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3

SOCIAL INTERPRETATION AND INDIVIDUAL ORIENTATION

I. *The Social Conception of the Community and the Individual*

THE SOCIAL WORLD TAKEN FOR GRANTED We start from an examination of the social world in its various articulations and forms of organization which constitutes the social reality for men living within it. Man is born into a world that existed before his birth; and this world is from the outset not merely a physical, but also a sociocultural one. The latter is a preconstituted and preorganized world whose particular structure is the result of an historical process and is therefore different for each culture and society.

Certain features, however, are common to all social worlds because they are rooted in the human condition. Everywhere we find sex groups and age groups, and some division of labor conditioned by them; and more or less rigid kinship organizations that arrange the social world into zones of varying social distance, from intimate familiarity to strangeness. Everywhere we also find hierarchies of superordination and subordination, of leader and follower, of those in command and those in submission. Everywhere, too, we find an accepted way of life, that is, how to come to terms with things and men, with nature and the supernatural. There are everywhere, moreover, cultural objects, such as tools needed for the domination of the outer world, playthings for children, articles for adornment, musical instruments of some kind, objects serving as symbols for worship. There are certain ceremonies marking the great events in the life cycle of the individual (birth, initiation,

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marriage, death), or in the rhythm of nature (sowing and harvesting, solstices, etc.). . . .

Thus, the social world into which man is born and within which he has to find his bearings is experienced by him as a tight knit web of social relationships, of systems of signs and symbols with their particular meaning structure, of institutionalized forms of social organization, of systems of status and prestige, etc. The meaning of all these elements of the social world in all its diversity and stratification, as well as the pattern of its texture itself, is by those living within it just taken for granted. The sum-total of the relative natural aspect the social world has for those living within it constitutes, to use William Graham Sumner's term, the folkways of the in-group, which are socially accepted as the good ways and the right ways for coming to terms with things and fellow men. They are taken for granted because they have stood the test so far, and, being socially approved, are held as requiring neither an explanation nor a justification.

These folkways constitute the social heritage which is handed down to children born into and growing up within the group. . . .

This is so, because the system of folkways establishes the standard in terms of which the in-group "defines its situation." Even more: originating in previous situations defined by the group, the scheme of interpretation that has stood the test so far becomes an element of the actual situation. To take the world for granted beyond question implies the deeprooted assumption that until further notice the world will go on substantially in the same manner as it has so far; that what has proved to be valid up to now will continue to be so, and that anything we or others like us could successfully perform once can be done again in a like way and will bring about substantially like results.

SELF-INTERPRETATION OF THE CULTURAL COMMUNITY*

The system of knowledge thus acquired—incoherent, inconsistent,

* EDITOR'S NOTE: Having discussed the characteristics and limitations of man's practical knowledge of everyday-life affairs (see "The Character of Practical Knowledge" in chapter 2 above), Schutz turned to the social foundations of this individual knowledge, as found in the cognitive system of the "in-group," the cultural community.

and only partially clear, as it is—takes on for the members of the in-group the appearance of a sufficient coherence, clarity, and consistency to give anybody a reasonable chance of understanding and of being understood. Any member born or reared within the group accepts the ready-made standardized scheme of the cultural pattern handed down to him by ancestors, teachers, and authorities as an unquestioned and unquestionable guide in all the situations which normally occur within the social world. The knowledge correlated to the cultural pattern carries its evidence in itself—or, rather, it is taken for granted in the absence of evidence to the contrary. It is a knowledge of trustworthy recipes for interpreting the social world and for handling things and men in order to obtain the best results in every situation with a minimum of effort by avoiding undesirable consequences. The recipe works, on the one hand, as a precept for actions and thus serves as a scheme of expression: whoever wants to obtain a certain result has to proceed as indicated by the recipe provided for this purpose. On the other hand, the recipe serves as a scheme of interpretation: whoever proceeds as indicated by a specific recipe is supposed to intend the correlated result. Thus it is the function of the cultural pattern to eliminate troublesome inquiries by offering ready-made directions for use, to replace truth hard to attain by comfortable truisms, and to substitute the self-explanatory for the questionable.

This "thinking as usual," as we may call it, corresponds to Max Scheler's idea of the "relatively natural conception of the world" (relativ natürliche Weltanschauung);[1] it includes the "of-course" assumptions relevant to a particular social group which Robert S. Lynd describes in such a masterly way—together with their inherent contradictions and ambivalence—as the "Middletown-spirit." Thinking as usual may be maintained as long as some basic assumptions hold true, namely: (1) that life and especially social life will continue to be the same as it has been so far, that is to say, that the same problems requiring the same solutions will recur

[1] Max Scheler, "Probleme einer Soziologie des Wissens, *Die Wissensformen und die Gesellschaft* (Leipzig, 1926), pp. 58 ff; cf. Howard Becker and Hellmuth Otto Dahlke, "Max Scheler's Sociology of Knowledge," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 2 (1942): 310–22, esp. p. 315.

and that, therefore, our former experiences will suffice for mastering future situations; (2) that we may relay on the knowledge handed down to us by parents, teachers, governments, traditions, habits, etc., even if we do not understand their origin and their real meaning; (3) that in the ordinary course of affairs it is sufficient to know something about the general type or style of events we may encounter in our life-world in order to manage or control them; and (4) that neither the systems of recipes as schemes of interpretation and expression nor the underlying basic assumptions just mentioned are our private affair, but that they are likewise accepted and applied by our fellow-men.

THE SUBJECTIVE MEANING OF GROUP MEMBERSHIP The subjective meaning of the group, the meaning a group has for its members, has frequently been described in terms of a feeling among the members that they belong together, or that they share common interests. This is correct; but unfortunately, these concepts were only partially analyzed, namely, in terms of community and association (MacIver), *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (Toennies), primary and secondary groups (Cooley), and so on. . . .

. . . the subjective meaning the group has for its members consists in their knowledge of a common situation, and with it of a common system of typifications and relevances. This situation has its history in which the individual members' biographies participate; and the system of typification and relevances determining the situation forms a common relative natural conception of the world. Here the individual members are "at home," that is, they find their bearings without difficulty in the common surroundings, guided by a set of recipes of more or less institutionalized habits, mores, folkways, etc., that help them come to terms with beings and fellow men belonging to the same situation. The system of typifications and relevances shared with the other members of the group defines the social roles, positions, and statuses of each. This acceptance of a common system of relevances leads the members of the group to a homogeneous self-typification.

Our description holds good for both (a) existential groups with which I share a common social heritage, and (b) so-called volun-

tary groups joined or formed by me. The difference, however, is that in the first case the individual member finds himself within a preconstituted system of typifications, relevances, roles, positions, statuses not of his own making, but handed down to him as a social heritage. In the case of voluntary groups, however, this system is not experienced by the individual member as readymade; it has to be built up by the members and is therefore always involved in a process of dynamic evolution. Only some of the elements of the situation are common from the outset: the others have to be brought about by a common definition of the reciprocal situation.

Here a highly important problem is involved. How does the individual member of a group define his private situation within the framework of those common typifications and relevances in terms of which the group defines its situation? But before we proceed to an answer, a word of caution seems indicated.

Our description is a purely formal one and refers neither to the nature of the bond that holds the group together, nor to the extent, duration, or intimacy of the social contact. It is, therefore, equally applicable to a marriage or a business enterprise, to membership in a chess club or citizenship in a nation, to participation in a meeting or in Western culture. Each of these groups, however, refers to a larger one of which it is an element. A marriage or a business enterprise, of course, takes place within the general framework of the cultural setting of the larger group, and in accordance with the way of life (including its mores, morals, laws, and so forth) prevailing in this culture which is pregiven to the single actors as a scheme of orientation and interpretation of their actions. It is, however, up to the marriage or business partners to define, and continuously redefine, their individual (private) situation within this setting.

This is obviously the deeper reason why, to Max Weber, the existence of a marriage or a state means nothing but the mere chance (likelihood) that people act and will act in a specific way —or, in the terminology of this paper, in accordance with the general framework of typifications and relevances accepted beyond question by the particular sociocultural environment. Such a general framework is experienced by the individual members in terms

of institutionalizations to be interiorized, and the individual has to define his personal unique situation by using the institutionalized pattern for the realization of his particular personal interests.

Here we have one aspect of the private definition of the individual's membership situation. A corollary to it is the particular attitude that the individual chooses to adopt toward the social role he has to fulfil within the group. One thing is the objective meaning of the social role and the role expectation as defined by the institutionalized pattern (say, the office of the Presidency of the United States); another thing is the particular subjective way in which the incumbent of this role defines his situation within it (Roosevelt's, Truman's, Eisenhower's interpretation of their mission).

