

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON SOCIAL REALITY AND CHANGE

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Introduction

The mission statement of the Ateneo de Davao University states that "it preserves, cherishes, and develops the values and convictions of the Filipino culture in an involvement with the local community, and in a commitment to the challenges of nation building."¹ In response to this an increasing number of students of the different curricular and extra-curricular clubs and organizations are now actively becoming involved with poor communities in Davao City. The Social Involvement and Coordination Office (SICO) is one of the important agencies of the university that facilitates the students' involvement. It helps the university make its social involvement programs successful.

One program, the Ateneo Student Exposure Program (ASEP), gives volunteer students the opportunity to experience first hand the living conditions of the poor. The students stay and live with poor families for about two or more weeks. They take part in the daily routine of the members of the families. At the end of the immersion period, the students spend a weekend of reflections on their experiences. To help them with their reflections, lectures in socio-economic and political structures are given. However, not all students have the opportunity to undergo the ASEP. In the effort to inform as many students as possible about the Philippine situation, SICO also initiates Social Awareness Seminars (SAS) which are usually held at least once a month. Each seminar has two phases: the first phase is informative, presenting a structural analysis of Philippine Society. The second phase involves the deepening of insights. Recently, in addition to the usual analysis of the Philippine situation, SICO incorporated lectures on philosophy into its seminars. ASEP has already had two occasions in which philosophic reflections were part of the process. Furthermore the second phase of the SAS now also includes philosophic reflections.

Philosophic analysis helps students look at social life from a more holistic point of view. This is simply being faithful to the nature of philosophic enterprise which is a systematic inquiry into the totality of human life. Philosophy searches for the foundations and principles that sustain the human character of every dimension of society. Unfortunately, the science is not so appreciated today except perhaps by small groups composed mainly of students and teachers of philosophy. Many have the impression that phi-

¹"The Mission Statement of the Ateneo de Davao University", *College Faculty Manual*, (1983), p. 1.

Philosophy is a mere intellectual and individualistic undertaking that does not have any bearing on the concrete praxis of social transformation. However, it must be clear that since philosophy is a holistic science, then, it necessarily includes social reality. In this essay, we will demonstrate the rigor and social extent of philosophy. Philosophy shows that the process of organizing and transforming society must consider the role of human subjectivity. People should be involved in decision-making about their own lives. In the final analysis, social transformation can be truly authentic if the social members themselves determine their destiny.

It is hoped that the present essay will be a fruitful contribution to the many sets of materials and documents already being read and studied by students. Likewise, this essay can help towards adding material to groups and organizations even outside the University.

Man Reduced to a Thing

The students are aware that a very huge percentage of Philippine capital and resources are not in the hands of the majority of Filipinos. The political laws have not been supportive of the needs of many. Education, to name a cultural dimension, is not really "educating" everyone. The students after their structural analysis mention that Philippine economics, politics, and culture are not supportive of the great majority, especially the poor. People, especially the poor, are not given the opportunity to define how they are to live in a more humane way. What has been happening is that experts design theories and policies for social restructuring without prior consultation with the people concerned.

The experts make the theories, policy-makers actualize them. The presupposition is that the lives and ways of people cannot be the basis for the theoretical constructs for change and development. It is believed that the criteria of the experts are more reliable in determining how people should live. Social change is implemented without considering what the people themselves have to say. There are two terms that can be helpful in the philosophic analysis. The first is the word "subjective". This has often been understood as that which refers to the personal, the idiosyncratic, and the vague. The other word is "objective", which often has been understood as that which is faithful to the "facts-in-themselves". The objective is what is enduring, such as the facts that are open to rigorous and systematic inquiry. To be subjective in one's interpretations is to be unsure and imprecise. To be objective is to be correct and precise. Hence, the subjective, employing its realm of values and meanings, is said to belong to peoples' interpretations of their situations, while the objective is the way of the scientific experts.

