

THE THEORY OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY IN THE WORK OF ALFRED SCHUTZ

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ABSTRACT. *The Theory of Intersubjectivity in the Work of Alfred Schutz.* The world of daily life is based on intersubjectivity, on the daily social interactions of the members of the community who live in common, each besides the others, undertaking a multitude of meaningful inter-relating activities sharing in the same time (the living present) and space. The intersubjectivity of the social world is built together with and for the others, whom I may effectively know by directly interacting with them, or whom I may not know at all. My relationship with these others may be of different degrees of closeness (when my experience of another is of a *We*-type relationship) or of foreignness (when my experience of my contemporary is of a *They*-type relationship). I'm directly experiencing the other, having immediate access to his subjectivity when we are engaged in a face-to-face interaction, which requires that we share a common sector of space and time.

Keywords: *intersubjectivity; the reality of everyday life; the mutual tuning-in relation, We-relationship; Thou-orientation; They-orientation; typifications; subjectivity*

Introduction

Our world is composed of many realities (the reality of daily life, the world of theatre, the world of play, the world of science, the world of dreams, the world of art, etc.),¹ that one may simultaneously access and which may yield different

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¹ „But there are several, probably an infinite number of various orders of realities, each with its own special and separate style of existence. James calls them »sub-universes« and mentions as examples *the world of sense or physical things* (as the paramount reality), the world of science, the world of ideal relations, the world of »idols of the tribe«, the various supernatural worlds of mythology and religion, the various worlds of individual opinion, the worlds of sheer madness and vagary.” Schutz (1945), 207.

„This world is certainly a »sub-universe« or »finite province of meaning« among many others, although one marked out as ultimate or paramount reality.” Schutz (1945), 230.

subjective experiences, experiences linked between them only by the fact they belong to the same subject. Between these realities, the reality of daily life is the supreme, primordial one. It is an inalienable reality, a self-evident fact that cannot be doubted in any circumstance, certain and shared through the reciprocal social interactions taking place between the members of the community that live in the common scene of life.²

The world of daily life is not a private world distinct for every singular individual, it is an intersubjective world, common to all the individuals, inside which they interact and act on the scene of life in function of their pragmatic individual interests.³ The world of daily life has existed since before my birth and will continue to exist when I shall be no more. For this reason, it may be considered as being continuous, the tense corresponding to it being the present continuous of the „here and now“. The actual present plays an essential role in the construction of daily-life reality, of social interactions and of the individual identity.⁴

² „As said, for Schutz the world is social, entirely and »from the start«. When a person comes into the world, the latter is already pre-given as cultural and intersubjective: a world built, shared, and handed down by others. The natural attitude itself, as a basic aspect of the everyday life-world, is social. I assume as given the objective, real, nature of the world and presume that my certainty is socially shared.“ Muzetto (2006), 19.

³ „We stated before that the world of daily life into which we are born is from the outset an intersubjective world. This implies on the one hand that this world is not my private one but common to all of us; on the other hand that within this world there exist fellow-men with whom I am connected by manifold social relationships.“ Schutz (1945), 218.

„In its broadest sense, he uses the term »life-world« (as Husserl uses the term »natural attitude« in *Ideas 1*) to designate the province of reality in which man continuously participates in ways which are at once inevitable and patterned“ (Schutz and Luckmann, 1973: 3). On other occasions (although inconsistent), he uses it to refer to a „world of working“ (*Wirkerewelt*) as distinct from a world of consciousness (1962: 222). Elsewhere it is a „background“ (1962: 57), and „the province of practice, of action“ (Schutz and Luckmann, 1973: 18). Costelloe (1996), 251.

This world, he declares for example, „is not my private world but an intersubjective one, and, therefore, my knowledge of it is not my private affair but from the outset intersubjective or socialized“ (Schutz, 1962: 11). Again, „the world of daily life is by no means my private world but is from the outset an intersubjective one“ (Schutz 1962: 312). Costelloe (1996), 253.

⁴ „In fact, the present is the privileged time frame for the construction of fundamental reality, of action, and of identity.“ Muzetto (2006), 5.

„The present truly remains the privileged time of human existence. The present is the time that plays a strategic role in the construction both of the reality of the everyday life-world and of the reality and identity of the Self.“ Muzetto (2006), 25.

The World of Everyday Life as an Intersubjective World

The world of daily life is based on intersubjectivity, on the daily social interactions of the members of the community who live in common, each besides the others, undertaking a multitude of meaningful inter-relating activities sharing in the same time (the living present) and space.⁵ Interaction with the other implies the other's existence as a possible receiver and interpreter of transmitted significance and this may take place only inside daily reality.