The most important element in the definition of the private situation is, however, the fact that the individual finds himself always a member of numerous social groups. As Simmel has shown, each individual stands at the intersection of several social circles, and their number will be the greater the more differentiated the individual's personality. This is so because that which makes a personality unique is precisely that which cannot be shared with others.

According to Simmel, the group is formed by a process in which *many* individuals unite *parts* of their personalities—specific impulses, interests, forces—while what each personality really is, remains outside this common area. Groups are characteristically different according to the members' total personalities and those parts of their personalities with which they participate in the group. . . . In the individual's definition of his private situation the various social roles originating in his multiple membership in numerous groups are experienced as a set of self-typifications which in turn are arranged in a particular private order of domains of relevances that is, of course, continuously in flux. It is possible that exactly those features of the individual's personality which are to him of the highest order of relevance are irrelevant from the point of view of any system of relevances taken for granted by the group of which he is a member. This may lead to conflicts within the personality, mainly originating in the endeavor to live up to the various and frequently inconsistent role expectations inhering

the individual's membership in various social groups. As we have seen, it is only with respect to voluntary, and not to existential group membership that the individual is free to determine of which group he wants to be a member, and of which social role therein he wants to be the incumbent. It is, however, at least one aspect of freedom of the individual that he may choose for himself with which part of his personality he wants to participate in group memberships; that he may define his situation within the role of which he is the incumbent; and that he may establish his own private order of relevances in which each of his memberships in various groups has its rank.

II. *Outside and Inside Perspectives*

OUT-GROUP VIEW—IN-GROUP VIEW The members of an out-group do not hold the ways of life of the in-group as self-evident truths. No article of faith and no historical tradition commits them to accept as the right and good ones the folkways of any group other than their own. Not only their central myth, but also the process of its rationalization and institutionalization are different. Other gods reveal other codes of the right and the good life, other things are sacred and taboo, other propositions of the Right of Nature are assumed.[2] The outsider measures the standards prevailing in the group under consideration in accordance with the system of relevances prevailing within the natural aspect the world has for his home-group. As long as a formula of transformation cannot be found which permits the translation of the system of relevances and typifications prevailing in the group under consideration into that of the home-group, the ways of the former remain un-understandable; but frequently they are considered to be of minor value and inferior.

This principle holds good, although in a slighter degree, even in the relationship between two groups that have many things in common, that is, where the two systems conform to a considerable extent. For example, Jewish immigrants from Iraq have consider-

[2] T. V. Smith, in *The American Philosophy of Equality* (Chicago, 1927), p. 6, has pointed out that Locke used the State of Nature and Equality to overthrow tyrants, Hobbes to enthrone the "mortal God."

able difficulty in understanding that their practices of polygamy and child marriage are not permitted by the laws of Israel, the Jewish national home. Another example appears in the discussions in the French National Assembly of 1789, after Lafayette submitted his first draft of the Declaration of Human Rights modeled after the American pattern. Several speakers referred to the basic differences between American and French society: the situation of a new country, a colony having severed its relationship with its motherland, cannot be compared with that of a country which had enjoyed its own constitutional life for fourteen centuries. The principle of equality would have an entirely different function and meaning in the historical setting of both countries; the equal distribution of wealth and the equal way of life in America permit the application of equalitarian phraseology that would have the most disastrous consequences if applied to the highly differentiated French society.[3]

It is, however, important to understand that the self-interpretation by the in-group and the interpretation of the in-group's natural conception of the world by the out-groups are frequently interrelated, and this in a double respect:

a. On the one hand, the in-group feels itself frequently misunderstood by the out-group; such failure to understand its ways of life, so the in-group feels, must be rooted in hostile prejudices or in bad faith, since the truths held by the in-group are "matters of course," self-evident and, therefore, understandable by any human being. This feeling may lead to a partial shift of the system of relevances prevailing within the in-group, namely, by originating a solidarity of resistance against outside criticism. The out-group is then looked at with repugnance, disgust, aversion, antipathy, hatred, or fear.

b. On the other hand, a vicious circle[4] is thus set up because

[3] Eric Voegelin, "Der Sinn der Erklärung der Menschen- und Bürgerrechte von 1789," *Zeitschrift für öffentliches Recht* 8 (1928): 82-120.

[4] On the problem of the vicious circle of prejudices, see R. M. MacIver, *The More Perfect Union* (New York, 1948), esp. pp. 68-81; also, United Nations, Memorandum of the Secretary-General, *The Main Types and Causes of Discrimination* Document E/Cn 4/Sub 2/40/Rev. of June 7, 1949, sections 56 ff.

the out-group, by the changed reaction of the in-group, is fortified in its interpretation of the traits of the in-group as highly detestable. In more general terms: to the natural aspect the world has for group A belongs not only a certain stereotyped idea of the natural aspect the world has for group B, but included in it also is a stereotype of the way in which group B supposedly looks at A. This is, on a major scale—i.e., in the relationship between groups—the same phenomenon which, in respect of relations between individuals, Cooley has called the "looking-glass effect."

Such a situation may lead to various attitudes of the in-group toward the out-group: the in-group may stick to its way of life and try to change the attitude of the out-group by an educational process of spreading information, or by persuasion, or by appropriate propaganda. Or the in-group may try to adjust its way of thinking to that of the out-group by accepting the latter's pattern of relevances at least partially. Or a policy of iron curtain or of appeasement might be established; and finally there will be no other way to disrupt the vicious circle but war at any temperature. A secondary consequence might be that those members of the in-group who plead for a policy of mutual understanding are designated by the spokesmen of radical ethnocentrism as disloyal or traitors, etc., a fact which again leads to a change in the self-interpretation of the social group.

STRANGER IN THE COMMUNITY The stranger . . . becomes essentially the man who has to place in question nearly everything that seems to be unquestionable to the members of the approached group.

To him the cultural pattern of the approached group does not have the authority of a tested system of recipes, and this, if for no other reason, because he does not partake in the vivid historical tradition by which it has been formed. To be sure, from the stranger's point of view, too, the culture of the approached group has its peculiar history, and this history is even accessible to him. But it has never become an integral part of his biography, as did the history of his home group. Only the ways in which his fathers and grandfathers lived become for everyone elements of his own

way of life. Graves and reminiscences can neither be transferred nor conquered. The stranger, therefore, approaches the other group as a newcomer in the true meaning of the term. At best he may be willing and able to share the present and the future with the approached group in vivid and immediate experience; under all circumstances, however, he remains excluded from such experiences of its past. Seen from the point of view of the approached group, he is a man without a history.

To the stranger the cultural pattern of his home group continues to be the outcome of an unbroken historical development and an element of his personal biography which for this very reason has been and still is the unquestioned scheme of reference for his "relatively natural conception of the world." As a matter of course, therefore, the stranger starts to interpret his new social environment in terms of his thinking as usual. Within the scheme of reference brought from his home group, however, he finds a ready-made idea of the pattern supposedly valid within the approached group—an idea which necessarily will soon prove inadequate. . . .

First, the idea of the cultural pattern of the approached group which the stranger finds within the interpretive scheme of his home group has originated in the attitude of a disinterested observer. The approaching stranger, however, is about to transform himself from an unconcerned onlooker into a would-be member of the approached group. The cultural pattern of the approached group, then, is no longer a subject matter of his thought but a segment of the world which has to be dominated by actions. Consequently, its position within the stranger's system of relevance changes decisively, and this means, as we have seen, that another type of knowledge is required for its interpretation. Jumping from the stalls to the stage, so to speak, the former onlooker becomes a member of the cast, enters as a partner into social relations with his co-actors, and participates henceforth in the action in progress.

Second, the new cultural pattern acquires an environmental character. Its remoteness changes into proximity; its vacant frames become occupied by vivid experiences; its anonymous contents turn into definite social situations; its ready-made typologies disintegrate. In other words, the level or environmental experience of

social objects is incongruous with the level of mere beliefs about unapproached objects; by passing from the latter to the former, any concept originating in the level of departure becomes necessarily inadequate if applied to the new level without having been restated in its terms.