The experts' scientific interpretations are believed to be much more valid than peoples' interpretations. Hence, the criteria for social change and development are in the hands of the scientific experts, since they are objective in their formulations. The subjective lives of social members, to be properly organized, must be subservient to the valid and reliable designs of the experts. It does appear therefore, that the peoples' right to

define their social lives can be denied in the name of scientific objectivity. Thus people have been reduced to objects. This is what is taking place in many programs for development, e.g., housing, industrialization, and infrastructure.²

It is incorrect to assume that people can go on with their daily lives relying on the experts to do the thinking and deciding for them. It is also incorrect to think that only the experts know, while everyone else does not. People will have to decide with what to do with their lives. They should be involved in designing what for them is the viable way of living. It is imperative to criticize the assumption that the subjective ways of the people are not at par with the objective constructs of the experts, especially the foreign experts. Two points can show why.

First, it is questionable if the set of criteria are really as objective as defined. It is believed that for experts to be objective they must be without values and meanings that color their interpretations. An entirely value-free science is today in dispute, and it is doubtful if experts can really cease from holding on to any value at all. One moralist looking into the relations between economics and ethics pointed out that the criteria purported to be without value coloring are really normative concepts and beliefs prescribing how people must live economic lives. The economists are not entirely scientific since they show that they are also ideological.³ Another observer noted that for a very long time many experts could not agree on the most objective criteria for correct social living. Hence, there grew to be as many criteria as there were scholars and thinkers.⁴ That is why it has become questionable if the constructed criteria are really faithful to the "facts-in-themselves." It can be asked if it is true that the proper way to live and get organized is discoverable in the experts' design whether the people agree with them or not.

No two people are exactly the same. The social inquirer is not exempted from this. Social members have *their own* experiences and their *own values*. The inquirer too has *his own*. In trying to analyse society the expert inquirer makes his approach genuine, that is, be as accurate as possible with the social facts. People give meaning and interpret their situations. The inquirer who fails to see this has mistaken the treatment of people for the treatment of things. The systematic and rigorous thinking in any genuine study of society must be cognizant of what is really in the social world. An inquirer's analysis must be consistently based on his subject matter. Disregard for such a basic verity is seen in the

² Lee Cormie, "The Sociology of National Development", *Sociology and Human Destiny*, ed. by Gregory Baum (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980), pp. 56-85.

³ J. Philip Wogaman, *Christians and the Great Economic Debate* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1977), pp. 1-33.

⁴ Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), pp. 11-13.

expert's attitude that deny people their chance to define and interpret their social lives. Social understanding and policy must be discoursed on the very meanings that people give to their situations.

The social philosopher, Alfred Schutz, in formulating his insights on social analysis, presented what he called "constructs of the second degree."⁵ In inquiring into the social world the expert inquirer must never hold his interpretations against the interpretations of the social members. Imposing insights must be avoided. Experts, planners, and policy-makers must be aware of the biases they have in looking at society. That is why understanding society is to see the very meanings inherent in peoples' actions. Understanding society must consider what social members themselves have to say about their situation. Everything else belonging to the experts must be "second degree" founded on the "first degree" interpretations of the people themselves.

Second, and in a more practical sense, it is unreasonable to impose criteria on people especially when human suffering and death will be the consequences. Experts' designs can be harmless if they only remain in theory, but the repercussions on peoples' lives must be considered with utmost attention. Particular attention should be given to the interconnections between theory, policy, and human pain⁶. What is intolerable is to allow the criteria to be imposed without peoples' participation and acceptance.

The Paradigm: Social Phenomenology

If people, especially the poor, in the Philippines today are reduced to the level of objects in the planning and implementation of development projects, then, there is a need for a philosophic critique of this situation. The subjective must surface. The paradigm on which the philosophic analysis here stands is the phenomenological perspective,⁷ especial-

⁵Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers 1: The Problem of Social Reality*, ed. by Maurice Natanson (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), p. 6.

⁶Peter Berger, *Pyramids of Sacrifice*, (England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1979)

⁷So much has been written on Phenomenology and we can refer to Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. by Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977). See also Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. by David Carr, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970). A precise discussion of Phenomenology can be found in Paul Ricoeur, *Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967). See also Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers 3: Studies in Phenomenological Philosophy*, ed. by Ilse Schutz, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966).

ly social phenomenology.⁸ A brief consideration of the history of Western philosophy may be helpful in seeing what phenomenology is.⁹

During the Ancient – Medieval period, philosophers believed that they could grasp the very essence of things. With the advent of the natural sciences the notion that the universe is basically mathematical and mechanical was introduced. The task of science was to gain insight into the mathematical and mechanical world-in-itself. The science of man consequently became a way of trying to determine how to quantify man and fit him into the mathematical-mechanical models. Then, the problem emerged as to how to grasp the "fact-in-themselves." For example, many asked if the physicist could really know the exact nature of matter. Furthermore, it was a problem in the human sciences to determine the precise models for human analysis.