This means that any form of communication between an individual and others presupposes the objective taking place of an event or of a series of events in the exterior world that function, firstly as an expressive schema for the emitter's thoughts, and secondly as a perceptive and interpretative schema for the receiver, who assigns it meaning and classifies it into a certain category of events. In other words, communication with another implies the performance of certain (verbal and/or non-verbal) actions in daily life, actions that the other interprets as signs for the message which I want to transmit.⁶

The intersubjectivity of the social world is built together with and for the others, whom I may effectively know by directly interacting with them, or whom I may not know at all.⁷ My relationship with these others may be of different degrees of closeness/spontaneity (when my experience of another is of a *We*-type relationship) or of foreignness (when my experience of my contemporary is of a *They*-type relationship). I am directly experiencing the other, having immediate access to his subjectivity irrespectively of the degree of closeness of our relationship, when we are engaged in a face-to-face interaction, which requires that we share a common sector of space and time, both of us being situated in the „here and now“ present.

⁵ „The world of daily life is not a private world. It is common to my fellow men and me. Other men whom I experience in this world do not appear to me in identical perspectives. They present themselves to me under different aspects and my relations with them have different degrees of intimacy and anonymity.“ Schutz (1976), 22.

On the one hand, the intersubjective nature of the world must be assumed because „we live in it as men among other men, bound to them through common influence and work, understanding others and being understood by them“ (Schutz, 1962: 10). Costelloe (1996), 253.

⁶ „Social actions involve communication, and any communication is necessarily founded upon acts of working. In order to communicate with Others I have to perform overt acts in the outer world that are supposed to be interpreted by the Others as signs of what I mean to convey. Gestures, speech, writing, etc., are based upon bodily movements.“ Schutz (1945), 218.

⁷ „The world is experienced by the Self as being inhabited by other Selves, as being a world for others and of others.“ Schutz (1976), 20.

When engaged in face-to-face interaction, a member of the society orients his awareness towards the interlocutor, the latter either being considered as someone important for me or as a mere contemporary. This Thou-orientation constitutes a characteristic of the subjective consciousness of every human being, essential for the achievement of all social face-to-face interactions between the members of the community.⁸ Such orientation towards the other can be either a unilateral one (if you are ignoring my attempt at dialogue) or a reciprocal one (both dialogue partners turn towards each other and recognize each other as subjects).

Self and sociability are intertwined in a dialectics of intersubjectivity that emerges both in the interactions of the *We*-type as well as in those of the *They*-type.⁹ I am able to attain access to the whole self of another and to his awareness only through such face-to-face interactions taking place in the concrete present of „here and now“. Besides these instances, only a partial self of the other may be glimpsed, since a specific other cannot be defined in his totality through any past event (for example: when you are reading these sentences, through them you will have access only to what I have thought on the subject at the moment I was writing them, not to me as I am) or through projecting my knowledge of his past into a predicted future. Without direct face-to-face contact, one may reach only an abstracted other, considered as an individual of a certain type, who belongs in a certain category of individuals that have certain specific traits and that fulfil certain social roles.

1. The Mutual Orientation to the Other that is Specific to Face-to-face Interactions Within the *We-relationships*

A common intersubjective world, accessible to both individuals partaking in a face-to-face interaction, is built from material provided by the mesh of constant face-to-face interactions between the members of society and by concrete common experiences lived in *We-Relationships* or *Mutual-Tuning-in Relations*.¹⁰ The *We-*

⁸ Overall, Schutz (1967, p. 9) emphasizes, „Living in the world, we live with others and for others, orienting our lives to them“. Ritzer (2003), 361.

⁹ "Each of (the social world's) sphere and regions is both a way of perceiving and a way of understanding the subjected experiences of others". Selfhood and sociality are thus conjoined in a "dialectic of intersubjectivity" (Schutz 1964, p.145), which takes shape from *They-relationships* as well as *We-relationships*. In the end, Schutz scopus shows how thoroughly "They" and "We" are implicated with one another." Ritzer (2003), 361.

¹⁰ "The beginning point for an analysis of the intersubjective world is the *We-relationship* I share with those fellow-men with whom I participate in direct spatial-temporal encounter - my consociates. The experience of the *We* is primordial. It is gained by the presence of men in the world, not by

type relationship models the structure of face-to-face situations of human interactions, containing the essential characteristics for any social relation, and it is the only kind of dialogic relation in which we may find the intentional reciprocal orientation of individuals towards each other.¹¹ Interhuman relations of the *We*-type imply the reciprocation of the orientation towards the interlocutor, the sharing of one's thoughts and worldview realized in the „here and now“ present, the augmentation of knowledge on the other and on the surrounding environment, and the construction of a common world based on an already recognized and shared structure of relevance.¹²

The reciprocal orientation towards the other presupposes my direct experience of the other considered as a conscious person, an individuality coexisting with me in spatial and temporal proximity, having life and consciousness similar to mine.¹³

induction or a theoretical proof. We come here to an experiential bedrock of the social: the *We* of direct, shared, face-to-face encounter is, from the standpoint of the ego's participation in the social world, an experience *sui generis*." Natanson (1970), 109.

