulate the three criteria he introduces to distinguish ideal types from generic concepts: the notions of unreality, significance, and one-sidedness.

Weber rejects the claim that in the cultural sciences a description can serve as an adequate explanation of the 'meaning' of an historical event.²¹ Furthermore, he states that every concept which is not purely classificatory is, in the sense that it implies an intellectual 'modification' of the data, a divergence from reality.²² I shall not here discuss Weber's use of the term "unreal" to denote the process of intellectual modification of empirical data, even though its introduction seems to be a source of confusion as to what he intends by the term "ideal type". Rather, I shall introduce a basic distinction which includes the distinction Weber intends by his use of the term "unreal". I shall distinguish between treating a general term substantively and treating a general term non-substantively.

A term may be grammatically substantive, that is, a grammatical noun, but this does not mean it will necessarily be logically substantive, that is, applicable to some existent(s), or, more precisely, to some observable,

²¹The Methodology, p. 78.

²²See Weber's distinction between concept and reality, The Methodology, p. 86.

empirical objects or events, etc., which are external to oneself. It is important here to note that I am not speaking of how the meaning of a general term is to be accounted for, that is, whether an intensional or extensional definition is appropriate. There are relations between what kind of definition may be used and whether or not the term defined is interpreted substantively, but these two points are nonetheless different. A term can be defined intensionally, for example, and yet be treated substantively, that is, as being applicable to observable, empirical objects or events.

In saying that the concepts of the cultural sciences are "unreal" Weber is not saying that they do not have an application to empirical phenomena, that is, he is not saying that such concepts are not to be treated substantively. A constructed concept is unreal in that it is an "explicit conceptual formulation"²³ for which criteria must be given in a precise and unambiguous manner. Such criteria limit the applicable data. The constructed concept is unreal insofar as it is a theoretical construction "which is "ideal" in the strictly logical sense of the term. It is a matter . . . of constructing relationships which our imagination accepts as plausibly motivated and hence as "objectively possible"²⁴ Weber emphasizes the necessity of understanding that the purpose of the theoretical concepts of

²³The Methodology, p. 94.

²⁴Ibid., p. 92.

a cultural science is to give meaning to historical data. The objective status of these concepts is such that a social scientist should never assume that the concepts can be applied to historical phenomena without providing the rules for delimiting the scope of the concepts. This is to say, one should provide some intensional definition of the term associated with the ideal type concept in question. This is necessary because the ideal type, in Weber's words, serves as a utopia, or, in contemporary terms, a model or construct.

It has the significance of a purely limiting concept with which the real situation or action is compared and surveyed for the explication of certain of its significant components. Such concepts are constructs in terms of which we formulate relationships by the application of the category of objective possibility. By means of this category, the adequacy of our imagination, oriented and disciplined by reality, is judged.²⁵

Weber emphasizes the need for precise and unambiguous definitions of the concepts of a cultural science. He states that while the use of ambiguously defined concepts (that is, where the criteria are not explicitly stated) may be an adequate expression of the meaning of the associated general terms provided that the interpreter of the general term can "feel" or "grasp" the intended meaning of the term in that particular instance (for example, in historical exposition), the use of such a concept is not appropriate to a cultural science. He questions whether such concepts as

²⁵The Methodology, p. 93.

"individualism", "imperialism", "mercantilism", etc., can be utilized in a cultural science without being precisely defined. He argues that

The greater the need . . . for a sharp appreciation of the significance of a cultural phenomenon, the more imperative is the need to operate with unambiguous concepts which are not only particularly but also systematically defined. . . . A simple "descriptive analysis" of these concepts into their components either does not exist or else exists only illusorily, for the question arises, as to which of these components should be regarded as essential.²⁶

The unreal status of the constructed concept is based on the fact that it is a conceptual construct which must be intensionally and precisely defined.

The second criterion Weber introduces to explain the notion of a constructed concept is that of significance. He argues that in interpreting the concepts through which we seek to understand cultural reality there must be some provision of criteria limiting the application of those concepts. He further argues that the criteria must necessarily be selected according to the cultural values of the researcher. Since empirical data provides no straightforwardly perceivable order the cultural scientist is dependent upon both his cultural values and his personal values for deciding which features to select in constructing a concept. It is this deliberate selection of limiting criteria which constitutes the value relevance of the

²⁶The Methodology, p. 93.

constructed concept.

[We bring] order . . . into this chaos only on the condition that in every case only a part of concrete reality is interesting and significant to us, because only it is related to the cultural values with which we approach reality. Only certain sides of the infinitely complex concrete phenomenon, namely those to which we attribute cultural significance--are therefore worthwhile knowing. They alone are objects of investigation.²⁷

In Weber's theory this is what is implied in the notion of a personal element in scientific work. From the infinite multiplicity of empirical data the investigator must select and order, and without this principle of selection and ordering there can be no knowledge. Every attempt to analyze concrete reality without selecting and ordering (that is, a "presuppositionless" examination of purely empirical data) is futile. Indeed, it is this drawing upon cultural values for guidance in the selection of the stipulated features of the constructed concepts which distinguishes the cultural sciences from the natural sciences.

We have designated as "cultural sciences" those disciplines which analyze the phenomena of life in terms of their cultural significance. The significance of a configuration of cultural phenomena and the basis of this significance cannot however be derived and rendered intelligible by a system of analytical laws . . . since the significance of cultural events presupposes a value-orientation towards these events. The concept of culture is a value-concept. Empirical reality becomes "cultural" to us because and insofar as we relate it to value ideas. It includes those

²⁷The Methodology, p. 78.

segments and only those segments of reality which have become significant to us because of the value-relevance. Only a small portion of existing concrete reality is colored by our value-conditioned interests and it alone is significant to us. It is significant because it reveals relationships which are important to us due to their connections with our values.²⁸

Weber implies that while the rules governing the use of generic concepts may be conventional, the stipulation of the criteria of a constructed concept is bound only by the interest of the investigator. In doing so he introduces a relativistic quality into cultural science for, since cultures change, the value-relevance of the criteria of the constructed concept will change.

The third criterion Weber introduces as peculiar to the constructed concept is that of being "one-sided". He asserts that in the construction of a concept the criteria for the intensional definition of the associated general term must fulfill a certain function, especially in the construction of those concepts which are referred to as the "ideas" of certain historical periods. That function is to provide for the organization of specific criteria in such a way that they may be regarded as "causal factors" in a causal analysis of empirical phenomena by comparing those empirical phenomena with a constructed concept. Such criteria delimit an "aspect" of the phenomena. From this assumption it follows that, in an analysis of empirical phenomena from the point of view of

²⁸The Methodology, p. 76.

their cultural significance, the selection of criteria may result in constructed concepts which, while constructed from the same data, are very different in logical form and cultural significance. In this situation some factors considered essential in the construction of a concept by one investigator may be considered to be non-essential by another investigator. Thus what is considered the cause of a certain historical phenomenon by one investigator may legitimately be ignored by another investigator. Weber rejects the claim that it is logically necessary to assume that there is one set of criteria which can be considered to organize exhaustively the data of history. Since he is concerned with developing a cultural science (which necessitates developing precise and unambiguous criteria for the application of the concepts of that science) he is concerned with developing a "class of causes" which may be imputed to empirical phenomena.²⁹ He implies that since the necessary precision and clarification of constructed concepts transcends common usage, there is a necessity for the development of such a class of causes as a disciplinary tool of the specialized areas of cultural science (for example, economics):

The justification of the one-sided analysis of cultural reality from specific "points of view"--in our case with respect to its economic conditioning--emerges purely as a technical expedient from the fact that training in the observation of the effects of

²⁹The Methodology, p. 71.

qualitatively similar categories of causes and the repeated utilization of the same schema of concepts and hypotheses . . . offers all the advantages of the division of labor.³⁰

It can now be seen that a constructed concept is a concept which has an associated general term which is 1) to be treated substantively; and 2) to be defined a) according to some stipulated criteria (without relying on an o. s. referent) and b) by utilizing a specialized "class of causes" developed in a discipline of the cultural sciences.

The essential difference between what Weber intends by "generic concept" and what he intends by "constructed concept" does not depend upon the ability to treat one type of concept substantively but not the other. Both types of concepts are treated substantively, although Weber obscures this point by referring to constructed concepts as "unreal". The essential difference lies in the necessity for the social scientist to develop adequately intensional definitions which will delimit clearly the scope of the constructed concepts. Sometimes generic concepts can be converted into constructed concepts by giving them more precise definitions.

³⁰The Methodology, p. 71.

CHAPTER III

THE RELEVANT ASSUMPTIONS OF ALFRED SCHUTZ (I)

Section 1

This chapter will contain an examination of the assumptions of Alfred Schutz and, along with the next two chapters, will provide the basis for a clarification of the notion of a typified concept. This clarification will be given in chapter V, when the nature of the typified concept will be considered in the light of the two basic distinctions developed in chapter II.

In section 2 Schutz's criticism of Weber's claim to have developed a methodology which makes the intended meaning of an individual's action accessible to the social scientist will be presented.

Section 3 will contain a brief explication of Schutz's use of the term "essence". An understanding of how he uses this term is a necessary precondition of an explication of his theory of intended meaning, which will be presented in chapter IV.

In section 4 the notion of a mental object is introduced in order to make explicit some of Schutz's assumptions about the nature of known experience. This will be done by making particular reference to the concept of the synthesis of identity.

In section 5 I shall consider the manner in which

we may speak of actions as objects and show how the essence of a temporal object determines the corresponding mental object.