There were, on the other hand, philosophers who pointed out that before studying things, the study of the mind must first precede. If, as the philosophers said, the world "in-itself" is not yet clear, maybe it is because the nature of the mind is not yet clear. Unfortunately, the mind was over-emphasized and everything became idealistic and even spiritualistic. Even the understanding of man became a way of trying to look for the structures of the mind independent of the structures of the world.

Phenomenology is a study of what comes in between the world and the mind. It does not see the separation of the two for it believes that the world is a world for the mind and the mind is directed to the world. There is no world without mind and mind without world. In the same way, man is interpreted to be not just a part of the world nor simply part of pure mind. For the philosophers of recent phenomenology, man's presence in the world is the emergence of meaning. The world makes sense because man is present to give meaning to it, and man fulfills his capacities of reason and understanding because of his being in the world.

Man has a special relation to the world and that is why we find many worlds, e.g., the world of art, the world of science, the world of the Chinese, the world of poverty, and so on. When the phenomenologist studies society, he talks of the world of everyday life wherein people routinely interact and organize themselves as a society. In fact, the pheno-

⁸This essay relies heavily on the social phenomenology of Alfred Schutz.

⁹We shall emphasize historical considerations related to the social sciences. See Alphonse de Waelhens, "The Human Sciences, the Ontological Horizon and the Encounter", *Phenomenology and Sociology*, ed. by Thomas Luckmann (England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1978), pp. 161-180; see also Thomas Luckmann, "Philosophy, Social Science and Everyday Life", *Phenomenology and Sociology*, ed. by Thomas Luckmann (England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1978), pp. 217-253.

menologist would see the other worlds, e.g., art and science, as derived from and as refinements of everyday world.¹⁰ In phenomenology the option of making the subjective surface means disclosing the everyday world of people and how people define themselves in that world.

Social Dimensions

The phenomenologist tries to recapture the richness of social experience by disclosing the varied ways through which society appears to the eyes of the ordinary man. To begin with, the social world is experienced as a *human* world. The experts' reifications are abstractions and devitalizations of the human element in the experience. The social world contains the relation between and among people, a relation which can never be found with things. For example, picture someone rushing for work. As he elbows his way through people to get a ride, he may say, "I am sorry". The experience of bumping against people is really different from the experience of bumping against a lamp post. No one will be sorry or repugnant towards a street lamp post, nor will the post demand respect and apologies from the one who accidentally bumps it. Nothing happens *between* the post and people. The social world is what happens between persons.

There are many profiles in the way people experience one another.¹¹ Some people are known to us in intimate ways. They may be people in our family, people we live with, or people we work with. We know them through their characters or personalities. However, there are those people we do not know too well in terms of their personalities. In fact, we know them simply as people performing certain functions. We do not know if they are well-mannered or ill-tempered; we do not know their private likes, dislikes, or preferences for this or that. As far as we are concerned, we simply know that they have particular things to do. These people are the policemen who handle peace and order, the mailmen who deliver the mail, the technocrats handling financial matters, and so on. Notice that we are not very intimate with them since we simply apprehend them in their functions. Unlike people we personally know, those we see only in terms of functions are anonymous.

Finally, we can even talk about groups or collectivities. A collectivity is composed of many individuals, many functions, even smaller groups. All are encapsulated in unity by virtue of being grouped. Now we really find here a high degree of anonymity. Consider,

¹⁰ Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers 1*, pp. 227-259.

¹¹ Alfred Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, trans. by George Walsh and Frederick Lehnert, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), pp. 139-214. See also Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers 2: Studies in Social Theory*, ed. by Arvid Brodersen, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), pp. 20-63.

for example, what we mean when we say "the people of Western Mindanao". What we have in mind is really a whole domain of individuals with different personalities, so many people of different works, so many ethnic religious groups, all lumped together. Obviously, we are not apprehending a unique, intimate person. When we apprehend a collectivity, we are not exactly referring to anyone in particular.