"Rather, "the world of the *We* is not private to either of us, but is our world, the one common intersubjective world which is right there in front of us. It is only from the face-to-face relationship, from the common lived experience of the world in the *We*, that the intersubjective world can be constituted. This alone is the point from which it can be deduced."" Natanson (1970), 110.

"Two reciprocal Thou-orientations form a *We*-relation, the nucleus of the social world, 'the systemic root of a shared world' (Natanson, 1977: 110)." Muzzetto (2006), 20.

¹¹ „Hence, we may say that concrete social relations in face-to-face situations are founded upon the pure *We*-relation. Not only is the latter logically prior to the former in the sense that it contains the essential features of any such social relation; the grasp of the specific traits of the partner which is an element of concrete social relations presupposes the community of space and time which characterizes the pure *We*-relation. The pure *We*-relation may be thus also considered as a formal concept designating the structure of concrete social relations in the face-to-face situation." Schutz (1976), 28.

„Schutz, in his phenomenological studies on the social world, has systematically analysed the nature of social relationships between individuals, and has arrived at an originating point involving intersubjectivity. This point is described by what he calls the Pure *We*-relationship." Grinnell (1983), 185.

„All the other manifold social relationships are derived from the originary experiencing of the totality of the Other's self in the community of time and space. Any theoretical analysis of the notion of »environment« – one of the least clarified terms used in present social sciences – would have to start from the face-to-face relation as a basic structure of the world of daily life." Schutz (1945), 221.

¹² „Third, and most important, there is thereby constituted a »*We*-relation« – a relation that transcends both of the individually unique biographical situations- in terms of which you and I, »*We*« share in a living present, which is our living present, the thoughts embodied in your speech." Zaner (1961), 82.

¹³ „An essential feature of this »Thou-orientation« is that the other person exist, but not that he have characteristics of one kind or another." As Schutz (1967 p. 163) puts it, „It is the pure mode in which I am aware of another human being as a person". Grinnell (1983), 188.

Therefore, the orientation towards the other is a meaningful form of communication taking place between individuals that recognize each other and relate to one another as subjects, being open one towards the other as well as towards the significance of their individual actions; in other words, they have unconditional trust in each other.¹⁴

Openness towards the other implies preoccupation for him, caring for what happens inside and outside him, with the same attention and interest that he has for his own self, as well as attention to and responsibility for one's own actions, in order to obtain the desired response from the other,¹⁵ proving the efficiency of the interaction.¹⁶ The open orientation towards the other maintains and sustains the possibility of reciprocation from the other, the possibility that the other will adopt the same attitude, preoccupation and interest towards me, in other words it offers

„Through the turning towards the Other which Schutz calls Thou-orientation, I apprehend the Other directly, as a person, as a being like me. The Thou-orientation is a universal form in which an Other is experienced »in person«” (Schutz and Luckmann, 1973: 62). „This is how I apprehend the Other's subjectivity.” Muzetto (2006), 19.

„To say that the world is experienced as »ours« from the outset is to hold that my fellow-man is initially recognized as a »someone« (not a »something«) and, further, a someone like me. In my face-to-face encounter with the Other, it is he as person who is grasped rather than a creature with the anatomical features which permit the human observer to classify him as a member of the same genus. It is in what Schutz terms the »Thou-orientation« that the Other is experienced as a person: I am already Thou-oriented from the moment that I recognize an entity which I directly experience as a fellow-man (as a Thou), attributing life and consciousness to him. However, we must be quite clear that we are not here dealing with a conscious judgment. This is a prepredicative experience in which I become aware of a fellow human being as a person.” Natanson (1970), 103.

¹⁴ „In-order-to become aware of such a situation, I must consciously pay attention to a fellow-man, to a human being confronting me in person. We shall term this awareness *Thou-orientation*.” Schutz (1976), 24.

„The Other must make it possible for me to respond, and I must make it possible in advance for him to appeal, by my very being open to him. This »must« expresses the condition without which the We-relation could not arise: »being open to« or availability. By »giving credit to« or »keeping faith with« the Other, as a Thou, a genuinely creative reciprocity becomes possible. This »mutual tuning-in relation«, then, whose fundamental stratum is the interlocking of time dimensions, becomes an interlocking of mutually recognizing actions, that is, a mutual tuning-in of reciprocal concern: love.” Zaner (1961), 93.