Section 2

In this section I shall be concerned with Schutz's criticism of Weber's concepts, particularly the notions of "direct understanding and motivational understanding", "subjective and objective meaning", and "meaningful action and meaningful behavior".¹ Weber distinguishes "action" from "social action":

In 'action' is included all human behavior when and in so far as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to it. Action in this sense may be either overt or purely inward or subjective; it may consist of positive intervention in a situation, or of deliberately refraining from such intervention or passively acquiescing in the situation. Action is social in so far as, by virtue of the subjective meaning attached to it by the acting individual (or individuals), it takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course.²

Schutz claims that Weber's notion of meaningful social action involves three unsolved problems: a) what it means to say that an actor "attaches meaning" to his action, b) how the other person in interaction is meaningful to the actor, and

¹See The Phenomenology, p. 13.

²Max Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, trans. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, ed. Talcott Parsons (New York, 1947), p. 88. (This will be referred to hereafter as Social and Economic Organization.)

c) how an individual understands the behaviour of others, either i) in general, or ii) in terms of the other's own meaning.³ Schutz suggests that these problems can be solved by his interpretation of the notions of subjectively intended meaning and objectively knowable meaning.

Schutz begins his analysis of Weber's terminology with a criticism of his concepts of observational and motivational understanding. Weber defines "direct observational understanding" as understanding "of the subjective meaning of a given act as such, including verbal utterances."⁴ He asserts that we can also understand via an explanation of the motive which the actor attaches to his action. This is motivational understanding. Schutz argues that Weber makes the following two claims involving the term "intended meaning".⁵ The first is that an actor can have an understanding of his own motivational context (or his "epistemic attitude"), that is, an actor can understand his own "intended meaning". The second claim is that an observer can have an observational understanding of this intended meaning of an actor, that is, an observer can have an understanding of the actor's intended meaning. The problem, Schutz argues, lies in the fact that the epistemic attitude of one person cannot be experienced by another person through observation (this will

³The Phenomenology, p. 17.

⁴Social and Economic Organization, p. 94.

⁵See Social and Economic Organization, p. 95.

be explained below). Weber claims that an observer can have both observational understanding and motivational understanding, but, according to Schutz, he fails to show how this can occur. Schutz accuses him of failing to provide a basis for the distinction between observational and motivational understanding. In Weber's writing,

Both types of understanding start out from an objective meaning-context. The understanding of subjective meaning has no place in either. One can treat observational understanding, whenever it concerns itself with subjective meaning, as if it were an inquiry into motives. . . . Conversely, one can treat motivational understanding as if it were observational.⁶

Schutz claims that it is inappropriate to call the meaning assigned to an action by anyone other than the actor a subjective meaning. The point he wishes to establish is that when an observer assigns meaning to an action of another person, it is a subjective meaning assigned by the observer to his own action of observing the actor. He argues that confusion arises in Weber's terminology because Weber fails to recognize that the way in which an observer has both observational understanding and motivational understanding is by 'looking through' the phenomena of the social world (having objective status) into the subjective processes (having subjective status) of the social actors. He argues that when an observer attends to the actions of others these

⁶The Phenomenology, pp. 29-30.

actions have objective meaning, but the observer has the capacity to look "over and through these external indications into the constituting process within the living consciousness of another rational being."⁷ This necessitates, for Schutz, the assumption that the objective world is commonly known as an abstraction shared in the meaning endowing consciousness of each individual, since otherwise the constituting processes of others would be inaccessible to an observer. This abstraction is considered to be distinct from the constituting processes which have produced that world. Thus, reference to an objective world is, in effect, reference to a world which has been constituted by subjective processes, whether or not these processes are recognized as such.

Weber's confusion also requires a clarification of the term "attaches meaning".⁸ Schutz claims:

By no means is the meaning of an experience a new, additional, and secondary experience which is somehow "attached" to [the experience]. By no means . . . is meaning a predicate of an individual experience⁹

Rather, "meaning is a certain way of directing one's gaze at an item of one's own experience."¹⁰ According to Schutz, Weber implicitly intends that the term "attaching meaning"

⁷The Phenomenology, p. 37.

⁸See above, p. 31.

⁹The Phenomenology, p. 42.

¹⁰Ibid.

be interpreted in the same way as Schutz has interpreted it (that is, as a "certain way of directing one's gaze at . . . one's own experience"), but he does not make this explicit. Schutz considers an analysis of the notion of intended meaning to be "the fundamental and basic [problem] of knowledge of the social world."¹¹

Section 3

This section contains a clarification of Schutz's concept of an essence. I treat this concept here since it is mentioned in the explanation of Schutz's theory of intended meaning, and to clarify it later would break the continuity of section 4.

Schutz gives the following example of his use of the term "essence". Given the existence of a single concrete object, for example, a wooden cube, that object is perceived as "unquestionably real".¹² Now suppose that we desire knowledge of the qualities common to all cubes. The single cube may be transformed in perception by "varying" its features (its colour, size, etc.). Thus, what may be imagined is an indefinite variety of cubes. However, Schutz

¹¹The Phenomenology, p. 43.

¹²Alfred Schutz, Collected Papers, vol. I, ed. Maurice Natanson (The Hague, 1971), p. 114. (This will be referred to hereafter as Collected Papers, vol. I.)

states:

. . . these variations do not touch on a set of characteristics common to all imaginable cubes, such as rectangularity, limitation to six squares, corporeality. This set of characteristics, unchanged among all the imagined transformations of the concrete thing perceived--the kernel, so to speak, of all possibly imaginable cubes--I shall call the essential characteristics of the cube or, using a Greek term, the eidos of the cube. No cube can be thought of that would not have these essential features. All the other qualities and characteristics of the concrete object under scrutiny are non-essential.¹³

He asserts that there is a distinction between the manner in which objects are characterized in daily life and the characterization of objects in a science. In daily life characterization is "frequently guided by a typification which separates and distinguishes objects in accordance with characteristics which these objects have only seemingly in common with other objects" ¹⁴ It will be of no assistance in the search for essential characteristics. Schutz states that a science which is expected to provide solutions to the problems of sociology cannot be one which deals with empirical facts. It has to be a science of essences.¹⁵ Such a science of essences "stands at the beginning of all methodological and theoretical scientific

¹³Collected Papers, vol. I, p. 114.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 283.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 132.

problems of all the cultural and social sciences"16

Section 4

Schutz begins his analysis of the concept of intended meaning by drawing a distinction between what Weber calls the "raw material" of experience (sense data) and knowledge of that raw material. We can have knowledge of the raw material of experience only as past experience. The following explains how Schutz conceives of the distinction between sense data as immediately experienced and sense data as known.

This distinction is dealt with by Schutz in the distinction between inner time and homogeneous time. In his theory inner time is synonymous with the present, and homogeneous time is usually past time (although, as we shall see, in the Act of projection it is a future experience which is thought of as completed). The Ego exists in inner time, in which it experiences sense data. The Ego does not comprehend what is experienced in inner time, the experience of sense data in inner time is unclear and meaningless. Only in homogeneous time does the Ego "glance backward" or reflect upon its past experiences and "lift out" or retain discrete entities from the past by an Act of attention.¹⁷ In an Act of attention the prephenomenological inner time is

¹⁶Collected Papers, vol. I, p. 132.

¹⁷The Phenomenology, p. 51.

objectified as a phenomenologically discrete unit and given form and clarity. This differentiation is the nature of comprehension.¹⁸ Only past experience is endowed with meaning by the reflective gaze of the Ego. This reflective glance, or Act, is distinct from past experience. The intentionality of the Act induces a modification of the originally passively received experience.¹⁹

I wish to examine the notion of what Schutz calls attentional modification in some detail.²⁰ He distinguishes two types of Acts. One type he calls Acts of spontaneity. This type of Act functions as the receiving of primal sensations, embracing the totality of experienced sense data.

¹⁸See The Phenomenology, p. 50. This process of differentiation is dealt with by Peter L. Berger and Stanley Pullberg in "Reification and the Sociological Critique of Consciousness," History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History, IV (1964), under the notion of reification. I refer the reader to Berger and Pullberg's clarification of the notions of objectivation as "that process whereby human subjectivity embodies itself in products that are available to oneself and one's fellow men as elements of a common world" (p. 199), and objectification as "the moment in the process of objectivation in which man establishes distance from his producing and its product, such that he can take cognizance of it and make of it an object of his consciousness." (p. 200)

¹⁹I shall use the term "intentionality" to refer simply to what Schutz calls "the way of directing one's gaze at an item of one's own experience" (see above, p. 34).

²⁰In those instances in which Schutz draws upon the terminology developed by Edmund Husserl, I wish to point out that I am concerned only with Schutz's interpretation of that terminology and not with Husserl's use of the terminology. (I am not assuming that Schutz's interpretation and Husserl's use are necessarily the same.)

"Acts of spontaneity" is the term applied to the experiences of sense data. Sense data, as originally received, can be modified. Acts of the second kind, in which some form of modification of sense data takes place, are called attentional Acts. Corresponding to the different ways in which the sense data can be modified we have four kinds of attentional Acts: the Acts of retention, reproduction, protention, and anticipation.

Schutz asserts that remembering is the lifting of an experience out of inner time and constituting it as a discrete entity. Remembering has two aspects: primary remembering, or retention, and secondary remembering, or reproduction. Retention is the leaving of any corresponding "impression" in consciousness by sense data which are experienced in the Now. Although in reproduction the same sense data are modified, it is nevertheless to be distinguished from retention in that it is in the Act of reproduction that the (content of the) remembered experience is constituted.²⁰ (The term "the content of a remembered experience" will be further clarified below.)

I shall now explicate briefly those of Schutz's assumptions regarding the nature of known experience which

²⁰I wish to make explicit that the term "constitution" as found within Schutz's phenomenological sociology should be interpreted as having a theoretical definition appropriate to his use of the term in The Phenomenology. [On the notion of a theoretical definition see Copi, pp. 101-102.]

are relevant to the thesis, after which I shall try to clarify the key concept involved in these assumptions. In the relationship between the original experience and the content of that experience as it is reproduced in consciousness, the former determines the latter. Schutz considers as an "insight" Husserl's claim that it may be said, in distinguishing between an experience and the reflective glance directed at that experience, that the experience is "already there"²¹, prior to reproduction of its content. In the reflective glance an impression of what is experienced is grasped in consciousness, and this impression implicitly contains the essence of the experienced object. The original experience, therefore, determines the (content of) the experience (that is, some temporal object²²) as reproduced in consciousness.