We can determine how people are intimate or anonymous to us in one or two ways.¹² One way is through the generality by which we apprehend them. Knowledge of a friend cannot be so generalized. Our knowledge of a friend is rich in content because we get our information, so to speak, from his very concrete manifestations. We have seen the personality of our friend. The less close we are to people the more general we apprehend them. Often we get information of them from stories. Maybe someone told us about them, or we have read about them in the papers or books. At any rate, no matter what knowledge we get about them, we know them not as well as we would know a friend. Knowledge of them becomes general.

The type "mailman" for instance already covers many individuals who we do not necessarily know. All those individuals are *generally* known as people who handle the mail. Anonymity is most experienced in collectivity where speaking of people becomes really general. We do not apprehend each and every individual, nor the work he does. Rather, we see a group at large. Our everyday speech indicates how general we can get in apprehending a collectivity: "The Ilocano people are thrifty", or "How can people become so unkind." The "Ilocano" or "people" are really general terms.

The other way by which intimacy and anonymity are gauged comes in terms of the ease with which we relate with people personally. For example, we know how at ease we can become in facing our friends. We can easily approach them. The ease becomes less when it comes, for example to relating with the mailman. When we receive our mail, we know that it is not easy to pour out our joys or troubles to the mailman. Perhaps, we might even feel it wiser to simply get the mail, turn around and pour out to a friend while letting the mailman just move on. Finally, imagine how impossible it is to face directly "the people of Western Mindanao". Apparently, here we are really aware of something very anonymous which, in sheer massivity, cannot even be addressed as a face-to-face partner. In our concrete day-to-day living, we can be amazed at how varied people are. People can be close or distant, intimate or anonymous. This is what profile means. We apprehend people in varying profiles.

So far we have looked into the experiences we have of people living today. This, obviously, is not the whole picture. There are also those people who lived in the past, and those who will come in the future.¹³ Some of those who lived in the past may have been personally close to us, e.g., our grandparents, our great grandparents. They comprise a

¹² Alfred Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, pp. 194-201.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 207-214.

small circle of our predecessors. The past is also composed of those people who are historically distant. Some of them may have made it to the history books. We may be celebrating their death anniversaries. However, the great number of the unique, rich, and concrete lives are not reconstructed and may never be reconstructed. These concrete personal lives are apprehended in general terms. For example, the *Katipuneros* under Andres Bonifacio may be interpreted as valiant, brave, zealous, and willing to die for the motherland. We do not know, however, the unique and concrete situations, feelings, and private goals of each and every soldier. Most people from the past are no longer apprehended in their uniqueness. The thousands of individual lives cannot be recalled except through generalities, e.g. the general trait of the soldiers, the ordinary life of the pre-Hispanic islanders, or the typical life of the Filipino during the revolution.

The generality by which we see the past influences the way we see the present. We may have a general idea that much of the Philippine economy today is foreign-controlled. This is because we have only a general understanding of the history behind this. A more in-depth study of the treaties, trade acts, and other agreements between the Philippine and United States governments will deepen our knowledge of foreign entrenchment in our soil. The less general our knowledge of the past becomes, the more in-depth our knowledge of the present situation is.

There are also those who will come in the future. Some of our successors may be personally close to us, such our children, our grandchildren, nephews, nieces. Nonetheless, most people in the future will never be known to us personally.

We may have our commitments for the future, either personal or historical. Our goals and projects, no matter how near or far, have a way of telling us how we are to conduct our current lives. Envisioning a future state-of-affairs, we discover many of the reasons behind our actions today. If looking at the past may help us clarify the present, the way we perceive the future also helps clarify the present. Take for instance the struggles of the poor today, made symbolic through their protests, strikes and rallies. If we want to understand why they do these actions, we will also have to see how their hopes influence them today. They are hoping for a future of justice for their children and grandchildren.

The world of the future will always be open. Our actions today may influence the future. However, our successors may alter what we hope for because they might create a world which does not necessarily comply with the expectations of our dreams and hopes.