¹⁵ „Thus the genuine appeal is a free act, »without strings«. The We-relation stands under the possibility which is essential to it, of failure; it is accompanied by a fundamental risk, and therefore it is constituted as a test, or trial (*épreuve*); for this reason it is essentially subject to betrayal, by the Other as well as by myself.” Zaner (1961), 92.

¹⁶ „Accordingly, to be open to the Other as a Thou, and thus to the subjective meaning of his actions, is possible only in so far as I »give him credit«, at the outset and without strings for being a person; that is, to be open to him is to care what happens to him as himself. I must make it possible in the first place for the Other to become himself; what happens after depends on this.” Zaner (1961), 92.

the other the necessary means to answer my expectations and to be, and remain, open towards me.¹⁷

a) The Access to the Other's Subjectivity. Understanding the Subjective Significance of My Partner's Actions Within the Dialogical We-relationship

a.1. Direct observations. The analyse of the verbal and non-verbal corporal clues of my dialogue partner as a mark of his expressiveness

Face-to-face interaction gives me access to the subjectivity of the other, enabling me to obtain a pure experience of him (the experience of his personhood) considered as a conscious human being similar to me, without permitting direct access to the specific content of this conscience.¹⁸ I acknowledge and accept that despite the fact that we live in the same common world of daily life, each individual is unique in his biographical situation, distinct from all others in his thought and in his subjective life, each having his own distinct experiences, his own interiority, his own points of view, his own system of relevance.¹⁹

¹⁷ „Holding myself open to the Other, I hold out to him the possibility for his own being open to me. Care, in this sense, is precisely a creative reciprocity in which, by my »tuning-in« to the Other, and his to me, I in some way make it possible for him to respond freely to me: caring for him, I make it possible for him to be able to care for me (and, dialectically for himself). I collaborate in his freedom and he in mine, and it is precisely through freedom that he is truly Other and I truly myself.” Zaner (1961), 93.

¹⁸ „All experience of social reality is founded on the fundamental axiom positing the existence of other beings »like me« (Schutz and Luckmann, 1973: 61). I know – all of us who live in the natural attitude 'know' – with absolute certainty that the Other is similar to me and is endowed with a body and a consciousness like I am. Yet, even in the sphere of the everyday world within my actual reach and representing my centre of reality, I can directly assure myself only of the existence of the Other's body, not of his consciousness, to which I have no direct access. Nevertheless, I assume with absolute certainty that the Other is a psychophysical unit. I interpret the changes I see in the Other's body as signs of a conscious experience. I 'know' that the lived experience is 'co-present'.” Muzetto (2006), 19.

¹⁹ „»How is a common world«, Schutz asks, »in terms of common intentionalities possible? « How, that is to say, does it come about that in spite of the fact that I, being »here« and the centre »O« for a system of coordinates defining my surrounding world, and you, being »there« and the centre »O« for a similar set of coordinates defining your surrounding world (you forming a part of my surrounding world and me forming a part of yours)- how do we come to have something in common (an object, a project, ultimately a common world)? How is it possible that although I cannot live in your seeing of things, cannot feel your love and hatred, cannot have an immediate and direct perception of your mental life as it is for you- how is it possible that I can nevertheless share your thoughts, feelings and attitudes? For Schutz the »problem« of intersubjectivity is here encountered in its full force.” Zaner (1961), 75–76.

Starting from here, I may understand the other, relate to him and form an opinion on him, in function of how he appears to me. I do not have access to what goes on in his mind nor to what reasons guide his actions. I may only observe his reactions, his non-verbal expressions and the behaviour he adopts during face-to-face interactions with me, trying to decipher the subjective significances of his actions and the interest he is investing in our conversation and in me as a dialogue partner. Each action and experience lived by someone has only one true subjective significance, the way in which it really is perceived by its author. I may approximate this significance only through interior reflection and analysis of the verbal and non-verbal messages emitted by him during face-to-face interaction. The subjective significance perceived by each of the members of the interaction can never be perfectly identical with that perceived by the other participant, or, for that matter, by an outside observer, since each individual, in his uniqueness, has a unique vantage point, a unique perspective, lodged in his individual experience.²⁰

I participate in the other's conscious life the moment I am engaged in a concrete *We*-type relationship and am interacting face-to-face with that other, who is present in front of me with a maximum of symptoms of his subjectivity.²¹ To participate in the other's conscious life and in the construction of his verbal experiences is not the same as talking with the other. To talk with the other means to transmit messages and to receive information in return. For participating in the construction of the other's verbal experiences inside a *We*-type relationship, I must not only be attentive and receptive to the information I'm receiving, but I also must reach an understanding of the other's subjective interpretation and significance of his own words and experiences.²²

„But Schutz asks, is then communication, whether by means of the spoken word, the expressive gesture, or a non-cognitive communicative scheme (such as music)- or does communication presuppose, on the contrary, the existence of a more fundamental social interaction, which would then be the basic intersubjective connection between man and fellowman? This question is obviously central, not only for philosophy but also for the social sciences in general.” Zaner (1961), 76.