Third, the ready-made picture of the foreign group subsisting within the stranger's home-group proves its inadequacy for the approaching stranger for the mere reason that it has not been formed with the aim of provoking a response from or a reaction of the members of the foreign group. The knowledge which it offers serves merely as a handy scheme for interpreting the foreign group and not as a guide for interaction between the two groups. Its validity is primarily based on the consensus of those members of the home group who do not intend to establish a direct social relationship with members of the foreign group. (Those who intend to do so are in a situation analogous to that of the approaching stranger.) Consequently, the scheme of interpretation refers to the members of the foreign group merely as objects of this interpretation, but not beyond it, as addressees of possible acts emanating from the outcome of the interpretive procedure and not as subjects of anticipated reactions toward those acts. Hence, this kind of knowledge is, so to speak, insulated; it can be neither verified nor falsified by responses of the members of the foreign group. The latter, therefore, consider this knowledge—by a kind of "looking-glass" effect[5]—as both irresponsive and irresponsible and complain of its prejudices, bias, and misunderstandings. The approaching stranger, however, becomes aware of the fact that an important element of his "thinking as usual," namely, his ideas of the foreign group, its cultural pattern, and its way of life, do not stand the test of vivid experience and social interaction.

The discovery that things in his new surroundings look quite different from what he expected them to be at home is frequently the first shock to the stranger's confidence in the validity of his habitual "thinking as usual." Not only the picture which the

5 In using this term, we allude to Cooley's well-known theory of the reflected or looking-glass self (Charles H. Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order*, rev. ed. [New York, 1922], p. 184).

stranger has brought along of the cultural pattern of the approached group but the whole hitherto unquestioned scheme of interpretation current within the home group becomes invalidated. It cannot be used as a scheme of orientation within the new social surroundings. For the members of the approached group their cultural pattern fulfils the functions of such a scheme. But the approaching stranger can neither use it simply as it is nor establish a general formula of transformation between both cultural patterns permitting him, so to speak, to convert all the co-ordinates within one scheme of orientation into those valid within the other—and this for the following reasons.

First, any scheme of orientation presupposes that everyone who uses it looks at the surrounding world as grouped around himself who stands at its center. He who wants to use a map successfully has first of all to know his standpoint in two respects: its location on the ground and its representation on the map. Applied to the social world this means that only members of the in-group, having a definite status in its hierarchy and also being aware of it, can use its cultural pattern as a natural and trustworthy scheme of orientation. The stranger, however, has to face the fact that he lacks any status as a member of the social group he is about to join and is therefore unable to get a starting point to take his bearings. He finds himself a border case outside the territory covered by the scheme of orientation current within the group. He is, therefore, no longer permitted to consider himself as the center of his social environment, and this fact causes again a dislocation of his contour lines of relevance.

Second, the cultural pattern and its recipes represent only for the members of the in-group a unit of coinciding schemes of interpretation as well as of expression. For the outsider, however, this seeming unity falls to pieces. The approaching stranger has to "translate" its terms into terms of the cultural pattern of his home group, provided that, within the latter, interpretive equivalents exist at all. If they exist, the translated terms may be understood and remembered; they can be recognized by recurrence; they are at hand but not in hand. Yet, even then, it is obvious that the stranger cannot assume that his interpretation of the new cul-

ral pattern coincides with that current with the members of the -group. On the contrary, he has to reckon with fundamental dis-repancies in seeing things and handling situations.

Only after having thus collected a certain knowledge of the interpretive function of the new cultural pattern may the stranger start to adopt it as the scheme of his own expression. The difference between the two stages of knowledge is familiar to any student of foreign language and has received the full attention of psychologists dealing with the theory of learning. It is the difference between the passive understanding of a language and its active mastering as a means for realizing one's own acts and thoughts.

THE INSIDER'S VIEW AND THE STRANGER'S ORIENTATION

We may say that the member of the in-group looks in one single glance through the normal social situations occurring to him and that he catches immediately the ready-made recipe appropriate to its solution. In those situations his acting shows all the marks of habituality, automatism, and half-consciousness. This is possible because the cultural pattern provides by its recipes typical solutions for typical problems available for typical actors. In other words, the chance of obtaining the desired standardized result by applying a standardized recipe is an objective one; that is open to everyone who conducts himself like the anonymous type required by the recipe. Therefore, the actor who follows a recipe does not have to check whether this objective chance coincides with a subjective chance, that is, a chance open to him, the individual, by reason of his personal circumstances and faculties which subsists independently of the question whether other people in similar situations could or could not act in the same way with the same likelihood. Even more, it can be stated that the objective chances for the efficiency of a recipe are the greater, the fewer deviations from the anonymous typified behavior occur, and this holds especially for recipes designed for social interaction. This kind of recipe, if it is to work, presupposes that any partner expects the other to act or to react typically, provided that the actor himself acts typically. He who wants to travel by railroad has to behave in that typical way which the type "railroad agent" may reasonably expect as the

typical conduct of the type "passenger," and vice versa. Neither party examines the subjective chances involved. The scheme, being designed for everyone's use, need not be tested for its fitness for the peculiar individual who employs it.

For those who have grown up within the cultural pattern, not only the recipes and their efficiency chance but also the typical and anonymous attitudes required by them are an unquestioned "matter of course" which gives them both security and assurance. In other words, these attitudes by their very anonymity and typicality are placed not within the actor's stratum of relevance which requires explicit knowledge *of* but in the region of mere acquaintance in which it will do to put one's trust. This interrelation between objective chance, typicality, anonymity, and relevance seems to be rather important.

For the approaching stranger, however, the pattern of the approached group does not guarantee an objective chance for success but rather a pure subjective likelihood which has to be checked step by step, that is, he has to make sure that the solutions suggested by the new scheme will also produce the desired effect for him in his special position as outsider and newcomer who has not brought within his grasp the whole system of the cultural pattern but who is rather puzzled by its inconsistency, incoherence, and lack of clarity. He has, first of all, to use the term of W. I. Thomas, to *define* the situation. Therefore, he cannot stop at an approximate acquaintance with the new pattern, trusting in his vague knowledge *about* its general style and structure but needs an explicit knowledge *of* its elements, inquiring not only into their *that* but into their *why*. Consequently, the shape of his contour lines of relevance by necessity differs radically from those of a member of the in-group as to situations, recipes, means, ends, social partners, etc. Keeping in mind the above-mentioned interrelationship between relevance, on the one hand, and typicality and anonymity, on the other, it follows that he uses another yardstick for anonymity and typicality of social acts than the members of the in-group. For to the stranger the observed actors within the approached group are not—as for their co-actors—of a certain presupposed anonymity, namely, mere performers of typical functions, but individuals.

On the other hand, he is inclined to take mere individual traits as typical ones. Thus he constructs a social world of pseudo-anonymity, pseudo-intimacy, and pseudo-typicality. Therefore, he cannot integrate the personal types constructed by him into a coherent picture of the approached group and cannot rely on his expectation of their response. And even less can the stranger himself adopt those typical and anonymous attitudes which a member of the in-group is entitled to expect from a partner in a typical situation. Hence the stranger's lack of feeling for distance, his oscillating between remoteness and intimacy, his hesitation and uncertainty, and his distrust in every matter which seems to be so simple and uncomplicated to those who rely on the efficiency of unquestioned recipes which have just to be followed but not understood.

In other words, the cultural pattern of the approached group is to the stranger not a shelter but a field of adventure, not a matter of course but a questionable topic of investigation, not an instrument for disentangling problematic situations but a problematic situation itself and one hard to master.

These facts explain two basic traits of the stranger's attitude toward the group to which nearly all sociological writers dealing with this topic have rendered special attention, namely, (1) the stranger's objectivity and (2) his doubtful loyalty.

1. The stranger's objectivity cannot be sufficiently explained by his critical attitude. To be sure, he is not bound to worship the "idols of the tribe" and has a vivid feeling for the incoherence and inconsistency of the approached cultural pattern. But this attitude originates far less in his propensity to judge the newly approached group by the standards brought from home than in his need to acquire full knowledge *of* the elements of the approached cultural pattern and to examine for this purpose with care and precision what seems self-explanatory to the in-group. The deeper reason for his objectivity, however, lies in his own bitter experience of the limits of the "thinking as usual," which has taught him that a man may lose his status, his rules of guidance, and even his history and that the normal way of life is always far less guaranteed than it seems. Therefore, the stranger discerns, frequently with a grievous

clear-sightedness, the rising of a crisis which may menace the whole foundation of the "relatively natural conception of the "world," while all those symptoms pass unnoticed by the members of the in-group, who rely on the continuance of their customary way of life.