What transpires *between* persons in the social world can be very intricate. The complexity is largely determined by the fact that people experience each other in profiles of the near and the remote, the past and the future and the intimate and the anonymous. In fact, it is not enough to say that we experience people in varied ways. We are also apprehended, in turn, by others in varied ways. We also appear to them in profiles.¹⁴ With our friends, we experience ourselves being treated in an intimate way. We are anonymous to

the mailman, for he does not know our personalities. We are but a statistical figure to the economist studying the income distribution of Region XI. We are the anonymous successors of our predecessors who worked for a world they expected we would support. Perhaps, we have changed their dreams. We will be one day left hidden in anonymity waiting to be unearthed by tomorrow's historians.

We are never exempted from the profiles by which others see us. As we apprehend and interpret people, in whatever sector of the world and time they may be, we too are apprehended *by them*.

INTERACTION

Let us now investigate what happens *between* persons in the social scene. First of all, in everyday experience, we see that people's actions make sense not just for us but also for those acting. The man knocking at the door carrying a neat bundle of pink sheets must be someone who intends to get our payments. We cannot accept the presupposition that he really has no business knocking at the door. Somehow, we ascribe sense to action, a sense which we think must belong to the person acting. That is why, if we cannot know about a person's action we try to find out from him. Of course, we do make mistakes in interpreting people's actions. The man knocking at the door may not be asking for bill payments but may instead be introducing his Mormon faith by giving out leaflets. That action of knocking at the door is, after all, infused with a sense of mission and not, as mistaken, an action of getting bill payments. Still, we see that the person's actions had some purpose.

If experience tells us that people give sense to their actions, then we must know what action is. Before we proceed, however, we must be precise with our meanings of the word action. At times, it is understood to be something very significant, and could be associated with political or even revolutionary conduct. Although action may be overt, not all action need necessarily be so. Waiting for prices to increase before selling, postponing dialogue with management, deciding not to vie for a post in the club, these too are actions. There can be indecisions, passivity, even silence, in action. The teacher thinking about his lesson plan or the scientist working out in his head a formula, are also actions. Thus actions can be covert too.¹⁵

Action always implies a "project".¹⁶ We make some anticipations of what we may expect to fulfill. The project is none other than a state-of-affairs pictured as accomplished and completed, but the actual completion lies in the future. Thus, the different steps in

¹⁵ Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers*, pp. 211-212.

¹⁶ Alfred Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, pp. 57-63.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 202-206.

the action are made to fulfill the project of the action. If there is no project there will be only aimless steps. Instead of action we may have mere physiological reflexes such as the face blushing, the pupils narrowing, or a kind of mental blackout that happens when a heavy object hits the head. Action must have its project, and here we find "meaningful action." The meaning of an action is in its project.¹⁷ If we want to know the sense of an action we have to look into what it is trying to accomplish. A man turning the door-knob may have in mind getting into the room. The movements of the action, such as grasping the knob, turning it, and eventually pushing the door open, are all geared towards fulfilling the plan of being inside the room.

Action does not, however, arise from a vacuum. It is always situated.¹⁸ To act is to respond to the situation in which the person finds himself. That is why it can be said that an action's project is demanded by the situation. While the project requires the steps necessary for its fulfillment, the situation in turn requires the establishment of the project itself. The man turning the knob wants to get in the room. Why? Perhaps, he is being chased by a huge dog. The situation impelled his project of getting into the room.

A main element in acting in daily life is that we believe in what we do. If fact, an effort is made to suspend doubts and questions that may run counter to the validity of our actions. The man kissing his newly wedded wife by the altar does not stop to ask if the married life is really his vocation. The laborer with eight children believes that his work must really be supportive of the family. There is found, in daily life, the attitude of taking things for granted. This carries the belief that we do not need to inquire so much into our daily actions. The taken-for-granted is that level of experience presenting itself as not in need of further analysis.

What sustains this attitude is the assumption that our actions have their consistency.¹⁹ On one hand, there is the belief that what were formerly successful will continue to be so now. The action has proven itself before, and hence, one takes it for granted that it will prove itself now. On the other hand, there is the belief that inasmuch as it has proven its success before, it can prove itself now. Thus there is no reason why it should not again prove itself in the future. Hence, what we usually do in the daily life attains a character of being *typical*.²⁰ The action yesterday, now, and as expected, is typically the

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 61.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 91-96.

¹⁹ Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckmann, *The Structures of the Life-World*, trans. by Richard M. Zaner and H. Tristram Engelhardt, Jr., (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), pp. 3-20.