²⁰ „This definitive circumstance means social scientists need to remain vividly aware of how the meaning of my action necessarily differs for the actor, for the actor's partner in a *We*-relationship, and for the observer who is not a participant in that relationship (Schutz, 1962, p. 24). We have already seen that lived *we*-relationships vary enormously in immediacy, intimacy, and intensity, so that the »outside« observer and the »inside« participant are more or less dissimilar in their points of view. They cannot make precisely the same objective sense of the actor's subjective meaning. Their respective positions entitle them to differing degrees of familiarity with and knowledge of the actor's relevancies, biographical situation, and typical in-order-to and because motives.” Ritzer (2003), 369.

²¹ „This relationship in which the partners are aware of each other and sympathetically participate in each other's lives, for however short a time, Schutz calls the »Pure *We*-relationship«.” Grinnell (1983), 188.

²² „If you speak to me, for example, I understand the objective sign-meaning of the words. But, since I »participate« in the step-by-step constitution of your speaking experiences in the contemporaneity of the *We*-relation, I may also apprehend the subjective configuration of meaning in which the words stand for you.” Schutz (1976), 25–26.

The experiences shared inside the living present of face-to-face interactions do not belong exclusively to either of the members of the interaction, belonging to both in common. I will relate to these experiences as to indicators of the subjective intentions of the other, based on my experience of the other as a peer who shares experiences with me inside the spatial and temporal community, which is the *We*-type relationship. This means that in order to be able to understand the subjective configuration of the words the other is transmitting, it is necessary that both of us situate ourselves in a *We*-type relationship.

Empirical observation of the other will enable me to associate aspects of my own consciousness with aspects of the other's consciousness. Each may understand the other in the „here and now“, in the immediate flux of his own subjective consciousness, on the basis of empirical observation of the behaviour, gestures and attitudes manifested by the other during the face-to-face interaction.²³ During face-to-face communication, thought is articulated through verbal expressions which are necessarily accompanied by non-verbal corporal clues (the intonation of the voice, facial expressions, gestures, body posture, the direction of the gaze) that, if observed, may be attributed meaning.

The objective aspect of the face-to-face communicative act, in both its verbal and non-verbal elements, enables the bridging of the intersubjective gap separating the distinct consciousness of the dialogue partners situated in the *We*-type relationship, leading to a quasi-simultaneity or synchronization of their thought processes.²⁴ This is the experience of an *alter ego* that is to be found in the simultaneity of the concrete present, described in the work of Alfred Schutz as „the general thesis of the existence of an *alter ego*“.²⁵ Due to this simultaneity, both of

²³ „But only in the ongoing *We*-relation may I directly apprehend the outcome of my partner's plans by witnessing the course of his action.“ Schutz (1976), 31.

²⁴ „The social relationship, therefore, consists of a mutual *Thou*-orientation between the person and the other. It takes place in the »face-to-face« situation that is characterized by »spatial and temporal immediacy« between the individuals. It is the occasion when there is an actual simultaneity with each other of two separate streams of consciousness“ (Schutz 1967, p. 163), „as was described earlier“. Grinnell (1983), 188.

²⁵ „Only in my straightforward attitude do I apprehend the Other as himself present, given. Thus, for Schutz, the alter ego is that subjective stream of thought that can be experienced in its living present. I experience the Other straightforwardly in the living present as that subjective stream of thought with which I share this present in simultaneity; that is we grow older together. This experience of the alter ego in living simultaneity Schutz calls »the general thesis of the alter ego's existence«. The thesis implies, he goes on, that this stream of thought that is not mine shows the same fundamental structure as my own consciousness. This means that the other is like me, capable of acting and thinking; that his stream of thoughts shows the same through and through connectedness as mine. ... It means, furthermore, that the other can live, as I do, in his either acts or thoughts, directed towards their objects or turn to his own

us experience our actions as a series of events that takes place in an exterior time, as well as in the interior time of the perception of each, the two dimensions of time joining in a single flux, the concrete present specific to the reality of daily life.²⁶ The expressed thoughts of the other become through exteriorization a common element of the living present, which both dialogue partners share during face-to-face interaction.

Understanding specific aspects of the other's conscious life as elements of concrete face-to-face social relations is interdependent on the commonality of space and time as essential aspects of the *We*-type relationship. We both share a connection between us in the space-time commonality offered by daily reality. In a *We*-type relationship, the self of the other reflects mine, me being a part of the other's world while the other is a part of mine, each one's own experiences becoming our, shared in the exterior world of daily life. In this case, we may say that the two partners grow old together, sharing each other in the interior and exterior dimensions of the concrete present.²⁷ My experience of the other is a direct one for as long as I am involved with him in a *We*-type relationship, in which I participate to the common flux of our shared experience, I recognize the other as

acting and thinking that, consequently, he has the genuine experience of growing old with me, as I know that I do with him. Thus I share the *We*-sphere straightforwardly, but I apprehend the *I*-sphere only reflectively." Zaner (1961), 83–84.