Let us consider the sense in which we may speak of such an essence, this being the key concept of Schutz's assumptions. We have seen that experience occurs in the present. Schutz categorizes the objects of this experience into two types: transcendent temporal objects and immanent temporal objects. A transcendent temporal object is a thing or event having a beginning, middle, and end, and which is

²¹Edmund Husserl, The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness, trans. James S. Churchill, ed. Martin Heidegger (Bloomington, 1964), p. 179: cited by Schutz, The Phenomenology, p. 50.

²²See below.

understood as lying outside the individual's consciousness, although capable of being perceived or thought of.²³ An immanent temporal object is a content of consciousness "whose duration is wholly within the individual's stream of consciousness."²⁴ An example of the former would be a wooden cube. Of the latter, Schutz gives as an example a sound in the sense of an auditory sense datum.²⁵ Following Husserl's terminology, I shall refer to both types of objects as temporal objects.

Since Schutz assumes that we do not have knowledge of temporal objects in (present) perception, the temporal objects as such are not directly known. They are known insofar as they are remembered. This is to say, what are known are the contents of the remembered experiences of these temporal objects, and I shall introduce the term "mental object" to refer to the content of such a remembered experience. It is introduced in order to make certain of Schutz's basic assumptions explicit. I wish to emphasize that the content of the remembered experiences of temporal objects can be temporarily set aside, that is, each mental object is to be understood as being repeatable. On the other hand, the mental event of which a mental object is the content

²³The Phenomenology, p. 46, n. 1.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

is temporally fixed, that is, it cannot be repeated. A mental object, being the content of a mental event, can re-occur in mental events of the same kind. Schutz does not seem to keep clear the distinction between the experiencing of something and that which is the content of the experience (as we shall see below in his use of the term "projected act"). Schutz's failure to make explicit his dependence upon the assumption that the content of a remembered experience is repeatable causes confusion. More importantly, he does not allow for the implications of this assumption.

We have seen that Schutz assumes that an empirical object, for example, a wooden cube, is classified, within a science, in terms of its essential characteristics. I shall now establish that he implies that all temporal objects are classified according to their essential characteristics, that is, according to their essences.²⁶

Schutz presents the following explanation of the term "synthesis of identity". I have made this explanation more precise by introducing the concept of a mental object. In (present) perception each individual's consciousness has presented to it a succession of appearances. Some successions of appearances are perceived as displaying a unity. For example, consider the perception of an empirical object such as a table. A succession of

²⁶Any reference to classification is always to be understood as a reference to classification within a science, unless otherwise stated.

appearances is presented in perception. All the appearances are so alike that we speak of a unity being displayed by the succession. These appearances are synthesized into a mental object and we speak of perceiving an empirical object; this is to say, we infer the constitution or unity of an empirical object from the constitution or unity of the mental object. This process is called the synthesis of identity. Now this manner of understanding the unity of an empirical object can be applied to every area of lived experience.²⁷ All mental objects are constituted in the same way. Not only are all temporal objects perceived in the same manner, but all temporal objects leave an impression in retention, and they are all remembered in the same way in reproduction. Schutz draws upon Husserl's "precise description" of this process where Husserl states that as regards the perception of temporal objects "it makes no difference . . . whether we take an immanent or transcendent Object" ²⁸ The reproduction of temporal objects as mental objects is accomplished in the complete reconstruction of the temporal object.²⁹ It is this reconstruction which I have referred

²⁷The Phenomenology, p. 80.

²⁸Husserl, p. 52. See The Phenomenology, pp. 47-48.

²⁹The Phenomenology, p. 49. I refer the reader also to Schutz's reference to Husserl's "precise description" where Husserl points out that in reproduction "the temporal object is again completely built up", Husserl, p. 59: cited by Schutz, The Phenomenology, p. 48.

to by the term "the content of a remembered experience".³⁰ I have now defined the term "the content of a remembered experience" as "the reproduced temporal object", that is, "a mental object".

Section 5

I shall now establish that Schutz assumes that actions can be classified according to their essences. ("An action" here is to be understood in the usual way to mean (roughly) "a piece of purposive behaviour" or "a piece of goal-orientated behaviour".) As I have stated, Schutz makes the following assumptions. The constitution of empirical objects (for example, a table) is inferred from the constitution of mental objects via the synthesis of identity. Furthermore, the constitution of all temporal objects can be inferred from the constitution of their corresponding mental objects in the same way; that is, the constitution of all perceivable objects, events, and contents of consciousness as temporal objects can be inferred from the constitution of their corresponding mental objects. Now actions are one kind of event, and since events are one kind of temporal object³¹, it follows that actions can be treated as objects. Within a science, temporal objects are classified according to their

³⁰See above, p. 39.

³¹See above, pp. 40-41.

essential characteristics. Therefore actions, as one kind of temporal object, are classified according to their essential characteristics.

As mental objects are constituted from the past experiences of temporal objects, we may speak of temporal objects determining their corresponding mental objects. In this sense, the essence of the previously experienced temporal object determines the essence of the reproduced temporal object, that is, of the corresponding mental object. Schutz implies, then, that the essence of an action determines the essence of its corresponding mental object.

CHAPTER IV

THE RELEVANT ASSUMPTIONS OF ALFRED SCHUTZ (II)

Section 1

This chapter is a continuation of my explication of the relevant assumptions of Alfred Schutz. In section 2 I shall explicate Schutz's term "projected act" and offer a criticism of its use. To avoid the logical difficulties in Schutz's use of the term "projected act" I shall introduce the term "projected mental object of an action". Section 3 will consist of an examination of the distinction between particular and typical characteristics. I conclude that they are not different in kind, and in section 4 I shall show that Schutz's concept of the synthesis of recognition involves characterizing temporal objects according to their typical characteristics, although these are not fixed. In section 5 I shall explain Schutz's notion of intended meaning.

Section 2

Schutz defines "behaviour" as "the modifying of past experience in the Acts of protention and reproduction."¹ He distinguishes the concept of behaviour from his special concept of action by defining the term "action" as "the

¹See The Phenomenology, p. 57.

execution of a projected act".² The term "projected act" will be explained and Schutz's use of it criticized, and the term "projected mental object of an action" will be introduced to serve instead of his term "projected act". The term "projected mental object of an action" will serve as the key concept in the explanation of his concept of intended meaning.

Reflection, in Schutz's theory, is not confined to retention and reproduction. There are attitudinal Acts which are reflective and also future-orientated. These are the Acts of anticipation and some Acts of protention. Protentions are to be contrasted with anticipations in that the former may or may not be "empty" while the latter are "not empty". The concepts of protention and anticipation will be explained by considering what is expected in each kind of Act.

Protentions are found in all attitude-taking Acts. They "constitute and intercept what is coming . . . in order to bring it to fulfillment."³ They are usually merged with

²I shall demonstrate that Schutz intends the term "the execution of the projected act" to be understood to cover all instances of action (as this term has been clarified on page 44 above). I refer to his "special" concept of action to emphasize the fact that while there is a similarity between the normal usage of the term "action" and his sense, by defining the term as he does he gives it a theoretical definition which is special to his phenomenological theory. It is this theoretical definition which I shall explicate in the remainder of this section.

³Husserl, p. 76: cited by Schutz, The Phenomenology, p. 57.

retentions. By this he implies that in each of a succession of appearances within the constituting process of the synthesis of identity there must necessarily be an Act which is directed towards the next appearance of the succession in order for there to be a synthesis of identity; this Act is called a protention. In protention what is expected is the next appearance in some succession of appearances.

The distinction between protentions and anticipations is based on what is expected in each kind of Act. Protentions are "empty" and "unfulfilled" only in behaviour which is not reflected upon.⁴ Since we have knowledge of a temporal object only through the reflective perception of a mental object, if the content of a protention is not synthesized, it cannot be the object of an intentional glance. To regard a protention as "empty" or "unfulfilled" is to imply that, in this form of expectation, no role is played by a mental object; that is, the 'content' of an empty protention is not a mental object.

Protentions are "fulfilled" or "not empty" in reflection. In reflection action is considered as completed, that is, as having a corresponding mental object. If a phase of the action is considered in reflective perception, "it is that phase which appears as completed."⁵

⁴The Phenomenology, p. 58.

⁵Ibid.

Let us consider the concept of a phase. Phases are considered as having duration. For example, Schutz states that: "From the point of view of a being immersed in duration, the "Now" is a phase rather than a point"6 Phases also have content. To speak of a phase of action is to speak of something which has a duration and which has as its content some succession of appearances which can be synthesized as an object of reflection. Since a phase has duration (and is, strictly speaking, the experiencing of something), it is the content of a phase which is an object of reflection. This content is constituted as a mental object having a corresponding temporal object.

Schutz states that in reflective perception protentions "bear the marks of fulfillment."⁷ They are "empty" only when the behaviour has not been reflected upon. In phases of action protentions are "never expectations which are still empty"8 Fulfilled protentions are called acts.⁹ As all protentions are Acts, that is, the experiencing of something, fulfilled protentions must be phases of action. An act, therefore, must be a phase of action.

I shall now consider the way in which we can speak of

⁶The Phenomenology, p. 51.