2. The doubtful loyalty of the stranger is unfortunately very frequently more than a prejudice on the part of the approached group. This is especially true in cases in which the stranger proves unwilling or unable to substitute the new cultural pattern entirely for that of the home group. Then the stranger remains what Park and Stonequist have aptly called a "marginal man," a cultural hybrid on the verge of two different patterns of group life, not knowing to which of them he belongs. But very frequently the reproach of doubtful loyalty originates in the astonishment of the members of the in-group that the stranger does not accept the total of its cultural pattern as the natural and appropriate way of life and as the best of all possible solutions of any problem. The stranger is called ungrateful, since he refuses to acknowledge that the cultural pattern offered to him grants him shelter and protection. But these people do not understand that the stranger in the state of transition does not consider this pattern as a protecting shelter at all, but as a labyrinth in which he has lost all sense of his bearings.

THE OBJECTIVE MEANING OF GROUP MEMBERSHIP The objective meaning of group membership is that which the group has from the point of view of outsiders who speak of its members in terms of "They." In objective interpretation the notion of the group is a conceptual construct of the outsider. By the operation of *his* system of typifications and relevances he subsumes individuals showing certain particular characteristics and traits under a social category that is homogeneous merely from his, the outsider's, point of view.

It is of course possible that the social category constructed by the outsider corresponds to a social reality, namely, that the principles governing such typification are considered also by the individuals thus typified as elements of *their* situation as defined by

them and as being relevant from *their* point of view. Even then, the interpretation of the group by the outsider will never fully coincide with the self-interpretation by the in-group. . . .

It is also possible, however, that people considering one another as heterogeneous may be placed by the outsider's typification under the same social category, which then is treated as if it were a homogeneous unit. The situation in which individuals are placed in this way by the outsider is of his, but not of their definition. For this reason the system of relevances leading to such typification is taken for granted merely by the outsider, but is not necessarily accepted by the individuals who may not be prepared to perform a corresponding self-typification.

4

SOCIAL MEANS OF ORIENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

Language and Social Knowledge

ONLY A VERY SMALL part of my knowledge of the world originates within my personal experience. The greater part is socially derived, handed down to me by my friends, my parents, my teachers and the teachers of my teachers. I am not only taught how to define the environment (that is, the typical features of the relative natural aspect of the world prevailing in the in-group as the unquestioned but always questionable sum total of things taken for granted until further notice), but also how typical constructs have to be formed in accordance with the system of relevances accepted from the anonymous unified point of view of the in-group. This includes ways of life, how to come to terms with the environment, efficient recipes for the use of typical means for bringing about typical ends in typical situations. The typifying medium *par excellence* by which socially derived knowledge is transmitted is the vocabulary and the syntax of everyday language. The vernacular of everyday life is primarily a language of named things and events, and any name includes a typification and generalization referring to the relevance system prevailing in the linguistic in-group which found the named thing significant enough to provide a separate term for it. The pre-scientific vernacular can be interpreted as a treasure house of ready-made pre-constituted types and characteristics, all socially derived and carrying along an open horizon of unexplored content.

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Language in the Context of Culture

Language as a scheme of interpretation and expression does not merely consist of the linguistic symbols catalogued in the dictionary and of the syntactical rules enumerated in an ideal grammar. The former are translatable into other languages; the latter are understandable by referring them to corresponding or deviating rules of the unquestioned mother-tongue.[1] However, several other factors supervene.

1. Every word and every sentence is, to borrow . . . a term of William James, surrounded by "fringes" connecting them, on the one hand, with past and future elements of the universe of discourse to which they pertain, and surrounding them, on the other hand, with a halo of emotional values and irrational implications which themselves remain ineffable. The fringes are the stuff poetry is made of; they are capable of being set to music but they are not translatable.

2. There are in any language terms with several connotations. They, too, are noted in the dictionary. But, besides these standardized connotations, every element of the speech acquires its special secondary meaning derived from the context or the social environment within which it is used and, in addition, gets a special tinge from the actual occasion in which it is employed.

3. Idioms, technical terms, jargons, and dialects, whose use remains restricted to specific social groups, exist in every language, and their significance can be learned by an outsider too. But, in addition, every social group, be it ever so small (if not every individual), has its own private code, understandable only by those who have participated in the common past experiences in which it took rise or in the tradition connected with them.

4. As Vossler has shown, the whole history of the linguistic group is mirrored in its way of saying things.[2] All the other ele-

1 Therefore, the learning of a foreign language reveals to the student, frequently for the first time, the grammatical rules of his mother-tongue which he has followed so far as "the most natural thing in the world," namely, as recipes.

2 Karl Vossler, *Geist und Kultur in der Sprache* (Heidelberg, 1925), pp. 117 ff.

ments of group life enter into it—above all, its literature. The erudite stranger, for example, approaching an English-speaking country is heavily handicapped if he has not read the Bible and Shakespeare in the English language, even if he grew up with translations of those books in his mother-tongue.

All the above-mentioned features are accessible only to the members of the in-group. They all pertain to the scheme of expression. They are not teachable and cannot be learned in the same way as, for example, the vocabulary. In order to command a language freely as a scheme of expression, one must have written love letters in it; one has to know how to pray and curse in it and how to say things with every shade appropriate to the addressee and to the situation. Only members of the in-group have the scheme of expression as a genuine one in hand and command it freely within their thinking as usual.

Marks

I experience the world within my actual reach as an element or phase of my unique biographical situation, and this involves a transcending of the Here and Now to which it belongs. To my unique biographical situation pertain, among many other things, my recollections of the world within my reach in the past but no longer within it since I moved from There to Here, and my anticipations of a world to come within my reach and which I must move from Here to another There in order to bring it into my reach. I know or assume that, disregarding technical obstacles and other limitations, such as the principal irretrievability of the past, I can bring my recollected world back into my actual reach if I return to whence I came (*world within restorable reach*); I expect also to find it substantially the same (although, perhaps, changed) as I had experienced it while it was within my actual reach; and I know or assume also that what is now within my actual reach will go out of my reach when I move away but will be, in principle, restorable if I later return.

The latter case is to me of an eminently practical interest. I expect that what is now within my actual reach will go out of my

reach but will later on come into my actual reach again, and, especially, I anticipate that what is now in my manipulatory sphere will reenter it later and require my interference or will interfere with me. Therefore I have to be sure that I shall then find my bearings within it and come to terms with it as I can now while it is within my control. This presupposes that I shall be able to recognize those elements which I now find relevant in the world within my actual reach, especially within the manipulatory zone, and which (I assume by a general idealization, called the idealization of "I can do it again" by Husserl)[3] will prove relevant also when I return later on. I am, thus, *motivated* to single out and to *mark* certain objects. When I return I expect these marks to be useful as "subjective reminders" or "mnemonic devices" (Wild's terms).[4] It is immaterial whether such a mnemonic device consists of the breaking of the branch of a tree or the selecting of a particular landmark to mark the trail to the waterhole. A bookmark at the page where I stopped reading or underlining certain passages of this volume or pencil-strokes on the margin are also marks or subjective reminders. What counts is merely that all these marks, themselves objects of the outer world, will from now on be intuited not as mere "selves" in the pure apperceptual scheme. They entered for me, the interpreter, into an appresentational reference. The broken branch of the tree is more than just that. It became a mark for the location of the waterhole, or, if you prefer, a signal for me to turn left. In its appresentational function, which originates in the interpretational scheme bestowed upon it by me, the broken branch is now paired with its referential meaning: "Way to the waterhole."

This mark which functions as a subjective reminder is one of the simplest forms of the appresentational relationship; it is detached from any intersubjective context. The inherently arbitrary character of my selecting certain objects as "marks" should be emphasized. The mark has "nothing to do" with what it should remind me of, both are in an interpretational context merely because

3 Edmund Husserl, *Formale und transcendentale Logik* (Halle, 1929), sec. 74, p. 167.

4 John Wild, "Introduction to the Phenomenology of Signs," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 8 (1947):224.

such a context was established by me. According to the principle of the relative irrelevance of the vehicle, I may replace the broken branch by a stonepile, according to the principle of figurative transference, I may dedicate this stonepile to a naiad, etc.

Indications

We mentioned before the stock of knowledge at hand as an element of my biographical situation. This stock of knowledge is by no means homogeneous. William James[5] has already distinguished between "knowledge about" and "knowledge of acquaintance." There are, moreover, zones of blind belief and ignorance. The structuration of my stock of knowledge at hand is determined by the fact that I am not *equally* interested in all the strata of the world within my reach. The selective function of interest organizes the world for me in strata of major and minor relevance. From the world within my actual or potential reach are selected as primarily important, those facts, objects, and events which actually are or will become possible ends or means, possible obstacles or conditions for the realization of my projects, or which are or will become dangerous or enjoyable or otherwise relevant to me.