„Therefore, I can experience the lived behaving of the other (i.e., in the flow of duration) even though it is inaccessible to the other. Similarly, the other can experience my behaving even though it is inaccessible to me. As a result, I can define the alter ego as »that subjective stream of thought which can be experienced in its vivid present«. One's experience of the other's stream of consciousness in the vivid present, Schutz (1962, p. 174) calls the »general thesis of the alter ego's existence«.“ Grinnell (1983), 187.

²⁶ „In simultaneity we experience the working action as a series of events in outer and inner time, unifying both dimensions into a single flux which shall be called the living present.“ Zaner (1961), 81.

„This sharing of the other's flux of experiences in inner time, this living through a living present in common, constitutes the mutual tuning-in relationship, the experience of the »We« which is at the foundation of all possible communication, »and thus of intersubjectivity.«“ Zaner (1961), 81.

²⁷ „In the face-to-face situation the fellowman and I were partners in a concrete *We*-relation. He was present in person, with a maximum of symptoms by which I could apprehend his conscious life. In the community of space and time we were attuned to one another; his Self reflected mine; his experiences and my experiences formed a common stream, *our* experience; we grew older together.“ Schutz (1976), 38.

„My participating in simultaneity in the ongoing process of the Other's communicating establishes therefore a new dimension of time. He and I, *we* share, while the process lasts, a common vivid present, *our* vivid present, which enables him and me to say: »*We* experienced this occurrence together«. By the *We*-relation, thus established, we both – he, addressing himself to me, and I, listening to him, – are living in our mutual vivid present, directed toward the thought to be realized in and by the communicating process. *We grow older together.*“ Schutz (1945), 219–220.

a subject and I am attentive and receptive to what the other transmits me.²⁸ Now I reflect on our common experiences, on the other and on the relation between us, I no longer have direct access to the other's experiences, distancing myself from the other, severing the link of the *We*-type relationship and, implicitly, the face-to-face interaction.²⁹ In this situation, I shall no longer consider my peer as a fellow subject equal with me in rights and freedoms, as being actively involved in a *We*-type relationship and as a dialogue partner with whom I was sharing similar experiences. The other will become a simple object for my thoughts, while I shall no longer harbour any interest on what he may try to transmit me.³⁰

a.2. The reciprocity of perspectives. „To take the role of the other“ in order to see things from his point of view

During daily life, the individual is capable of reaching understanding of the other's actions only by placing himself in the other's place and imagining that he would be in the same situation as the other, performing the same actions, determined by the same motives as the other. In order to be able to adopt the point of view of the other, the individual temporarily has to become, from a participant in face-to-face interaction, an astute observer of the other's manifest actions as dialogue partner.³¹

²⁸ „My experience of the fellow-man is direct as long as I am straightforwardly engaged in the *We*-relation, that is, as long as I participate in the common stream of our experiences. If I think and reflect about our experience, this directness is broken. I must interrupt my straightforward engagement in the *We*-relation. In a manner of speaking, I must step outside the face-to-face situation. While I was engaged in the *We*-relation, I was busy attending to you; in order to think about it, I must break off the immediate rapport between us. Before I can reflect about our common experience its vivid phases, in which we were jointly engaged, must have come to a stop.“ Schutz (1976), 26–27.

²⁹ „Straightforward engagement in the *We*-relation is possible only in the ongoing experiences of a face-to-face situation, while reflection is *ex post facto*. It begins after the concrete *We*-relation has come to an end.“ Schutz (1976), 27.

³⁰ „The more I am involved in reflecting upon the common experience, the less directly do I live it and the remoter is the living, concrete human being who is my partner in the *We*-relation. The fellow-man whom I experience directly while I am busily engaged in our common experience becomes a mere object of my thought as I begin to reflect about us.“ Schutz (1976), 27.

³¹ „An utterance that momentarily upsets or disorients a partner in a close *We*-relationship, typically reflects at least a short term disjuncture between the relevancies of the speaker and those of the listener. Beyond such relationships, the failure to understand – that is, the failure to grasp the subjective meaning of an Other's action – points to a standing divergence between Ego's and Other's systems of relevancies. In order to understand the Other, Ego must temporarily set aside his or her own relevancies enough to adopt the Other's point of view and thus grasp what she or he meant by a given action or a course of actions.“ Ritzer (2003), 367.