⁷Ibid., p. 58.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., p. 59.

acts as involving mental objects, as distinct from unfulfilled protentions which do not. Any phase of a "fully constituted" action appears as completed in reflection.¹⁰ In fact, Schutz defines "a phase considered in reflection" as "a constituted experience".¹¹ The content of these phases are considered as constituted objects, that is, as mental objects. Since the reflective perception of such phases are acts, that is, are "fulfilled" and "not empty", then, in reflection, acts involve a mental object. Since Schutz has defined "an act" as "a fulfilled and never empty protention"¹², then an act must involve a mental object.

Let us now consider what is expected in an Act of anticipation. These Acts are forms of protention which are the "future directed counterpart of [reproduction]."¹³ Since anticipation corresponds to reproduction in that it is reproductive, then some mental object must be reproduced in both kinds of Acts. A reproduced temporal object, that is, a mental object, has what I shall call a determinative function --it determines what is expected in anticipation. Schutz cites Husserl's statement that "in [reproduction] we have a pre-directed expectation" ¹⁴ If what is expected in

¹⁰The Phenomenology, p. 58.

¹¹Ibid., p. 51.

¹²Ibid., p. 59.

¹³Ibid., p. 58.

¹⁴Husserl, p. 76: cited by Schutz, The Phenomenology, p. 59.

anticipation is a temporal object whose characteristics correspond to the characteristics of the mental object, then the expectation of the future temporal object may be said to be "fulfilled" when the characteristics of the expected temporal object "fulfill", or correspond to, the characteristics of the mental object. The characteristics of the mental object may thus be said to determine which characteristics are expected in the future perception of some temporal object.

I shall now explicate the meaning of the term "projected act". In a projected act the aims of the action are projected and

. . . the projection of an action is in principle carried out independently of all real action. Every projection of action is rather a phantasying of action . . . but not the activity itself.¹⁵

In such phantasying (which differs from empty protention) the act is projected as the goal of the action (that is, the projected act is considered as already completed), and is brought into being by the action.¹⁶ An example of such phantasying would be the imagining of getting up from a chair and going over to a window.¹⁷ The "picture in mind" in this instance is "a picture of the completed act of having gone

¹⁵The Phenomenology, p. 59.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁷Ibid.

over to the window." In this instance we may regard either the whole process of getting up and going over to the window as a phase (that is, as a completed act), or we may regard a shorter part of the action as a completed act (for example, the phase of getting up from the chair, the phase of taking the first step, etc.). In all of these examples of phases the "picture in mind" is of a completed act, according to Schutz.

The term "completed act" refers to any phase (of any duration) the content of which can be constituted as a mental object. It may refer to a phase the duration of which is the smallest period of time in which a mental object may be constituted. Those phases the duration of which is the smallest period of time in which a mental object may be constituted will be referred to as the ultimate completed acts. These acts cannot contain a phase of a shorter duration the content of which can be constituted as a mental object. Any phase of action whose duration is greater than that of an ultimate completed act may be distinguished as a completed act. Barring the limitations of the ultimate completed act, the determination of the duration of a phase of action considered as a completed act is arbitrary. The unity of the completed act is a function of the "span or breadth of the project."¹⁸ Although there is a minimal

¹⁸The Phenomenology, p. 62.

duration a phase must have before it can be considered as a completed act (such minimal phases being the ultimate completed acts), there is no maximal duration for a phase the content of which can be constituted as a mental object.

The use of the term "projected act" is open to criticism. Schutz considers the question of whether it is the action or the act which is projected and phantasied, and concludes that "what is projected is the act" ¹⁹ Now the term "projected act" is confusing in that it does not make sufficiently clear that what is being projected is the content of the modifying experience (which in the case of a fulfilled protention is a mental object) and not the Act of modifying. Strictly speaking, an Act of modifying is an experiencing and, as such, cannot be retained (since the past modifying of an experience, being itself an experience, is temporally fixed). Since a fulfilled protention is an experiencing which cannot be retained, it cannot be projected. Since a modifying experience cannot be projected, it is only the mental object (as the content of the modifying experience) which can be projected. Since a phase of action (or act) logically cannot be assumed to be projected, I conclude that the term "projected act" must be interpreted to mean "the mental object of an action (or of a phase of action) which is projected". Schutz's statement that it is the act which is

¹⁹The Phenomenology, p. 68.

projected is logically incoherent.

"Anticipation" is understood as being "reproductive" insofar as what is anticipated is a temporal object expected in the future having the same characteristics as the projected mental object of some action.

Let us now consider what is meant by the term "the execution of the projected act", or, in more precise terminology, "the 'execution' of the projected mental object of an action". (The term "the 'execution' of the projected mental object of an action" can be read more intelligibly as "the projection of a mental object of an action and the orientating of one's action towards it".) To explain this notion I shall first explain Schutz's concept of a polythetic Act. Polythetic Acts will be differentiated from what I shall call (following Schutz) choice Acts, the latter being a sub-class of the former.

Schutz refers to Acts which can be invariably differentiated into other Acts as polythetic Acts.²⁰ For example, the phase of action of "getting up out of the chair and going over to the window" is a completed act. So too would be the phase of action of "opening the window". Now, in a polythetic Act the phase of action of "getting up and going over to the window" may be 'bound to' or synthesized with the phase of action of "opening the window". The resultant phase of action would be "getting up and going over

²⁰The Phenomenology, p. 68.

to the window and opening the window". This phase of action would be perceived as displaying a unity:

The unity found is . . . a unity of a higher order. This higher Act . . . is both polythetic and synthetic. It is polythetic because within it several different "theses" are posited. It is synthetic because they are posited together. As every constituent Act within the total Act has its object, so the total Act has its total object.²¹

All choice Acts are polythetic Acts. In a choice Act two or more distinct mental objects of action are projected. The individual chooses between the mental objects of action as to which one will be the goal of his action. In the Act of choosing, the particular mental objects of action "drop out of view" and a "new synthetic Act" is constituted.²² Choice Acts are concerned "not with what is but with what the actor has decided will be."²³ Choice Acts, as a sub-class of polythetic Acts, are differentiated from other polythetic Acts in that a choice is made in them as to which of several possible phases of action is to be realized. A choice Act, as an experiencing, has as its content a mental object from which a temporal object can be inferred. In the completed act "the whole thing can be looked upon . . . as something actually existent."²⁴ Since the projection of an action must

²¹The Phenomenology, p. 68.

²²Ibid., p. 69.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

necessarily involve the projecting of a content of a past experiencing, only the actor, according to Schutz, can know the meaning (as he defines "meaning"²⁵) of the projected mental object of an action. It follows that in the projection of a mental object of an action which is the content of a polythetic Act (in which the mental objects of other completed acts are synthesized), the meaning of each individual act, insofar as it is related to the realization of the goal, will be known only to the actor. In the future orientating of his action to the particular goal only the actor will know whether a phase of action is orientated towards the goal. For example, an actor may synthesize, in a polythetic Act, the mental object of the phase of action of "cutting down a tree" and the mental object of the phase of action of "receiving payment", and the actor may then project as a goal the mental object of the resultant phase of action of "cutting down a tree and receiving payment". On the other hand, an observer of the actor's action of cutting down a tree may, on the basis of his previous experience, synthesize the mental object of the phase of action of "cutting down a tree" with the mental object of the phase of action of "getting firewood". The observer may then assume as the actor's goal the realization of the mental object of the phase of action of "cutting down a tree and getting firewood". Suppose the actor completes the phase of action of "cutting down a tree".

²⁵See above, p. 34.

The completed phase may be understood by the actor as having been completed in order to complete the phase of action of "cutting down a tree and receiving payment". In this context, Schutz would assert that the phase of action of "cutting down a tree" could not be regarded as the completed act. Rather, only the completion of the phase of action of "cutting down a tree and receiving payment" may be regarded as the completed act. Thus the term "the 'execution' of the projected mental object of an action" refers to the completion of the phase of action constituting the goal of the action. This goal is known only by the actor, not by the observer.

Section 3

In order to make explicit Schutz's assumptions regarding the nature of intended meaning I shall consider the manner in which he defines "particular" and "typical" characteristics. The distinction between particular and typical characteristics will help in the clarification of the concept of the synthesis of recognition, which will be dealt with in the following section.

Schutz explains the notion of typicality as it pertains to empirical phenomena by stating that

. . . what is experienced in the actual perception of an object is apperceptively transferred to any other similar object, perceived merely as to its type. Actual experience will or will not confirm my

anticipation of the typical conformity with other objects. If confirmed, the content of the anticipated type will be enlarged; at the same time the type will be split up into sub-types; on the other hand the concrete real object will prove to have its individual characteristics, which . . . have a form of typicality.²⁶

The question may be raised as to Schutz's assumptions regarding the nature of "what is experienced" in this context. He distinguishes typical from individual characteristics.²⁷

From his examples we see that he uses the term "individual characteristics" to refer to characteristics which only one individual object happens to have, not to characteristics which only one individual object logically can have; that is to say, he uses the term to refer to characteristics which another object could have. For example, he speaks of his "friend and companion Rover", an Irish setter²⁸, but there is nothing logically incoherent in conceiving of any number of other Irish setters all answering to the name of Rover and all being extremely friendly and companionable to dear old Schutz. This holds true even though there may not in fact be another such Irish setter. Schutz makes explicit that which characteristics are to be considered typical and which are to be considered individual is dependent upon one's purposes. These purposes dictate what is to be considered relevant in classifying an object as one of a certain kind, and what is

²⁶Collected Papers, vol. I, p. 8.

²⁷Ibid., p. 9.

²⁸Ibid., p. 8.

to be considered irrelevant. Relevance determines

. . . what elements have to be made a substratum of generalizing typification, what traits of these elements have to be selected as characteristically typical, and what others as unique and individual²⁹

The selection of typical as distinct from particular characteristics differs between what Schutz calls "common sense interpretation" and scientific interpretation. The two kinds of interpretation are distinguished in that the latter uses typifications which are "determined" by a limited number of well-defined characteristics.³⁰ Since a science is concerned with essential characteristics it can be seen that, although "what is experienced" in common sense interpretation may or may not be open to classification in terms of essential characteristics, "what is experienced" in the context of a social science must be classified via essential characteristics.³¹

I conclude that since typical and particular characteristics are not different in kind (being dependent upon one's particular purposes at the time), and may be changed as one's purposes change, it logically follows that any object can be typified (classified) in terms of different essences, given

²⁹Collected Papers, vol. I, pp. 9-10.