Certain facts, objects, and events are known to me as being interrelated in a more or less typical way, but my knowledge of the particular kind of interrelatedness might be rather vague or even lack transparency. If I know that event *B* usually appears simultaneously or precedes or follows event *A*, then I take this as a manifestation of a typical and plausible relationship existing between *A* and *B*, although I know nothing of the nature of this relationship. Until further notice I simply expect or take it for granted that any future recurrence of an event of type *A* will be connected in typically the same way with a preceding, concomitant, or subsequent recurrence of an event of type *B*. I may then apprehend *A* not as an object, fact, or event standing for itself, but standing for something else, namely, referring to the past, present or future appearance of *B*. Here again we have a form of pairing by appre-

5 James, *Principles of Psychology* (New York, 1890), 1:221.

entation which most authors subsume under the concept of sign. We prefer to reserve the term "sign" for other purposes and to call the appresentational relationship under scrutiny *indication*.

Husserl[6] has characterized this relationship of indication ("*Anzeichen*") as follows: an object, fact, or event (A), actually perceptible to me, may be experienced as related to another past, present, or future fact or event (B), actually not perceptible to me, in such a way, that my conviction of the existence of the former (A) is experienced by me as an *opaque* motive for my conviction for, assumption of, or belief in the past, present, or future existence of the latter (B). This motivation constitutes for me a pairing between the indicating (A) and the indicated (B) elements. The indicating member of the pair is not only a "witness" for the indicated one, it does not only point to it, but it suggests the assumption that the other member exists, has existed, or will exist. Again the indicating member is not perceived as a "self," that is, merely in the apperceptual scheme, but as "wakening" or "calling forth" appresentationally the indicated one. It is, however, important that the particular nature of the motivational connection remain opaque. If there is clear and sufficient insight into the nature of the connection between the two elements, we have to deal not with the referential relation of indication but with the inferential one of *proof*. The qualification contained in the last statement eliminates, therefore, the possibility of calling the footprint of a tiger (recognized as such) an indication or "sign" of his presence in the locality. But the halo around the moon indicates coming rain, the smoke fire, a certain formation of the surface oil in the subsoil, a certain pigmentation of the face Addison's disease, the position of a needle on the dial of my car an empty gas tank, etc.

The relationship of indication as described covers most of the phenomena generally subsumed under the category of "natural signs." The knowledge of indications is of eminent importance from the practical point of view, because it helps the individual transcend the world within his actual reach by relating elements within it to elements outside it.

6 Husserl, *Logische Untersuchungen I*, vol. 2/1, secs. 1–4, esp. p. 27.

*Signs and Sign-Systems**

First of all, let us see how a sign gets constituted in the mind of the interpreter. We say that there exists between the sign and that which it signifies the relation of representation. When we look at a symbol, which is always in a broad sense an external object, 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. Husserl repeatedly points out that it belongs to the essence of the signitive relation that "the sign and what it stands for have nothing to do with each other." The signitive relation is, therefore, obviously a particular relation between the interpretive schemes which are applied to those external objects here called "signs." When we understand a sign, we do not interpret the latter through the scheme adequate to it as an external object but through the schemes adequate to whatever it signifies. We are saying that an interpretive scheme is *adequate* to an experienced object if the scheme has been constituted out of polythetically lived-through experiences of this same object as a self-existent thing. For example, the following three black lines, *A*, can be interpreted (1) *adequately*, as the diagram of a certain black and white visual Gestalt, or (2) *non-adequately*, as a sign for the corresponding vocal sound. The adequate interpretive scheme for the vocal sound is, of course, constituted not out of visual but out of auditory experiences.

However, confusion is likely to arise out of the fact that the interpretation of signs in terms of what they signify is based on previous experience and is therefore itself the function of a scheme.

What we have said holds true of all interpretation of signs,

* Editor's note: In this selection, taken from his earliest publication, Schutz used the terms *signs* and *symbols* interchangeably. Thereby he was following a still widespread usage. In his later work, however, in part under the influence of ideas developed by William James, he made a sharp distinction between the two. The reader should keep in mind that wherever the term *symbol* occurs in this selection, it has the connotation of *sign*. For Schutz's later conception of *symbol*, see "Transcendences and Multiple Realities" in chapter 12 below.

whether the individual is interpreting his own signs or those of others. There is, however, an ambiguity in the common saying "a sign is always a sign for something." The sign is indeed the "sign for" what it means or signifies, the so-called "sign meaning" or "sign function." But the sign is also the "sign for" what it expresses, namely, the subjective experiences of the person using the sign. In the world of nature there are no signs (*Zeichen*) but only indications (*Anzeichen*). A sign is by its very nature something used by a person to express a subjective experience. Since, therefore, the sign always refers back to an act of choice on the part of a rational being—a choice of this particular sign—the sign is also an indication of an event in the mind of the sign-user. Let us call this the "expressive function" of the sign.

A sign is, therefore, always either an artifact or a constituted act-object.[7] The boundary between the two is absolutely fluid. Every act-object which functions as a sign-object (for instance, my finger pointing in a certain direction) is the end result of an action. But I might just as well have constructed a signpost, which would, of course, be classified as an artifact. In principle it makes no difference whether the action culminates in an act-object or in an artifact.

It should be noted that in interpreting a sign it is not necessary to refer to the fact that someone made the sign or that someone used it. The interpreter need only "know the meaning" of the sign. In other words, it is necessary only that a connection be established in his mind between the interpretive scheme proper to the object which is the sign and the interpretive scheme proper to the object which it signifies. Thus when he sees a road sign, he will say to himself, "Intersection to the left!" and not "Look at the wooden sign!" or "Who put that sign there?"

We can, therefore, define signs as follows: Signs are artifacts or act-objects which are interpreted not according to those inter-

[7] [The words here translated "act-object" and "sign-object" are, respectively, *Handlungsgegenständlichkeit* and *Zeichengegenständlichkeit*. They refer to the act and sign considered as repeatable objects rather than as unique events.]

pretive schemes which are adequate to them as objects of the external world but according to schemes not adequate to them and belonging rather to other objects. Furthermore, it should be said that the connection between the sign and its corresponding non-adequate scheme depends on the past experience of the interpreter. As we have already said, the applicability of the scheme of that which is signified to the sign is itself an interpretive scheme based on experience. Let us call this last-named scheme the "sign system." A sign system is a meaning-context which is a configuration formed by interpretive schemes; the sign-user or the sign-interpreter places the sign within this context of meaning.

The Objective Meaning of Sign Systems

Now there is something ambiguous in this idea of a sign context. Surely no one will maintain that the connection in question exists independently of the actual establishment, use, or interpretation of the signs. For the connection is itself an example of meaning and therefore a matter of either prescription or interpretation. In a strict sense, therefore, meaning-connections hold, not between signs as such, but between their meanings, which is just another way of saying between the experiences of the knowing self establishing, using, or interpreting the signs. However, since these "meanings" are understood only in and through the signs, there holds between the latter the connection we call the "sign system."

The sign system is present to him who understands it as a meaning-context of a higher order between previously experienced signs. To him the German language is the meaning-context of each of its component words; the sign system of a map is the meaning-context of every symbol on that map; the system of musical-notation is the meaning-context of every written note; and so forth.

Knowing that a sign belongs to a certain sign system is not the same thing as knowing *what* that sign means and for what subjective experience of its user it is the expressive vehicle. Even though I do not know shorthand, still I know shorthand when I see it. Even though I may not know how to play a card game, still I can recog-

ize the cards as *playing* cards, etc. The placing of a sign within is sign system is something I do by placing it within the total conext of my experience. In doing this, all that is necessary is that I nd within the store of my experience such a sign system together with the rules on the basis of which it is constituted. I do not have to understand the meaning of the individual signs or be fully conversant with the sign system. For instance, I can see that certain characters are Chinese without understanding their meaning.

As an *established* sign every sign is meaningful and therefore in principle intelligible. In general it is absurd to speak of a meaningless sign. A sign can properly be called meaningless only with respect to one or more established sign systems. However, to say that a sign is alien to one such system only means that it belongs to another. For instance, the meaninglessness per se of a definite auditory-visual symbol can never be determined but only its meaninglessness within a definite "language," in the broadest sense of that term. A letter combination which is quite unpronounceable can have a code meaning. It can be put together by one person according to the rules of the code and can then be interpreted by another person who knows those same rules. More than that, however, the audio-visual symbol "Bamalip" seems at first quite meaningless so far as the European languages are concerned. But the person who knows that "Bamalip" is the scholastic term for an entity of formal logic, namely, the first mood of the fourth figure of the syllogism, will be able to place it quite precisely within the structure of his own native language.