²⁰ Alfred Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, p. 90.

same action. Of course, there may be some differences in each occasion, but those elements that make the actions so unique and irretrievable from each other are set aside as irrelevant. Those elements are largely taken for granted. That is why we are not very inquisitive about what we typically do. We have done actions before; we keep on doing them routinely, and we have always been met with sufficient success. So without much further ado, we expect that our next occasion to do such actions will show that the actions will work well. The actions are thus, again and again, typical.

When others come intimately into our lives it is difficult to typify them. This is because of the richness in which we experience them. Nonetheless, even intimate others can be typified. When mother is silent it *typically* means that she is angry over something. As we move out of intimacy, and enter into anonymity, we cannot rely so much on the concrete manifestations of peoples' personalities. We rely more and more on general understanding about them. Thus, the more we typify them. For instance, the type "mailman" means that there are people handling the mail. There may be different, unique individuals with their specific idiosyncracies, but in daily life we take for granted their individualities and simply see the type. This goes for all our anonymous typifications. That is why, again, if we cannot comprehend someone's action it is probably because we have not determined what type of thing he is doing. We fall short of trying to see the context of his action.

One important point is that the types that we have of people are not altogether arbitrarily made.²¹ When, we were born into the world we were told about how the world typically is. Already we find typical ways of calling things, e.g., dogs, cats, fish, trees, stones, and chairs. Included in the typifications we derive are those about other people. All these typifications are found in the milieu we are born into. Our parents, elders, teachers, and others have told us how to interpret and typify the world. When we were born into the society we were born into a *shared* world, evident in the typifications of the milieu. We become participants of the shared world.

A crucial aspect in being participants in the shared world is the way we got to learn to look at our own actions. Being born in the social milieu we realize what typical actions are "good" or "bad".²² The experience of being in the church service finds the child's inquisitive eyes looking out for interesting things. The child feels his way around, taking a step here, a step there. Soon he boldly runs about, touching objects on the floor, investigating people's faces, and maybe even inviting other children to his noisy adventures. Then the long arms of the father and the wide embrace of the mother put the child in his place. The learning process goes on, and the lesson for the day is: noisemaking in the church is "wrong".

²¹ Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers 1*, pp. 7-10.

²² Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckmann, *The Structures of the Life-World*, pp. 243-247.

In the social world we learn actions that are typical, and that is why our actions are not altogether private. Somehow, our actions are adjusted to the approvals in the milieu. We find that our actions become appropriate as they become defined as part of the typically accepted ways of acting. Yet, a great deal of the acceptance have their historical aspects.²³ In other words, many of the typical actions have been historically established some time ago. Other people in the past have responded to certain situations with their particular actions. They found their actions to have worked successfully; the actions have proven their worth. Such actions became the typical ways of responding to the situations from which they originated. These are then the typical actions vis-a-vis the corresponding typical situations.

Anyone engaged with the typical situations can simply respond with the typical action. At the start, the trials and errors have determined the most appropriate actions. These actions are then handed down, as tradition. Others who come later are saved the steps of having to find out and experiment on their own. They are simply told what the most appropriate actions are. The typical actions become part of the taken-for-granted ways of doing things. Sometimes, we realize that we do not know the history behind what we daily do. The origins of the actions may have been lost from the memory of everyone, including elders. Inasmuch as the actions continue proving themselves, it may not occur to us to suspect their origins. Examples are numerous: ways of right speech, ways of wearing clothes, search for success, ways of work, and so on. Today, we find thousands of young people trying to get the most wanted college diploma which will, supposedly, be their passport to success.

In the course of interactions with people, we orient ourselves towards others with the expectation of how they will be oriented towards us. The mutuality of actions are largely typical. Since we interpret others' actions as typical it is also expected that others interpret our actions as typical. The types that we see of each other are mutually oriented.²⁴ Take for example, riding a public vehicle. The type "driver" implies that the one behind the wheel brings people of the type "passengers" to their designated places. When on a vehicle we orient our actions according to the type expected of us, "passengers", while the one driving orients his action as expected of the type "driver". We take for granted we are following the typifications expected of us.