³⁰Ibid., p. 282.

³¹Ibid. Here Schutz treats types as determined by "well-defined characteristics" and states that these same "well-defined characteristics" co-determine scientific concepts (types).

that this typification is undertaken within a social science.

Section 4

This section will consist of a clarification of Schutz's assumption that each "concrete real object" may be classified according to different essences. To say that a temporal object may be recognized as being a certain kind of temporal object means, for Schutz, "recognizing it as belonging to a class."³² (All members of the class would have the same essence.) For example, to perceive the "set of characteristics common to all imaginable cubes"³³ in a particular temporal object is to classify the particular object as a member of that class of things known as "cubes".

I shall now show that a particular object (for example, a dog) may be classified as being a member of different classes (for example, of the class of dogs, of Irish setters, of mammals, etc.). From the previous section we can see that the dog, Rover, shares certain "typical characteristics of appearance" with other members of the class of dogs.³⁴ These are not the same characteristics as those which Rover shares with objects of a more specific or a more general class. For example, there are those characteristics typical of all

³²The Phenomenology, p. 84.

³³See Schutz's use of "essential characteristics", above, p. 36.

³⁴Collected Papers, vol. I, p. 8.

friendly and companionable Irish setters, and those typical of all mammals. The classification of an object is a function of intentionality; that is, the object (in this instance, Rover) may be classified as a member of several classes according to one's purposes. He may be classified as a member of the class of friendly and companionable Irish setters, or as a member of the class of dogs, or as a member of the class of mammals, and since, for Schutz, each of these classes is delimited by some essence, it follows that the empirical object Rover can be classified according to at least three different essences. Although this example is taken from common discourse, the same holds true for objects of a social science (this being a science of essences), that is, they can be classified according to different essences.

Classification is dependent upon past experience. The synthesis of recognition

. . . takes the lived experience that is to be classified, refers it back to the schemes on hand, and fixes its specific essence. The lived experience is thus brought back to an objectification already on hand within the store of experience and identified with this objectification.³⁵

To classify a temporal object, the actor must have had a past experience of another object having an essence which the newly perceived object also has. Novel objects are considered "unexplainable" if they cannot be classified

³⁵The Phenomenology, p. 83.

according to the perceiver's past experience of objects of some analogous kind. Temporal objects which are unexplainable in this way may be classified by reference to the interpretive schemes of others.³⁶ Experiences of temporal objects of the same kind are called analogous acts. Analogous acts are those having "an identical nucleus of meaning"³⁷ For example, in classifying an object as a "table", the perceiver makes a reference to his previous experience of other tables. To say that an act is analogous to a previously experienced act implies that both acts have a content with the same essence, and that the perceiver recognizes this similarity. He thus classifies the object on the basis of his past experience of at least one other object having the same essence.

Section 5

Having clarified the role of what I have called mental objects in Schutz's theory of behaviour and action, his use of the term "intended meaning" can now be explained. The purpose of this clarification is to gain a fuller understanding of Schutz's criticism of Weber's use of the term "intended meaning". He criticizes Weber for failing to

³⁶See Collected Papers, vol. I, p. 8 where Schutz speaks of someone who perceives an Irish setter for the first time asking someone else what it is.

³⁷The Phenomenology, p. 90, n. 88.

distinguish two possible interpretations of this term.³⁸ In the first possible interpretation the term refers to the context of meaning which the actor subjectively believes is the reason for his behaviour. In the second, the term refers to the context of meaning which the observer supposes is the reason for the actor's behaviour.³⁹ According to this criticism, Weber does not make it clear whether the term "intended meaning" is used in the first or second sense. Schutz concludes that the term must be understood in the first sense.

He distinguishes meaning from intended meaning. In my terminology, the meaning of a phase of action is the content of that phase, where this content has been reproduced from past experience in the form of a mental object. The intended meaning of a phase of action (again, in my terminology) is the projected mental object which is the content of the phase, where future experience is expected to conform to this mental object. The intended meaning is both determined and determinative (as I have used these terms). On the one hand, the intended meaning is a projected mental object of action the characteristics of which have been determined by the temporal object of which it is a reproduction, and on the other hand, the projected mental object orders future experience insofar as it determines which characteristics

³⁸See above, pp. 32-35.

³⁹See The Phenomenology, p. 86.

will be looked for in the expected temporal object.

Schutz claims that an individual's intended meaning cannot be comprehended⁴⁰ by anyone other than that individual. On the assumption that only the individual in question can comprehend the fulfilling of the goal, Schutz concludes that:

"Intended meaning" is therefore essentially subjective and is in principle confined to the self-interpretation of the person who lives through the experience to be interpreted. Constituted as it is within the unique stream of consciousness of each individual, it is essentially inaccessible to every other individual.⁴¹

What is meant here is that only the individual can comprehend the fulfilling of the goal, and not that no two individuals can have the same goal. The distinction between an experiencing and the content of the experiencing is helpful here in showing that these two claims are very different. It has already been shown that it must be a mental object which is projected. Now, of course, it is in principle possible for two individuals to project the same mental object (since it is built into the notion of a mental object that it can be repeated, either at different times or by different people, in experiences of the same kind). Thus it is in principle possible for two people to have the same goal. What is not

⁴⁰See above, pp. 37-38. "Comprehend" is always to be understood in Schutz's sense, unless otherwise stated.

⁴¹The Phenomenology, p. 99.

in principle possible is that each individual's fulfilling of the goal should be one and the same experiencing. The content of their experiencings of fulfilling the goal may, in principle, be the same. The experiencings will, nevertheless, be numerically different. Insofar as this last is Schutz's claim, it is valid. If, however, he is also claiming that it is in principle impossible that the content of the experiencings should be the same, then the point seems to be invalid. It will be remembered that the content in this sense is the content of a polythetic Act which may involve a synthesis of a number of mental objects into a new mental object. An individual can combine an indefinite number of mental objects which are the reproductions of previously experienced temporal objects in a polythetic Act. Now I agree that it is highly unlikely that a sociologist will encounter any two persons with exactly the same (qualitatively) past experience, but the objection remains that it is not in principle impossible.

CHAPTER V

THE SUBJECTIVE-OBJECTIVE MEANING DISTINCTION IN SCHUTZ

Section 1

This chapter will consist of an explication of the distinction Schutz draws between the concepts of objective meaning and subjective meaning. This distinction serves as the basis for the distinction between judging the objective probability of the existence of a social relationship and judging the subjective probability of the existence of such a relationship. In section 2 the notion of a form of perception having the property of simultaneity will be explained. The concept of a relation of representation between a general term and a mental object will be introduced, and this will be followed by a clarification of the relation of correspondence. The clarification of these relations is necessary in order to understand Schutz's distinction between an observer's judgement of the objective probability of the existence of a social relationship, and a participant's judgement of the subjective probability of the existence of a social relationship. Section 3 will consist of an explanation of Schutz's assumptions regarding generic concepts. His notion of a generic concept will be compared with Weber's and preliminary conclusions will be drawn. In section 4 I shall begin to explain Schutz's concept of an ideal type by showing that he intends ideal types to be treated substantively.

Section 5 will contain a further clarification of Schutz's concept of an ideal type. I shall show that he assumes that an ideal type can be explained via some o. s. referent, more specifically, that the general term involved stands in a relation of representation to a mental object. The term "typified concepts" will be used to refer to ideal types as Schutz conceives of them.

Section 2

In the previous chapter it was shown that Schutz concludes that the intended meaning of an action is essentially inaccessible to (that is, cannot be comprehended by) an observer of that action. This does not preclude the possibility that the actor's lived experience may be comprehended by someone else. In order to explain the way in which the lived experience of one person can be comprehended by another, Schutz's notion of simultaneity will be introduced.

Schutz's theory of intersubjective understanding is based upon a form of personal perception having the property of "simultaneity". This occurs in a face-to-face situation, that is, one in which one person observes another's action as it occurs (before the other has had the opportunity to differentiate his past experience into phases of action). In this situation the bodily movements, facial expressions, etc., of the other are perceived as indications of the other's

subjective experiences. This perception involves a special form of inference in which a certain intentional Act "utilizes an already established code of interpretation directing us through the bodily movement to the underlying lived experience."¹ Schutz does not explain the nature of the "certain intentional Act", nor does he explain the nature of the "already established code" to which he refers. In simultaneous perception one person can comprehend the intentional Acts of the other as they occur by grasping the outward indications of the conscious processes.² (It is rather difficult to see how Schutz can justify this claim since to say that one comprehends the Acts of another as they occur seems to contradict his earlier claims that comprehension involves reproduction, and that we can reproduce only the content of past experiences.) By means of the "pre-established code of interpretation" the gaze of one person goes "right through" the indications to the mind of the other. In this sense it may be said that in the face-to-face relation someone who perceives another's indications comprehends the subjective experiences of which they are indications. Although one person can comprehend what another is experiencing during that phase of action, he cannot comprehend how the content of that phase of action is organized within the previous experience of the actor. The

¹The Phenomenology, p. 101.

²Ibid., p. 104.

knowledge an observer has of an actor whose experience he has observed is a result of, and is limited to, the observer's experience of the actor.

An indication is to be distinguished from a sign. A sign is an indication which is deliberately selected by the actor in order to express some content of his subjective processes. The relation between a sign and the relevant content of an individual's subjective processes is called the relation of representation.