From this it follows that the sign meaning within a certain sign system must have been experienced previously. It is a question just what this phrase, "have been experienced," means. If we ask ourselves in what circumstances we have experienced the connection between the term "Bamalip" and the first mood of the fourth figure, we will find that we have learned it from a teacher or from a book. To have experienced the connection, however, means that we must on that occasion have established in our minds the term "Bamalip" as the sign of the first mood of the fourth figure. Therefore, the understanding of a sign (to be more precise, the possibility of its interpretation within a given system) points back to a previous de-

cision on our part to accept and use this sign as an expression for a certain content of our consciousness.

Every sign system is therefore a scheme of our experience. This is true in two different senses. First, it is an *expressive scheme;* in other words, I have at least once used the sign for that which it designates, used it either in spontaneous activity or in imagination. Second, it is an *interpretive scheme;* in other words, I have already in the past interpreted the sign as the sign of that which it designates. This distinction is important, since, as already shown, I can recognize the sign system as an interpretive scheme, but only know that others do so. In the world of the solitary Ego the expressive scheme of a sign and its corresponding interpretive scheme necessarily coincide. If, for instance, I invent a private script, the characters of that code are established by me while I am inventing the script or using it to make notes. It is for me at such moments an expressive scheme. But the same scheme functions as an interpretive one for me when I later read what I have written or use it to make further notes.

To master fully a sign system such as a language, it is necessary to have a clear knowledge of the meaning of the individual signs within the system. This is possible only if the sign system and its component individual signs are known both as expressive schemes and as interpretive schemes for previous experiences of the knower. In both functions, as interpretive scheme and as expressive scheme, every sign points back to the experiences which preceded its constituting. As expressive scheme and as interpretive scheme a sign is only intelligible in terms of those lived experiences constituting it which it designates. Its meaning consists in its translatibility, that is, its ability to lead us back to somethng known in a different way. This may be either that scheme of experience in which the thing designated is understood, or another sign system. The philologist Meillet explains this point clearly as far as languages are concerned:

> We cannot apprehend the sense of an unknown language intuitively. If we are to succeed in understanding the text of a language whose tradition has been lost, me must either have a faithful translation into a known language, that is, we must be closely related to one

more languages with which we are familiar. In other words, *we must already know it.*[8]

This property of "being already known" amounts to this: the meaning of the sign must be discoverable somewhere in the past experience of the person making use of the sign. To be fully conversant with a language, or in fact with any sign system, involves familiarity with given interpretive schemes on the basis of one's preceding experiences—even though this familiarity may be somewhat confused as to the implications of the schemes. It also involves the ability to transform these constituted objects into active experience of one's own, that is, in the ability to use expressively a sign system that one knows how to interpret.

We are now getting close to an answer to the question of what is meant by "connecting a meaning with a sign." . . . A meaning is connected with a sign, insofar as the latter's significance within a given sign system is understood both for the person using the sign and for the person interpreting it. Now we must be quite clear as to what we mean by speaking of the established membership of a sign in a given sign system. A sign has an "objective meaning" within its sign system when it can be intelligibly coordinated to what it designates within that system independently of whoever is using the sign or interpreting it. This is merely to say that he who "masters" the sign system will interpret the sign in its meaning-function to refer to that which it designates, regardless of who is using it or in what connection. The indispensable reference of the sign to previous experience makes it possible for the interpreter to repeat the syntheses that have constituted this interpretive or expressive scheme. Within the sign system, therefore, the sign has the ideality of the "I can do it again."

However, this is not to say that the signs within the previously known sign system cannot be understood without an Act of attention to those lived experiences out of which the knowledge of the sign was constituted. On the contrary: as a genuine interpretive

8 Quoted in Vossler, *Geist und Kultur in der Sprache*, p. 115. [Translated by Oscar Oeser as *The Spirit of Language in Civilization* (London, 1932), p. 104. The reference is to A. Meillet, *Aperçu d'une histoire de la langue grecque* (Paris, 1913), p. 48.]

scheme for previous lived experiences, it is invariant with respect to the lived experiences of the I in which it was constituted.

Expressive Function of Signs

What we have been considering is the objective meaning of the sign. The objective meaning is grasped by the sign-interpreter as a part of his interpretation of his own experience to himself. With this objective meaning of the sign we must contrast the sign's expressive function. The latter is its function as an indication of what actually went on in the mind of the communicator, the person who used the sign; in other words, of what was the communicator's own meaning-context.

If I want to understand the meaning of a word in a foreign language, I make use of a dictionary, which is simply an index in which I can see the signs arranged according to their objective meaning in two different sign systems or languages. However, the total of all the words in the dictionary is hardly the language. The dictionary is concerned only with the objective meanings of the words, that is, the meanings which do not depend on the users of the words or the circumstances in which they use them. In referring to subjective meanings, we do not here have in mind Husserl's "essentially subjective and occasional expressions." . . . Such essentially subjective expressions as "left," "right," "here," "there," "this," and "I" can, of course, be found in the dictionary and are in principle translatable; however, they also have an objective meaning insofar as they designate a certain relation to the person who uses them. Once I have spatially located this person, then I can say that these subjective occasional expressions have objective meaning. However, *all* expressions, whether essentially subjective in Husserl's sense or not, have for both user and interpreter, over and above their objective meaning, a meaning which is both subjective and occasional. Let us first consider the *subjective* component. Everyone using or interpreting a sign associates with the sign a certain meaning having its origin in the unique quality of the experiences in which he once learned to use the sign. This added meaning is a kind of aura surrounding the nucleus of the

jective meaning.[9] Exactly what Goethe means by "demonic" can only be deduced from a study of his works as a whole. Only a careful study of the history of French culture aided by linguistic tools can permit us to understand the subjective meaning of the word "civilization" in the mouth of a Frenchman. Vossler applies this thesis to the whole history of language in the following way: "We study the development of a word; and we find that the mental life of all who have used it has been precipitated and crystallized in it."[10] However, in order to be able to "study" the word, we must be able to bring to bear from our previous experience a knowledge of the mental structure of all those who have used it. The particular quality of the experiences of the user of the sign at the time he connected the sign and the *signatum* is something which the interpreter must take into account, over and above the objective meaning, if he wishes to achieve true understanding.

We have said that the added meaning is not only subjective but *occasional.* In other words, the added meaning always has in it something of the context in which it is used. In understanding someone who is speaking, I interpret not only his individual words but his total articulated sequence of syntactically connected words —in short, "what he is saying." In this sequence every word retains its own individual meaning in the midst of the surrounding words and throughout the total context of what is being said. Still, I cannot really say that I understand the word until I have grasped the meaning of the whole statement. In short, what I need at the moment of interpretation is the total context of my experience. As the statement proceeds, a synthesis is built up step by step, from the point of view of which one can see the individual acts of meaning-interpretation and meaning-establishment. Discourse is, therefore, itself a kind of meaning-context. For both the speaker

9 In fact, we can even say that the understanding of the objective meaning is an unrealizable ideal, which means merely that the subjective and occasional component in the sign's meaning should be explained with the utmost clarity by means of rational concepts. That language is "precise" in which all occasional subjective meanings are adequately explained according to their circumstances.

10 Vossler, *Geist und Kultur in der Sprache*, p. 117 [Oeser trans., p. 106].

and the interpreter, the structure of the discourse emerges gradually. The German language expresses the point we are making precisely in its distinction between *Wörter* ("unconnected words") and *Worte* ("discourse"). We can, in fact, say that when unconnected words receive occasional meaning, they constitute a meaningful whole and become discourse.

5

SELECTIVE ATTENTION: RELEVANCES AND TYPIFICATION

Zones of Relevance

THE ZONE of things taken for granted may be defined as that sector of the world which, in connection with the theoretical or the practical problem we are concerned with at a given time, does not seem to need further inquiry, although we do not have clear and distinct insight into, and understanding of, its structure. What is taken for granted is, until invalidation, believed to be simply "given" and "given-as-it-appears-to-me"—that is, as I or others whom I trust have experienced and interpreted it. It is this zone of things taken for granted within which we have to find our bearings. All our possible questioning for the unknown arises only within such a world of supposedly preknown things, and presupposes its existence. Or, to use Dewey's terms, it is the indeterminate situation from which all possible inquiry starts with the goal of transforming it into a determinate one. Of course, what is taken for granted today may become questionable tomorrow, if we are induced by our own choice or otherwise to shift our interest and to make the accepted state of affairs a field of further inquiry.