Social members act towards one another according to how they typically see each other. Hence, social interactions occur by types, e.g., driver-passengers, consumer-manufacturer, labor-management, land-lord-tenant, even laborer-to-laborer, businessman-to-businessman. In the social world we find that we really take on many typical roles. Getting into a public vehicle we become "passengers"; arriving at work, we are "laborers"; receiving salary, we become the potential "consumers"; arriving home, we are the "neigh-

²³ *ibid.*, pp. 290-293.

²⁴ Alfred Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, pp. 202-207.

bers". Social living is a matter of taking roles typical in different sectors of time and place.

A few points can be mentioned in reaction to this. First, there is the realization that social members have ways of looking at each other. Here we find the notion that social members define and interpret their world. An expert inquirer will have to realize that the social milieu is rich with typifications and people follow generally the typical ways expected of them. To impose one's own constructs is really to deny from the study the whole range of people's interpretations. To understand people is to see their complex typifications, how they look at the world and themselves.

Secondly, society can have its sense of being a "home". The social members are not just related with one another, they are participants *in* a shared world with accepted ways of doing things. To be part of the milieu is to be guaranteed that our actions have their rightful places. The conforming to and being adjusted to the given typifications of the milieu amount to having some kind of an order. Familiarity with things and actions is bred into us because our ways take part in the accepted ways. By following the contours of the typifications, especially the expected typical ways of acting, we social members are guaranteed the "rightness" or "wrongness" in what we do. The first personal pronoun "We" indicate what this means. The use of the pronoun seems to presuppose that everyone is part of the common, shared ways of doing things: "We members of the association", "We members of the barangay", "We citizens". Mutuality is a taken-for-granted reality and everyone is identified in it. So a fundamental experience of social living is within and being a part of the whole.

Finally, anonymity is part of social existence. Anonymity is characterized by rigid orders established through long historical processes. A great part of social relations are conducted along the ways of the established orders and therefore need not always account for individual preferences and feelings. Social relations, we must remember, move in more than just intimate relations. For life in society to be humanly possible is for that life to be also engaged in the public world. Without managing a common world of typical ways of defining things, we find a very fragmented social world. Without anything publicly attainable, we find an absence of an important condition for human authenticity.²⁵

Concluding Remarks: On the Importance of Reflection

This essay has pointed out that social members do establish and maintain their own social reality. First, it shows that people experience one another in varied ways depending on the proximity and distance they have towards one another. Hence, the interpretations they make about each other are really situated within the stratifications. We can see

²⁵ Maurice Natanson, "The Problem of Anonymity in the Thought of Alfred Schutz", *Phenomenology and the Social Sciences*, ed. by Joseph Bien, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), pp. 68-69.

why people can be intimate or anonymous towards one another. Secondly, the essay has shown that typifications are crucial in the mutuality between and among social members. The typifications, especially of actions, determine how social members are to act towards one another. A great deal of social relations are really colored by the mutuality of types.

Let it be stressed that all typical interpretations and the consequent interactions are to be found within the confines of society itself. Hence, instead of searching for the sense of social behavior outside society, we must engage in understanding society by keeping in constant touch with the typifications inherent within the society. Failure to realize this can lead to imposition.

Experts have their own ideas as to what they believe to be the outcome expected of any social action. They assume that social behavior functions according to certain typical expectations outside of and regardless of the peoples' ways. The experts interpret social living from their own typifications in the belief that their claims can be applied to the whole of society. Their understanding involves interpreting society with typifications that are not in conjunction with peoples' interpretations. Perhaps, the experts really wish to serve the people in good faith, but in putting their ideas into effect, they run counter to the expectations and goals of people. Believing in the objectivity of their designs, the experts would rather listen only to themselves. Along their way impositions take place.

People too have an active role in such impositions. It was mentioned above that people, in their daily lives, tend to take a lot of things for granted. They are not always inquisitive about everything. When the experts present very inviting statements about development and progress, people might just take it for granted that what experts say are really promising. To take things for granted can be myopic. People may believe that their own goals and dreams can be better facilitated by the know-how of the experts. To couple peoples' attitude of taking things for granted with the experts' confidence in their own ideas contributes to our social ills. When experts present what they believe are the most appropriate ways to live, people take for granted that they are shown the best. Soon, people undergo a historical transformation largely dependent on what experts say. Then, people are led to situations they do not really intend, with their children and grandchildren trapped in the same unfortunate fate. At the same time the experts, perceiving the people's disappointments, start blaming external economic or political forces, or worse, start accusing people of their failure to appreciate and cooperate with what are being done for them.