The term "relation of representation" may be used in two senses: the first in reference to the relation which exists between a sign and the content of consciousness which it has been selected to represent in the mind of the sign-user, the second in reference to the relation between the sign and the content of consciousness which the sign is understood to represent in the mind of the interpreter of that sign. (This will be explained below.) To understand a sign is to "focus attention on" that which it signifies³, and the two different conscious processes (mentioned above) to which attention is directed give us the two senses of the relation of representation, the former relation being called the subjective meaning of the sign, and the latter relation being called the objective meaning of the sign. The former is referred to

³The Phenomenology, p. 119.

. . . if we have in view the meaning-context within which the [sign] stands or stood in the mind of the producer. To know the subjective meaning of the [sign] means that we are able to run over in our own minds in simultaneity or quasi-simultaneity the polythetic Acts which constituted the experience of the producer.⁴

The objective meaning is the interpretation of that sign in the meaning-context in the mind of the interpreter. If he does not make special reference to the subjective meaning of the sign,

. . . the objective meaning remains, from the point of view of the interpreter, invariant for all possible creators of the meaningful object [that is, the sign]. Insofar as that object contains within its very meaning the ideality of the . . . "I can do it again," to that extent is that meaning independent of its maker and the circumstances of its origination. The [sign] is abstracted from every individual consciousness and indeed from every consciousness as such. Objective meaning is merely the interpreter's ordering of his experiences of a [sign] into the total context of his experience.⁵

In both kinds of representation Schutz is quite explicit regarding the necessity of differentiating the sign from the content of the subjective processes of which it is the external representation. According to him, an observer of an actor cannot have a genuine understanding of the other simply by perceiving the signs of that actor:

. . . by "understanding the other person" much more is meant, as a rule. This additional something . . .

⁴The Phenomenology, p. 133.

⁵Ibid., p. 135.

involves grasping what is really going on in the other person's mind, grasping those things of which the external manifestations are mere indications.⁶

Let us consider the nature of the "things" of which signs are indications. A sign is intelligible only "in terms of those lived experiences . . . which it designates."⁷ One phase of lived experience (which has been referred to as a phase of action) is differentiated from another phase of lived experience via the characteristics which distinguish the content of the one phase of action from the content of the other phase of action, that is, via the characteristics which distinguish the two mental objects involved. If understanding a sign is to be aware of the certain content of consciousness of which the sign is a deliberate expression, then this is to say that understanding a sign implies a knowledge of the mental object of which the sign is an expression. A relation of representation may be described as a relation in which a sign stands for, or represents, a mental object, either in the mind of the person using the sign, or in the mind of the person interpreting the sign.

Schutz considers Weber to be ambiguous insofar as he

⁶The Phenomenology, p. 113. I refer the reader also to The Phenomenology, p. 111 where Schutz states: "The attention of the observer is focused not on the indications but on what lies behind them. This is genuine understanding of the other person," and to p. 112 where he states that the observer "regards the meaning of the word as an indication . . . of the speaker's subjective experiences"

⁷Ibid., p. 122.

does not establish whether or not the intended meaning of an action is identical with the actor's motive⁸, nor does he clearly distinguish between the in-order-to motive of the actor (the orientation of the action towards a future event) and the because-motive of the actor (the relation of the action to a past lived experience).⁹ In what sense can the in-order-to motive and the because-motive be understood as mental objects? Schutz argues that what is meant by the term "the in-order-to motive" is "the meaning-context of a project, within which the completed act is pictured as something brought to fulfillment by my action."¹⁰ This has been previously described as a choice Act which has as its content a projected mental object.¹¹ The meaning-context in which the because-motive is understood is "clearly constituted only in a backward glance."¹² That is, because-motives consist of past lived experiences, which have already been shown to be accessible only in the form of mental objects. In Schutz's theory motives are to be understood as mental objects, either as the reproduction of the content of some remembered experience, or as projected, and we may note that in the

⁸The Phenomenology, p. 87.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 89.

¹¹See above, p. 54.

¹²The Phenomenology, p. 93.

face-to-face situation the interaction consists of "a specific disclosure of the motives of the other person."¹³

The process by which a sign is established as a representation of a particular mental object is one in which an individual "perceives the event and orders his perceptions into polythetic syntheses, upon which he then looks back with a monothetic glance, and arranges these syntheses into the total context of his experience, giving them at the same time a name."¹⁴ This is to say, an individual constitutes a phase of action and classifies the content of that phase (the mental object) according to the characteristics of that mental object.

Having drawn the distinction between the objective meaning of a sign (that is, where the interpreter makes no reference to the subjective meaning, but treats the sign as being abstracted from the subjective context of the actor who uses the sign and as being endowed with "universal meaning"¹⁵) and the subjective meaning of a sign (that is, where the interpreter treats the sign as representing particular polythetically constructed lived experiences

¹³The Phenomenology, p. 172.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 110. See also p. 122 where Schutz states that interpreting a sign involves "a previous decision on our part to accept and use this sign as an expression for a certain content of our consciousness." [My emphasis.]

¹⁵Ibid., p. 135.

occurring in the mind of the sign-user¹⁶), Schutz concludes that the concepts of subjective meaning and objective meaning may be understood as two ends of a continuum between which there are an indefinite number of stages. The balance between that part of an observer's understanding of someone else's action which is based upon the observer's past experience of other actors, and that part which is based upon his experience of that particular actor, will determine where along the continuum his interpretation lies. Schutz claims that confusion arises from Weber's use of the terms "observational understanding" and "motivational understanding" because Weber fails to distinguish between genuine understanding of the other's action and the objective interpretation of that action. Weber claims that given any plurality of actors, there is a probability that they are involved in a social relationship, that is, that the actions of each individual are orientated towards the actions of the others (each individual takes into consideration the actions of the others when he himself acts).¹⁷ Schutz questions whether that probability is based on an observer's judgement of the probability that the actors are involved in a social relationship, or on an actor's judgement of the probability that the others towards whom his action is orientated will

¹⁶The Phenomenology, p. 135.

¹⁷See Social and Economic Organization, p. 118.

orientate their action towards him. The former kind of probability he terms objective probability, and the latter, subjective probability. He suggests that Weber's ambiguity can be resolved by distinguishing between the subjective probability of a social action and the objective probability of a social action.

This distinction can be understood by considering how Schutz uses the term "relation of correspondence". He states that in judging the probability of the existence of a social relationship, it is assumed "that for the observer the outward indications he sees before him stand in a relation of correspondence to certain conscious processes."¹⁸ In establishing a relation of correspondence, the observer assumes that the mental object in the mind of one actor is the same mental object as that in the mind of the other actor, and that both instances of the mental object are represented by the same sign. In perceiving the first actor's use of the sign, the second actor may become aware of the relevant content of consciousness of the first actor. He assumes that the sign used by one actor stands in a relation of representation to the actor's in-order-to motive (which is a projected mental object of an action). Insofar as the second actor becomes aware of the relevant content of consciousness of the first, he can orientate his action so as to take the motive of the first into consideration. Thus the

¹⁸The Phenomenology, p. 153.

in-order-to motive of the first actor becomes the because-motive of the second; that is, the characteristics of a projected mental object (of an action) of the first actor will have the same characteristics as the mental object which is the reproduction of the content of a past experience of the other actor.

An observer can judge the probability of the existence of a social relationship in two ways: he can draw upon his past experience, or he can directly check with those whom he considers to be involved in the relationship. In the first case the judgement relies on the observer's past experience of similar phases of action in which he has been involved or of which he has knowledge. To the extent that the observer relies on his previous experience in making a judgement, that judgement is based on an objective probability. In the second case the observer becomes a participant in the social relationship, and the judgement will, therefore, be based on subjective probability. Insofar as the observer may rely purely on his past experience (that is, when he is in the role of an observer) or may participate in varying degrees of interaction with the actors, there is a sense in which there will be varying degrees of interpretability of the relationship, that is, varying degrees of certainty as to the existence of a social relationship.

. . . in any direct social observation carried on outside a social relationship, my interpretation of

another's behavior cannot be checked against his own self-interpretation, unless of course I exchange my role as an observer for that of a participant.¹⁹

Section 3

This section consists of a brief consideration of the notion of generic concepts as they appear in the methodological assumptions of Weber and Schutz. For Weber a generic concept is understood as being "descriptive" in that such a concept refers to the general aspects of phenomena; generic concepts "merely summarize the common features of certain empirical phenomena" ²⁰ The general terms associated with Weber's generic concepts are to be treated substantively, that is, as applying to observable empirical phenomena. He states that he is concerned with "an empirical science of concrete reality" ²¹ In ordinary discourse the use of such concepts suffers from "the neglect of clear-cut concept-construction" ²² It has been shown that he implies that generic concepts must be interpreted via some ordering and selecting criteria.²³ It has also been shown that Weber distinguishes generic concepts

¹⁹The Phenomenology, pp. 173-174.

²⁰The Methodology, p. 100.

²¹Ibid., p. 72.

²²Ibid., p. 107.

²³See above, p. 19.

from constructed concepts; he does not presuppose that the two kinds of concepts are to be treated in the same way.

Let us consider the way in which we may speak of a notion in Schutz's methodology similar to Weber's notion of a generic concept. Schutz also recognizes a type of concept used in ordinary discourse as distinct from the concepts of a sociological science. This kind of concept will likewise be called a generic concept. These are used descriptively for Schutz, that is, they are used to distinguish certain temporal objects from other temporal objects according to their characteristics. Insofar as these concepts are used to classify transcendent temporal objects, they are treated substantively. In those cases where generic concepts are used to classify immanent temporal objects, they are not treated substantively.²⁴

A similarity exists in the notions of a generic concept as found in Weber and Schutz. Both theorists regard generic concepts as descriptive, that is, both treat them substantively, although Schutz treats substantively only those generic concepts used to classify transcendent temporal objects. There is, however, a distinction between the generic concepts in Weber's methodology and those in Schutz's methodology. Weber implies that the general term associated with a generic concept is to be defined intensionally in that

²⁴For a clarification of "treating a general term substantively" see above, pp. 22-23.

some criteria are necessary for ordering and selecting which features are to be considered relevant to the classifications. Schutz, on the other hand, implies that insofar as the general term associated with a generic concept must be understood via the relation of representation as having a mental object as an o. s. referent, then the general term is defined extensionally.