In referring to a shift of our own interest we have touched upon the core of our problem. . . .

It is our interest at hand that motivates all our thinking, projecting, acting, and therewith establishes the problems to be solved by our thought and the goals to be attained by our actions. In other words, it is our interest that breaks assunder the unproblematic field of the preknown into various zones of various

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Reprinted from the following items in the Bibliography: 1946, 467–70; 1957a, 48–50; 1950a, 388–89, 392–93; 1959a, 79–80; 1957a, 39–40, 43–45.

relevance with respect to such interest, each of them requiring a different degree of precision of knowledge.

For our purposes we may roughly distinguish four regions of decreasing relevance. First, there is that part of the world within our reach which can be immediately observed by us and also at least partially dominated by us—that is, changed and rearranged by our actions. It is that sector of the world within which our projects can be materialized and brought forth. This zone of primary relevance requires an optimum of clear and distinct understanding of its structure. In order to master a situation we have to possess the know-how—the technique and the skill—and also the precise understanding of why, when, and where to use them. Second, there are other fields not open to our domination but mediately connected with the zone of primary relevance because, for instance, they furnish ready-made tools to be used for attaining the projected goal or they establish the conditions upon which our planning itself or its execution depends. It is sufficient to be merely familiar with these zones of minor relevance, to be acquainted with the possibilities, the chances, and risks they may contain with reference to our chief interest. Third, there are other zones which, *for the time being,* have no such connection with the interests at hand. We shall call them relatively irrelevant, indicating thereby that we may continue to take them for granted as long as no changes occur within them which might influence the relevant sectors by novel and unexpected chances or risks. And, finally, there are the zones which we suggest calling absolutely irrelevant because no possible change occurring within them would—or so we believe—influence our objective in hand. For all practical purposes a mere blind belief in the That and the How of things within this zone of absolute irrelevancy is sufficient.

But this description is much too rough and requires several qualifications. First, we have spoken of an "interest at hand" which determines our system of relevances. There is, however, no such thing as an isolated interest at hand. The single interest at hand is just an element within a hierarchical system, or even a plurality of systems, of interests which in everyday life we call

plans—plans for work and thought, for the hour and for our
To be sure, this system of interests is neither constant nor
mogeneous. It is not constant because in changing from any
ow to the succeeding Now the single interests obtain a different
eight, a different predominance within the system. It is not homo-
eneous because even in the simultaneity of any Now we may have
most disparate interests. The various social roles we assume simul-
taneously offer a good illustration. The interests I have in the same
situation as a father, a citizen, a member of my church or of my
profession, may not only be different but even incompatible with
one another. I have, then, to decide which of these disparate inter-
ests I must choose in order to define the situation from which to
start further inquiry. This choice will state the problem or set the
goal in respect to which the world we are living in and our knowl-
edge of it are distributed in zones of various relevance.

Second, the terms "zones" or "regions" of various relevance might suggest that there are closed realms of various relevance in our life-world and, correspondingly, of various provinces of our knowledge of it, each separated from the other by clean-cut border lines. The opposite is true. These various realms of relevances and precision are intermingled, showing the most manifold interpenetrations and enclaves, sending their fringes into neighbor provinces and thus creating twilight zones of sliding transitions. If we had to draw a map depicting such a distribution figuratively it would not resemble a political map showing the various countries with their well-established frontiers, but rather a topographical map representing the shape of a mountain range in the customary way by contour lines connecting points of equal altitude. Peaks and valleys, foothills and slopes, are spread over the map in infinitely diversified configurations. The system of relevances is much more similar to such a system of isohypses than to a system of coordinates originating in a center O and permitting measurement by an equidistant network.

Third, we have to define two types of systems of relevances which we propose to call the system of intrinsic, and the system of imposed, relevances. Again, these are merely constructive types

which in daily life are nearly always intermingled with one another and are very rarely found in a pure state. Yet it is important to study them separately in their interaction. The intrinsic relevances are the outcome of our chosen interests, established by our spontaneous decision to solve a problem by our thinking, to attain a goal by our action, to bring forth a projected state of affairs. Surely we are free to choose what we are interested in, but this interest, once established, determines the system of relevances intrinsic to the chosen interest. We have to put up with the relevances thus set, to accept the situation determined by their internal structure, to comply with their requirements. And yet they remain, at least to a certain extent, within our control. Since the interest upon which the intrinsic relevances depend and in which they originate has been established by our spontaneous choice, we may at any time shift the focus of this interest and thereby modify the relevances intrinsic to it, obtaining thus an optimum of clarity by continued inquiry. This whole process will still show all the features of a spontaneous performance. The character of all these relevances as intrinsic relevances—that is, intrinsic to a chosen interest—will be preserved.

We are, however, not only centers of spontaneity, gearing into the world and creating changes within it, but also the mere passive recipients of events beyond our control which occur without our interference. Imposed upon us as relevant are situations and events which are not connected with interests chosen by us, which do not originate in acts of our discretion, and which we have to take just as they are, without any power to modify them by our spontaneous activities except by transforming the relevances thus imposed into intrinsic relevances. While that remains unachieved, we do not consider the imposed relevances as being connected with our spontaneously chosen goals. Because they are imposed upon us they remain unclarified and rather incomprehensible.

Social Domains of Relevance

The order of domains of relevances prevailing in a particular social group is itself an element of the relative natural

ception of the world taken for granted by the in-group as an uestioned way of life. In each group the order of these domains its particular history. It is an element of socially approved and ally derived knowledge, and frequently is institutionalized. anifold are the principles that are supposed to establish this der. In Plato's *Laws* (631C, 697B, 728E, 870), for example, all e details of the proposed legislation are derived from the order f goods: the divine ones (wisdom, temperance, courage, justice) d the human ones (health, beauty, strength, wealth); or the hings in which every man has an interest have their specific rank: he interests about money have the lowest, next come the interests f the body, and of the highest rank are the interests of the soul (*Laws,* 743E). And Plato comes to the conclusion that a law must be wrong in which health has been preferred to temperance, or wealth to both.

But this is just one example of the many principles in accordance with which the domains of relevances can be ranked. Aristotle's statement that merit is differently estimated in different states, contains an important element of modern sociology of knowledge. We have to recall Max Scheler's findings that in any culture the highest rank is accorded to one of the three types of knowledge distinguished by him—knowledge for the sake of domination (*Beherrschungswissen*), knowledge for the sake of knowing (*Bildungswissen*)—knowledge for the sake of salvation (*Heilswissen*)—and therewith to one of the three types of men of knowledge: the scientist-technician, the sage, the saint. The social acceptance of this rank order determines the whole structure of the particular culture. Finally, Aristotle's statement recalls the concepts of modern anthropology (Linton) and sociology (Parsons-Shils) of ascription and achievement as basic determinants of status and role expectations within the social system.

Quite independently, however, of the particular principle according to which the order of the various domains of relevances has been established in a particular group, certain general statements as to their formal structure can be made:

1. The various domains of relevances are not commensurable

one with another; they are essentially heterogeneous. It is impossible to apply the criteria for excellence valid in one domain of relevances to another domain.

2. Both the relevance structure which constitutes the particular domains of relevances and the order of these domains itself are in continuous flux within each group. This is a main factor in the dynamics of the notions of equality and inequality accepted by a particular group. These concepts change, either (a) if for one reason or another the relevance structure which demarcates a *particular* domain of typification is no longer taken for granted beyond question but becomes questionable itself, a fact that might lead to a permeation of a particular domain of relevance by a heterogeneous one; or (b) if the *order* of the domains of relevances ceases to be socially approved and taken for granted.

3. Since, however, the domains of relevances and their order are themselves elements of the social situation, they might be defined in different ways in accordance with their subjective and objective meaning.