Let us make some final remarks regarding the state-of-affairs above. First, typifications are products of people; objective designs are products of experts. *Social members and social experts are humans*. They are not things. Things affect one another without having to define and interpret one another. The relations between things do not require their mutual approvals, disapprovals, conformity, or contrariety. When water boils it does not do so because it is complying with what heat expects. It does not decide on how to respond when fire is placed under it. Water does not know what it is doing, what it must do, and what it must not do. When heated, it simply steams, a matter of cause and

affect. What happens to a thing is an effect of external forces, what happens to society is born out of mutual interactions.

Social members tend to forget that they are the forces behind their own social orders and histories. They take the realities of their actions for granted. Their actions are attended to as if they are final, valid, and not in need of further questions. There seems to be nothing else wanting aside from what are typically done. Social members adapt to the course of the typical. So long as the typical actions are confirmed, social members find no need for further questions. The actions, having been successful, become the typical vital forces for the success of contemporary life. Having proven their success now, the actions are expected to be, again and again, successful in the future. Consequently, fitted into daily life is the forgetfulness of the human authorship underneath the typifications. The typical appears to be independent of and external to people as if the typical has always existed. Hence, anyone born into the milieu is told to internalize what he did not, in the first place, establish. He is molded into the contours of society's typifications. The typical originally egressed from human authors, but in the long run, became authors of human lives. People sustain the typical by adjusting themselves to them. Their lives thus become products of the typical.

The experts, on the other hand, may think of leaving behind peoples' typifications to enter into a more supposedly objective region. They study in famous universities and finish technical degree courses. They may even pursue and finish studies abroad or in the prestigious universities here. They are then equipped with a different set of typifications.

The structure of forgetfulness found within society is also found to be in the experts' regions. Experts take for granted that their scientific theories and findings are so obviously valid there is no need to ask if these are also human interpretations of society. Of course, it is naive to say that their training is useless and arbitrary. The great insights of the scientists in the past are not to be undermined. The point made here, however, is the fact that everything said about society, no matter how complex and scientific, are nonetheless related to the scientists' and experts' way of looking, perceiving, and interpreting. To forget this is to be drawn into false reifications. The fact of imposing designs on people can also be attributed to this failure of experts to see that their statements and insights are related to their own subjectivity. They think that their designs are external to themselves and to social members such that everyone simply has to conform to the external validities.

The philosophic critique of this essay is now evident: there is the need to confront the tendency to forget and even deny the importance of the subjective in defining social reality. A final remark can be offered. We must consider the pragmatic import of our analysis.

One of the trends today towards social transformation in education is what is commonly called "conscientization". Philosophy, although not appearing to be directly

engaged with the praxis of change, is today aware of its form of *reflection* which can be helpful to social transformation. Phenomenological-philosophical reflection makes explicit the relations between human subjectivity and its meaningful reality. Reflection inquires into the ways by which the human being gives meaning to his experiences. In a more technical language, reflection delineates the whole structure of consciousness and how consciousness establishes the significance of its experiences.²⁶ With regard to our concern in this essay, philosophic reflection can be said to *remind* us that social members and even the experts are human beings intrinsically related to the realities that they define. Secondly, reflection can be a tool describing how precisely the relations proceed. This will definitely awaken people's awareness to their own possibilities as authors of their own destiny. Instead of neglecting their humanity, people will be given the chance to rediscover their dignity as the essential component of their history. Finally, and in an existential sense, reflection can help people realize that whatever reality and history they establish, all these are nonetheless *merely* human products. This is not to degrade people. It is true that human finitude and human limitations produce finite and limited social orders. A society aware of its own limitations can also be careful of its ambitions and dreams. The philosophic analysis must stress this because when philosophy declares the final frontiers of being human, it readily assents to the exigency of religious Hope.

Philosophic analysis in the seminars of the Ateneo de Davao University social involvement programs is usually followed by theological reflections. It is really fitting to make theology the next area for social considerations because, after showing the human limits discussed by philosophy, theology opens avenues for a more transcendent and eternal reality.

²⁶Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, pp. 33-37.

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