Section 4

In this section I shall begin to clarify the term "typified concept". First I shall consider the claim that Schutz treats the general term associated with an ideal type substantivally. It will be remembered that to treat a general term substantivally is to use it to refer to some observable, empirical objects or events which are external to oneself.

Sociology, for Schutz, is a science of social action:

. . . he not only accepts but emphasizes Weber's view that the social sciences are concerned essentially with social action, the concept of "social" being defined in terms of a relationship between the behavior of two or more people, and the concept "action" being defined as behavior to which a subjective meaning is attached. A social action is, therefore, an action which is oriented toward the past, present, or future behavior of another person or persons.²⁵

Schutz, then, accepts Weber's statement as to the goal of

²⁵George Walsh, The Phenomenology, introduction p. xxi.

interpretive sociology. This goal is to study social action by interpreting the subjective meanings of social actors, and these meanings are to be found in the intentions of such actors: "The aim, then, is to interpret the actions of individuals in the social world and the ways in which individuals give meaning to social phenomena."²⁶

It is explicitly stated in The Phenomenology that the world of social actors other than oneself is known only in terms of ideal types²⁷, that is, that a sociological science must use ideal types as its method:

Since every social science starts out by taking for granted a social world which it sees as either a world of mere contemporaries or a world of predecessors, it can comprehend this world only by the method of ideal types²⁸

In a social science "the complex of knowledge . . . is based exclusively on explicit positional Acts of judgment, on constituted ideal objectifications"²⁹ Therefore the general terms associated with ideal types are central to sociological science and are applicable to social actions. I conclude that the general terms associated with typified concepts are treated substantively by Schutz as applying to

²⁶The Phenomenology, p. 6.

²⁷Ibid., p. 222.

²⁸Ibid., p. 223.

²⁹Ibid.

social actions. It will be remembered that he treats social actions as transcendent temporal objects, that is, as "having a beginning, middle, and end, and which [are] understood as lying outside the individual's consciousness."³⁰ (To say that the social actions of others are observable events which are external to oneself is still to allow that in classifying them as being of certain kinds, we may have to draw upon some non-observable features--this will be explained in the last chapter.)

Section 5

In this section I shall consider the way in which typified concepts are interpreted via some o. s. referent. "An o. s. referent" has been defined as "that object or collection of objects denoted by a general term". I shall argue that Schutz assumes that a general term is to be understood via reference to the mental object which the sign has been chosen to represent, and, therefore, that he is assuming that the general term associated with a typified concept is to be defined extensionally via an o. s. referent. Reference will be made to some of Schutz's previously explicated concepts, namely, the relation of representation and the synthesis of recognition, and I shall introduce his concept of anonymity.

³⁰See above, pp. 40-41.

Signs have been distinguished from indications (the former being a sub-class of the latter), and Schutz makes it clear the words are a kind of sign.³¹ It has been shown that a sign, according to Schutz, must be distinguished from the thing which it represents.³² Words are always interpreted as having a referent:

When we look at a symbol . . . we do not look upon it as object but as representative of something else. When we "understand" a sign, our attention is focused not on the sign itself but upon that for which it stands.³³

Furthermore, a sign is always representative of previous lived experience. A sign is a "sign for" what it expresses, which is the subjective experience of the person using that sign.³⁴ To "understand" a sign or to interpret it depends on a decision to accept the sign as representing a content of consciousness, for a sign is intelligible only in terms of the lived experiences which it represents.³⁵ It can be seen

³¹See The Phenomenology, p. 111 where he speaks of "the word as a sign of its own word meaning."

³²See, for example, above, p. 68, n. 2, and p. 71, n. 7. For an additional reference see The Phenomenology, p. 111 where he states that "the attention of the observer is focused not on the indications but on what lies behind them.", and gives as an example the focusing of attention on an indication which is a sign.

³³The Phenomenology, pp. 118-119.

³⁴Ibid., p. 119.

³⁵Ibid., p. 122.

that a word is intelligible, for Schutz, only insofar as it stands in a relation of representation to a mental object (which is considered as the content of a mental event which [content] can re-occur in other mental events of the same kind).

Let us consider this claim more closely. Schutz introduces the term "anonymity" to distinguish the reflective character of the They-relationship (holding between actors whom one observes) from the pre-reflective character of the We-relationship (holding between oneself, as participant, and other actors in a face-to-face relationship). Pre-reflective perception occurs in a face-to-face situation and as such is a matter of "immediate experiencing" which serves to disclose the motives of the other in this situation.³⁶ This relationship may be characterized as reciprocal insofar as it consists of a social relationship in which the in-order-to motives of one actor become the because-motives of another. The transition from the We-relationship to the They-relationship is a transition from reciprocal experiencing to what Schutz calls one-sided experiencing, in which the actions of the other(s) in a social relationship are experienced reflectively.³⁷ It is clear that he draws no distinction between generic and typified concepts as to how

³⁶The Phenomenology, p. 180.

³⁷I assume here that Schutz's use of the term "one-sided" is meant to be the same as Weber's use of the term. See above, p. 27.

they are to be interpreted; both kinds of concepts are to be interpreted via mental objects functioning as the o. s. referents of the general terms involved. As soon as an individual becomes an observer of any social action (that is, as soon as he is involved in a They-relationship) he experiences the other(s) reflectively. Since reflective perception involves mental objects, it makes no difference whether the observer uses generic concepts or typified concepts in classifying the social action. Both kinds of concepts are to be interpreted via mental objects which are the o. s. referents of the associated general terms. To say that an ideal type is anonymous is to say that the mental object involved is not temporally fixed. Schutz remarks that "a moment of living experience [can be] lifted out of its setting and then, through a synthesis of recognition, frozen into a hard and fast "ideal type.""³⁸ It is clear that by the term "lifted out" Schutz is referring, albeit in a somewhat confusing manner, to the distinction between an experiencing and the content of that experiencing. The quality of anonymity is apparent in the concepts of social science where knowledge is "based exclusively . . . on ideal objectifications, that is to say, on conclusions of thought, and never on prepredicative Acts of laying hold on . . . the other person himself."³⁹ Social science, according to

³⁸The Phenomenology, p. 187.

³⁹Ibid., p. 223.

Schutz, never refers back to direct experience.⁴⁰ I conclude that as regards the way in which general terms are to be interpreted, he assumes that the general term associated with a typified concept stands in a relation of representation to a mental object; that is, mental objects are the o. s. referents of such terms.

It can be seen then that a typified concept is a concept which has an associated general term which is 1) treated substantively; and 2) to be defined extensionally via an o. s. referent, this being some mental object (or collection of mental objects⁴¹).

⁴⁰The Phenomenology, p. 223.

⁴¹I shall consider the o. s. referent of such a general term to be a mental object rather than a collection of mental objects. (To speak of a mental object is already to speak of some content which can re-occur.) There is a strong suggestion in Schutz's writing that mental objects not containing contradictory features can be synthesized into a new "total object". (For my purposes, it makes no difference whether the o. s. referent is understood to be a mental object or a collection of mental objects; in both cases the essential points stand.)

CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

Section 1

This chapter contains the concluding remarks on the methodological assumptions of Schutz and Weber examined in this thesis. Section 2 will include a brief comment on Weber, while in section 3 I shall criticize Schutz for the limitations imposed on his theory by his reliance on the notion of an o. s. referent in explaining the meaning of the general terms associated with typified concepts. Section 4 contains a note on further research possibilities.

Section 2

As Parsons points out, it is one of Weber's fundamental positions that "'immediate experience' is diffuse and not capable of precise formulation."¹ Weber recognizes that the development of any sociological science is logically dependent upon a type of methodological tool which is particularly suited to the nature of social action. Like Schutz, he recognizes that the ordering of empirical phenomena is dependent upon the purposive selection of some of the properties of the phenomena, and the two theorists agree that ideal types are to be used as a generalizing

¹Parsons, p. 588.

technique. Weber allocates some role to the process of verstehen in generalizing in the cultural sciences (for example, in the historian's ability to 'grasp' an historical "idea"), but he does not conceive of this as anything more than a preliminary technique. His concept of verstehen does not involve the assumption that an ideal type in any sense 'corresponds to' something which has been given in experience; that is, he does not suppose that the attributes or qualities which serve as the criteria by means of which selection and ordering take place are pre-given in the objects themselves (in the sense that the attributes exist outside of our perception of them). Whatever the theoretical problems in Weber's methodology, he has explicitly provided the means for testing a sociologist's claim to knowledge by making ideal types explicit theoretical or conceptual constructions, distinct from the intuitive grasp of the historical "ideas" of which they are the formulations. In this way the notion of an intersubjective technique for validation is preserved. Thus in rejecting the idea that the general terms associated with the concepts of a sociological science are to be defined via an o. s. referent, Weber is able to avoid the kind of difficulties which inhere in Schutz's empiricist sociology.

Section 3

This section consists of a criticism of some of

Schutz's assumptions regarding the applicability of typified concepts to social phenomena. Of course, I do not criticize him for treating the associated general terms substantively. Sociology deals with social actions and the terminology of sociology should be applicable to those actions. The major criticism of Schutz is that the applicability of typified concepts is severely limited because of his reliance on mental objects as the o. s. referents of the associated general terms. In order to provide for the common body of knowledge necessary as the foundation of a sociological science, a more adequate method of defining these terms must be used.