Understanding the other's action requires one to "take the role of the other", as George Herbert Mead has written in "Mind, Self and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviourist", as well as Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, in "The Social Construction of Reality". In the works of Alfred Schutz this concept appears as „reciprocation of perspectives", which describes the process enabling individuals to construct an intersubjective world,³² by starting from accepting the assumption of the uniqueness of all individuals, each with his own opinions and perspectives on both his peers and the social world. Even if the access to the subjectivity of the other is a direct one and even if both of us are sharing the same space-time dimensions, it does not mean that I can transpose myself in the other's person, experiencing what the other feels or thinks.³³

The reciprocation of perspectives requires that both observer and observed share the same system of relevance, homogenous in its structure and content, by which they assume their stance towards every action. In the absence of such a shared system of relevance, it will not be possible for individuals to reach a common understanding of the subjective significance they attribute their actions, each one believing in the rationality of their own actions, while distrusting the correctitude of those made by the other.³⁴ What is relevant for one of the individuals might not be for another, due to their different practical purposes. In such a case, the individuals cannot reach an understanding of the subjective meaning of each other's actions, because their systems of relevance are in disjunction, instead of being joined, shared, as they are in a *We*-type relationship.

³² „The third postulate – the »reciprocity of perspectives« – is designed to demonstrate how individuals, despite being separated by time and space, manage to constitute an intersubjective world." Costelloe (1996), 254.

³³ „As fellow-man, however, I can share a great deal with the Other: I can gain direct access to him as a Thou in the *We*-relationship and I can share a certain dimension of time through the fact that my alter ego and I grow older together. But even in these immediacies, I do not »become« the Other nor do I enter mysteriously into his lived experience. Sharing is not invading." Natanson (1970), 113.

³⁴ „Schutz (1962, p. 29) emphasized that the general thesis of the reciprocity of perspectives ... presupposes that the observed and the observer are sharing a system of relevancies sufficiently homogeneous in structure and content for the practical purpose involved. If this is not the case, then a course of action which is perfectly rational from the point of view of the actor may appear as non-rational to the partner or observer or vice versa." Ritzer (2003), 366.

b) The Access to my Own Subjectivity. The Importance of the Reciprocity of Perspectives Within the Interior Self-reflection

The necessity for the reciprocation of perspectives and for taking on the role of the other in order to understand the subjective significance of the other's actions underline the essential part played by our peers both during daily life interactions as well as at the moment when an individual may gain access to his own subjectivity through interior reflection, exercised both on his own person as well as on his interactions with others during face-to-face interactions, placing himself in the place of the others and trying to see the situation through their points of view. This attests the fact that the individual is never utterly alone, neither in his daily social life, nor in his own interiority.

Face-to-face interactions are the only kind of interactions through which I may gain access both to the subjectivity of the other and to my own. Each one may have access to his own self, his own subjective consciousness only through retrospective interior reflection on past experiences that have made their mark upon him, stored in his long time memory. When engaged in self-reflection, I shall have to take into account the image I have formed on the other during our face-to-face dialogue and to consider also the other's opinion, his point of view on me, which the other has directly expressed at that moment, even if I am aware that there is a strong possibility that our perception of what happened in our environment has changed with age.³⁵ I can remember the other's opinion based on the symptoms of his subjectivity, still alive in my memory. The facility with which I can recall the body language expressions transmitted by the other during our face-to-face dialogue is due to the benefit of the *We*-type relationship, which allows both partners the possibility of verifying, correcting and enriching their knowledge of each other, as well as that of their social world, by having lived alongside each other for a certain time span.

My self-knowledge is a detailed one, since I have access to the memory of my past, to the experiences I have accumulated in time and to the events that have marked me. It is a retrospective knowledge, based on interior reflection upon one's self. However, the symptoms of my subjectivity are not as accessible to my

³⁵ „When I have a recollection of you ... I remember you as you were in a concrete *We*-relationship with me. I remember you as a unique person in a concrete situation, as one who interacted with me in the mode of »mutual mirroring« described above. I remember you as a person vividly present to me with a maximum of symptoms of inner life, as one whose experiences I witnessed in the actual process of formation. I remember you as one whom I was for a time coming to know better and better. I remember you as one whose conscious life flowed in one stream with my own. I remember you as one whose consciousness was continuously changing in content.” Ritzer (2003), 359.

introspection as those of the other are through empirical observation on the body language expressions transmitted by the other during the living „here and now” present from inside a *We*-type relationship.³⁶ For this reason, it is considered that the pure sphere of the *We*-type relationship concerns the fact that I know the other better than he knows himself and vice versa. I have immediate access to the subjectivity of the other and a better knowledge on him due to the meeting of our gazes and the reciprocation of our mirroring in each other’s eyes, these being possible only in the framework of face-to-face interaction from inside the *We*-type relationship. Because of this, it is considered that each one is the witness of the birth the individual experiences of one's dialogue partner, and of the reciprocal orientation towards the other.³⁷

2. *They*-orientation Within the Social Interactions Between Individuals as Contemporaries

Our experience of others becomes distanced or anonymous when, despite the fact that we turn our attention towards them, there is no face-to-face interaction. In such a case, the other is no longer considered as being my partner in a *We*-type relationship, but only as a contemporary of mine.³⁸ The relationship between individuals as merely contemporaries is essentially characterized by being oriented towards *Them*.