The Typification of Objects

The factual world of our experience . . . is experienced from the outset as a typical one. Objects are experienced as trees, animals, and the like, and more specifically as oaks, firs, maples, or rattlesnakes, sparrows, dogs. This table I am now perceiving is characterized as something recognized, as something foreknown and, nevertheless, novel. What is newly experienced is already known in the sense that it recalls similar or equal things formerly perceived. But what has been grasped once in its typicality carries with it a horizon of possible experience with corresponding references to familiarity, that is, a series of typical characteristics still not actually experienced but expected to be potentially experienced. If we see a dog, that is, if we recognize an object as being an animal and more precisely as a dog, we anticipate a certain behavior on the part of this dog, a typical (not individual) way of eating, of running, of playing, of jumping, and so on. Actually we do not see his teeth, but having experienced before what a dog's

h typically look like, we may expect that the teeth of the dog before us will show the same typical features though with individual modifications. In other words, what has been experienced in the actual perception of one object is apperceptively transferred to any other similar object, perceived merely as to its type. Actual experience will or will not confirm our anticipation of the typical conformity of these other objects. If confirmed, the content of the anticipated type will be enlarged; at the same time, the type will be split up into subtypes. On the other hand, the concrete real object will prove to have its individual characteristics which, nevertheless, have a form of typicality. Now, and this seems to be of special importance, we *may* take the typically apperceived object as an example of a general type and allow ourselves to be led to the general concept of the type, but we do not *need* by any means to think of the concrete dog thematically as an exemplar of the general concept "dog." "In general," this dog here is a dog like any other dog and will show all the characteristics which the type "dog," according to our previous experience, implies; nevertheless, this known type carries along a horizon of still unknown typical characteristics pertaining not only to this or that individual dog but to dogs in general. Every empirical idea of the general has the character of an open concept to be rectified or corroborated by supervening experience.

Naming and Typifying

Language as used in daily life . . . is primarily a language of named things and events. Now any name includes a typification and is, in Husserl's sense, a nonessential empirical generalization. We may interpret the prescientific human language as a treasure house of preconstituted types and characteristics, each of them carrying along an open horizon of unexplored typical contents. By naming an experienced object, we are relating it by its typicality to pre-experienced things of similar typical structure, and we accept its open horizon referring to future experiences of the same type, which are therefore capable of being given the same name. To find a thing or event relevant enough to bestow a separate name

upon it is again the outcome of the prevailing system of relevance. Here is an animal and this animal is a dog, but a dog of a particular kind which is unknown to me. I am, if sufficiently interested in this object, not satisfied with subsuming it under the name of "dog." The characteristics which it has in common with all other dogs are precisely those which are irrelevant to me; relevant, however, are those which lead to the building of a new subtype. I ask: What kind of dog is this? And my curiosity is satisfied if I learn that it is an Irish setter. At the same time, recognizing the animal as a dog, it is normally not relevant to me to continue the generalization: A dog is a mammal, an animal, a living thing, an object of the outer world, and so on. It is always the system of relevance that chooses from the vocabulary of my vernacular (and also from its syntactical structure) the relevant term, and that term is the typical pre-experienced generalization interesting me (or my interlocutor) in the present situation.

Experience and Typification

As Husserl . . . has convincingly shown, all forms of recognition and identification, even of real objects of the outer world, are based on a *generalized* knowledge of the *type* of these objects or of the *typical* style in which they manifest themselves. Strictly speaking, each experience is unique, and even the same experience that recurs is not the same, because it recurs. It is a recurrent sameness, and as such it is experienced in a different context and with different adumbrations. If I recognize this particular cherry tree in my garden as the same tree I saw yesterday, although in another light and with another shade of color, this is possible merely because I know the typical way in which this unique object appears in its surroundings. And the type "this particular cherry tree" refers to the pre-experienced types "cherry trees in general," "trees," "plants," "objects of the outer world." Each of these types has its typical style of being experienced, and the knowledge of this typical style is itself an element of our stock of knowledge at hand. The same holds good for the relations in which the objects

[illegible] to one another, for events and occurrences and their mutual [illegible]ions, and so on.

Typification in Social Life

What the sociologist calls "system," "role," "status," "role expectation," "situation," and "institutionalization," is experienced by the individual actor on the social scene in entirely different terms. To him all the factors denoted by these concepts are elements of a network of typifications—typifications of human individuals, of their course-of-action patterns, of their motives and goals, or of the sociocultural products which originated in their actions. These types were formed in the main by others, his predecessors or contemporaries, as appropriate tools for coming to terms with things and men, accepted as such by the group into which he was born. But there are also self-typifications: man typifies to a certain extent his own situation within the social world and the various relations he has to his fellow men and cultural objects.

The knowledge of these typifications and of their appropriate use is an inseparable element of the sociocultural heritage handed down to the child born into the group by his parents and his teachers and the parents of his parents and the teachers of his teachers; it is, thus, socially derived. The sum-total of these various typifications constitutes a frame of reference in terms of which not only the sociocultural, but also the physical world has to be interpreted, a frame of reference that, in spite of its inconsistencies and its inherent opaqueness, is nonetheless sufficiently integrated and transparent to be used for solving most of the practical problems at hand.

It should be emphasized that the interpretation of the world in terms of types, as understood here, is not the outcome of a process of ratiocination, let alone of scientific conceptualization. The world, the physical as well as the sociocultural one, is experienced from the outset in terms of types: there are mountains, trees, birds, fishes, dogs, and among them Irish setters; there are cultural objects, such as houses, tables, chairs, books, tools, and among them

hammers; and there are typical social roles and relationships, such as parents, siblings, kinsmen, strangers, soldiers, hunters, priests, etc. Thus, typifications on the commonsense level--in contradistinction to typifications made by the scientist, and especially the social scientist—emerge in the everyday experience of the world as taken for granted without any formulation of judgments or of neat propositions with logical subjects and predicates. They belong, to use a phenomenological term, to the prepredicative thinking. The vocabulary and the syntax of the vernacular of everyday language represent the epitome of the typifications socially approved by the linguistic group.

Systems of Relevance and Typification

A system of relevances and typifications as it exists at any historical moment, is itself a part of the social heritage and as such is handed down in the educational process to the members of the in-group. It has various important functions:

1. It determines which facts or events have to be treated as substantially—that is, typically—equal (homogeneous) for the purpose of solving in a typical manner typical problems that emerge or might emerge in situations typified as being equal (homogeneous).

2. It transforms unique individual actions of unique human beings into typical functions of typical social roles, originating in typical motives aimed at bringing about typical ends. The incumbent of such a social role is expected by the other members of the in-group to act in the typical way defined by this role. On the other hand, by living up to his role the incumbent typifies himself; that is, he resolves to act in the typical way defined by the social role he has assumed. He resolves to act in a way in which a businessman, soldier, judge, father, friend, gangleader, sportsman, buddy, regular fellow, good boy, American, taxpayer, etc., is supposed to act. Any role thus involves a self-typification on the part of the incumbent.

3. It functions as both a scheme of interpretation and as a

e of orientation for each member of the in-group and constitherewith a universe of discourse among them. Whoever (I ded) acts in the socially approved typical way is supposed motivated by the pertinent typical motives and to aim at ging about the pertinent typical state of affairs. He has a reable chance, by such actions, of coming to terms with everyone accepts the same system of relevances and takes the typifications originating therein for granted. On the one hand, I have—in er to understand another—to apply the system of typifications epted by the group to which both of us belong. For example, if uses the English language, I have to interpret his statements in ms of the code of the English dictionary and the English gramar. On the other hand, in order to make myself understandable another, I have to avail myself of the same system of typificans as a scheme of orientation for my projected action. Of course, ere is a mere chance, namely, a mere likelihood, that the scheme typifications used by me as a scheme of orientation will coincide th that used by my fellow man as a scheme of interpretation; herwise misunderstandings among people of goodwill would be possible. But at least as a first approximation we take it for anted that we both mean what we say and say what we mean.

4. The chances of success of human interaction, that is, the ablishment of a congruency between the typified scheme used the actor as a scheme of orientation and by his fellow men as a heme of interpretation, is enhanced if the scheme of typification standardized, and the system of pertinent relevances institutionalized. The various means of social control (mores, morals, aws, rules, rituals) serve this purpose.

5. The socially approved system of typifications and relevances is the common field within which the private typifications nd relevance structures of the individual members of the group originate. This is so, because the private situation of the individual as defined by him is always a situation within the group, his rivate interests are interests with reference to those of the group whether by way of particularization or antagonism), his private roblems are necessarily in a context with the group problems. gain, this private system of domains of relevance might be in-

consistent in itself; it might also be incompatible with the socially approved one. For example, I may take entirely different attitudes toward the problems of rearmament of the United States in my social role as a father of a boy, as a taxpayer, as a member of my church, as a patriotic citizen, as a pacifist, and as a trained economist. Nevertheless, all these partially conflicting and intersecting systems of relevances, both those taken for granted by the group and my private ones, constitute particular domains of relevances; all objects, facts, and events are homogeneous in the sense that they are relevant to the same problem.