In order for an individual to understand the meaning of a sign used by another, both individuals, through their previous experience, must have perceived the world in such a way that the characteristics of the mental object represented by a given sign as used by one individual are the same as the characteristics of the mental object represented by that sign in the mind of the other. As the general terms associated with typified concepts have mental objects as o. s. referents, all intersubjective understanding relies on a complicated 'synchronizing' of mental objects in the minds of the communicators. In social interaction an individual must be able to test his understanding of what the others mean by the signs they use. He may do this by denoting some object in the environment:

. . . when I am in the face-to-face situation with you, I can point to something in our common environment, uttering the words "this table here" and, by means of the identification of lived experiences in the environmental object, I can assure the adequacy of my interpretive scheme to your expressive scheme. . . . it is of the greatest significance that I consider myself justified in equating my own interpretation of my lived experiences with your interpretation of yours on those occasions when we are experiencing one and the same object.²

But how does Schutz solve the problems involved in those instances in which the synchronizing does not function (that is, when one person does not understand a sign used by another and the other person cannot solve the confusion by denoting an object in the common environment)? Let us consider some possible cases of such an inability.

It is obvious that there is a difference between a statement of fact and a statement of value. For example, there is obviously a difference between claiming "This is an act of killing" and claiming "This is an act of murder", for murder is unjustified killing, or killing which is morally reprehensible. I shall not deal with this difference at any length. It is sufficient to say that one person cannot test his understanding of another's use of the term "murder" by denoting an instance of it in the common environment, for we can perceive only an instance of killing. There is nothing in his perception of an act of killing which would ensure an understanding of the other's use of the term "murder".

²The Phenomenology, pp. 170-171.

A similar objection may be raised concerning objects the significance of which may change historically, or which have a different significance for members of different social groups. By this I mean those objects whose significance is based on the attitudes which people hold towards them. Schutz claims that one can denote a table to ensure one's understanding of the general term "table". Now suppose that one perceives two objects which are the same height, width, colour, etc., and suppose also that one of these objects serves as a table and the other serves as an altar. There need be nothing in the perception of these objects which would allow us to differentiate them on the grounds of their differing significance; attitudes as such cannot be denoted. And yet "table" certainly does not mean the same as "altar".

Let us consider one last case in which an individual tries to explain a general term to another individual. I shall use as an example the term "bureaucracy". Regardless of his ability to point to an instance of bureaucracy, the other individual will not, simply on this basis, understand the meaning of the general term "bureaucracy". What is required for an understanding of the term is some explicit formulation of the relationships between the social actors whose actions maintain the bureaucracy, for a relationship cannot be constituted as a temporal object, neither as a transcendent temporal object nor as an immanent temporal object. It will be remembered that it was pointed out

above that although a term may be treated substantively as applying to observable phenomena, it may still be that in explaining the meaning of the term, one must do more than simply point to instances of phenomena to which the general term is applicable.³ Any sociological concept involving the notion of a social institution, a family group, a socialization process, etc., in fact, the notion of any social phenomenon involving individuals standing in certain relationships to one another, will give rise to the same difficulty as we find in the case of the concept of a bureaucracy. Social relationships as such cannot be denoted. 'Pointing to' instances of the social phenomena to which the concepts in question are applicable, therefore, will not ensure an adequate understanding of the general terms involved.

We may see, then, that Schutz's reliance on mental objects as the o. s. referents of general terms is severely limiting. To the extent that social actors or social scientists utilize value or attitudinal concepts, or seek to describe social relationships, they must necessarily rely on intensional definitions of the general terms involved if they are to ensure intersubjective understanding.

Both Schutz and Weber are concerned with the development of a science of social action. Walsh states of Schutz

³See above, p. 81.

that

. . . he not only accepts but emphasizes Weber's view that the social sciences are concerned essentially with social action A social action is . . . an action which is oriented toward the past, present, or future behavior of another person or persons.⁴

Of course, a study of social action involves an acknowledgment of the motives and intentions on the part of the actors. Schutz has stated that on the basis of one's past experience one is able to infer the motives of others in certain situations, but he must face a major difficulty in that it is hard to see how motives or intentions can be constituted as temporal objects. A motive is not a physical object, nor is it an observable event, nor is it a content of consciousness in the sense of a sense-datum (that is, an immanent temporal object). To have a certain motive--"I am doing this in order to reach this goal"--may possibly be construed by a theorist with Schutz's premises as the having of a certain orientation towards a (projected) mental object, but the motive is not just the mental object. To have a motive (or an intention) is to have a certain orientation, a certain relationship towards, a mental object, and this orientation towards a mental object, being a relationship between oneself and a mental object, cannot be constituted as a temporal object. Schutz's dilemma is this: he has claimed that a sign is

⁴The Phenomenology, introduction p. xxi.

understandable only insofar as the mental object which it represents is known to the individual trying to understand, but any general term whose meaning involves reference to actors' motives or intentions will not, for the reasons given, be adequately defined by reference to a mental object (as its o. s. referent). The general terms peculiar to sociology are the general terms peculiar to the classification of social actions and social phenomena involving social action, and their meaning is, therefore, understood only by reference to the motives and intentions of the actors involved, to those things, in fact, which give the actors the roles they have in the social phenomena to be classified.

For these kinds of terms (signs), then, Schutz provides no means by which intersubjective understanding may be checked. At this point Schutz has the choice of either, (a) having the actor point to an instance of the kind of social action/social phenomenon the associated general term of which is to be explained--in which case he must ignore the non-observable motives and intentions of the actors in the 'explanation' of the general term and rely solely on the observable behaviour of the actors to provide all the features relevant to its being called a situation/institution of the kind in question; or, (b) losing the common meaning of the term by keeping some reference to motives and intentions in the meaning of the general term without providing any means for explaining this meaning other than

simply pointing to instances of social actions/phenomena of the kind in question; or, (c) providing some intensional definition of the term in question, that is, providing some articulated criteria which serve as rules by an appeal to which social actions/phenomena are to be classified. It is difficult to understand how, in a sociological science, either (a) or (b) can be considered acceptable. It seems that (c) offers the only acceptable solution to the problems inhering in any attempt to develop an intersubjective technique for validating claims regarding social relationships or actions. I have shown that this is essentially Weber's position. To the extent that the difficulties in Schutz's methodology are overcome by the provision of intensional definitions of the general terms associated with typified concepts, then to that extent the role of mental objects will have changed. Consider: in his theory both the subjective and objective meanings of general terms are given in the extensional definition of them via mental objects. Schutz assumes that the ability to denote objects in a common environment will serve as an adequate technique for intersubjective understanding. This is consistent with his other assumption that knowledge is an activity of becoming "better and better acquainted with a pre-given object."⁵ Weber, on the other hand, assumes that the possibility of

⁵Collected Papers, vol. I, p. 279.

intersubjective validation of knowledge claims in a social science lies in the theoretical elaboration of the concepts.

The necessity for the provision of intensional definitions of general terms becomes obvious when we consider Schutz's claim that any science must be a science of essences. This claim implies that in interpreting the general terms associated with typified concepts, the mental object which is the o. s. referent must serve to classify temporal objects on the basis of their essential characteristics. Let us consider the case where we have classified an object as being of a certain kind and where we are asked to justify our classification. Suppose that we have to rely on Schutz's assumptions in a case where the person asking for the justification of the classification claims that he cannot perceive the essential characteristics of the object classified. Then, in order to ensure that the mental object in his mind (serving as the o. s. referent of the general term associated with the typified concept in question) has the essential characteristics, we should be obliged logically to point out every member of that particular class of objects. Although this may be logically possible, there would still be the necessity of introducing intensional criteria for determining the classification of phenomena perceived in the future (unless we are prepared to argue that in pointing out all members of the class now extant, we have exhaustively included all members of that class that could ever exist).

(This point has been made in an earlier context.⁶)

How useful, then, is the role played by mental objects in Schutz's theory? In the above it has been argued that his assumption that a theory of intersubjective understanding can be built on the concept of a mental object fails to provide the kind of agreement he has in mind as to the meaning of general terms associated with typified concepts. It has been seen that there is a need for the provision of ways of defining the terms other than by relying on mental objects as o. s. referents, and that this necessitates bringing in intensional definitions. I submit that this need for the introduction of intensional definitions seriously weakens Schutz's claim to have provided an adequate means of classifying social phenomena and an adequate theory of intersubjective understanding of general terms. As Weber is aware, it is only by providing clear and unambiguous concepts that a science can be developed having a terminology which can be treated substantively (that is, as having a practical application) and, at the same time, having adequate criteria for determining to which situations its various concepts are applicable.

It should be noted that Schutz claims that any science must be a science of essences, and this is open to question. While this question is not directly relevant to the problems

⁶See above, p. 12.

dealt with in the thesis, the reader will no doubt recognize the problems involved in it. Schutz argues as follows: social actions are to be considered the objects of investigation of a sociological science, and, since any science is a science of essences, sociology must be concerned with the essences of social actions (that is, social actions must be classified via their essences). It is difficult to see how he can justify the claim that social actions are appropriately classified via essences. I have mentioned above that the meaning of a general term can be explained intensionally without necessarily making reference to "essences".⁷ It may well be that "cluster concepts" are more useful here, although I shall not deal with this question in this thesis.

Section 4

In the thesis I have dealt with some of the methodological assumptions of Alfred Schutz and Max Weber. It was seen that there is a basic difference between the theories of Schutz and Weber as to the manner in which the general terms of a sociological science are to be interpreted. This suggests the need for continuing research into the various possible ways of interpreting general terms within sociological theory. Of particular interest in future

⁷See above, pp. 14-15.

research is the effect of Schutz's methodology on contemporary theoretical developments within sociology. The development of the theoretical assumptions of ethnomethodology should be open to particular scrutiny.

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