³⁶ „Since I perceive the continuous manifestations of my partner's conscious life I am continuously attuned to it. One highly important consequence of this state of affairs is the fact that my partner is given to me more vividly and, in a sense, more »directly« than I apprehend myself. Since I »know« my past, I »know« myself in infinitely greater detail than anyone else. Yet this is knowledge in retrospect, in reflection; it is not direct and vivid experience. Hence, while I am straightforwardly engaged in the business of life, my own self is not present to me in an equally wide range of symptoms as is a fellow-man whom I confront in the Here and Now of a concrete *We*-relation.” Schutz (1976), 29.

³⁷ „The lived *we*-relationship stunning possibilities. It means that I can »keep peace with each moment of (my partner’s) stream of consciousness as it transpires« thus making me »better attuned to him (or her) than I am to myself«; it means that whether we join hands or not, we do join glances, eventuating in an »interlocking of glances« and a »thousand – faceted mirroring of each other«; it means that we »witness the literal coming-to-birth of each other’s experiences«.” Ritzer (2003), 35.

³⁸ „... the ego is able to advance from the experience of the Thou in the *We*-relationship to the increasing stages of anonymization which mark its genesis and destiny as a contemporary with other contemporaries, as a successor to predecessors, and as a predecessor to successors.” Natanson (1970), 111.

The orientation towards *Them* is the mode in which our awareness grasps contemporary individuals with whom we have never interacted until present or such individuals with whom there has been face-to-face interaction inside a *We*-type relationship, but it was since discontinued.³⁹ My partner from the *We*-type relationship becomes my contemporary when the face-to-face interaction ceases. At that instant, the other disappears from the concretely lived present of my awareness, although the link that has already been established between us persists, as our knowledge of and feelings for each other continue to exist.⁴⁰ We continue to share the same temporality even when spatial contiguity ceases. I know that he continues to exist in the same present as it is here (for me; but we do no longer share the same physical environment, being in different places from each other) and now (which we continue to share as contemporaries).

We both continue to exist in the same present of now, time flowing the same for both of us, but we no longer have access to each other's subjectivity, no longer being in the face-to-face interaction of the present of here. The relation between people that are not present simultaneously in the same place is different from face-to-face interaction, where the emphasis was on the reciprocal mirroring of gazes and on having direct experience of the dialogue partner, an experience that persisted in its effectiveness even after the actual interaction has ceased.

At the end of the face-to-face interaction, when the other becomes merely a contemporary, from being my peer in a *We*-type relationship, I cease to have direct access to his subjective life. When I am experiencing the other as merely a contemporary, it is an experience of an abstracted individual, characterized by a high degree of anonymity and impersonality, while the immediateness of the experience is greatly diminished, lacking the directness of the face-to-face situation.⁴¹ I can no longer immediately experience the existence of the other, lacking direct access to

³⁹ „Contemporaries are not present in person, but I do know of their co-existence with me in time: I know that the flux of their experiences is simultaneous with mine. This knowledge, however, is necessarily indirect. Hence, the contemporary is not a Thou in the pregnant sense that this term has in a *We*-relation. These terms describe the social topography of my Here and Now, whose contents are, of course, continuously changing. The reference point is always my present experiences. A mere contemporary may be a former fellow-man, and I may be counting on meeting him again face-to-face in a recurrent pattern.” Schutz (1976), 42.

⁴⁰ „As a rule we see no reason why a fellow-man who was a partner in a concrete *We*-relation, with whom we interacted, whom we have loved or hated, should turn into something »different« merely because he happens to be absent at the moment. We still love him or hate him, as the case may be, and nothing in the routine of everyday life compels us to notice that our experience of him underwent a significant structural modification.” Schutz (1976), 38.

⁴¹ „In contrast to the way I experience the conscious life of fellowmen in face-to-face situations, the experiences of contemporaries appear to me more or less *anonymous* processes.” Schutz (1976), 43.

his individuality and uniqueness. Since we cannot directly interact with those who are our contemporaries, our understanding of them must be a deductive and discursive one, made up out of interpretative schema that correspond only to the social world in general and to our set of expectations with regard to them. These expectations stem from the previously had face-to-face interactions with the respective other and will be either confirmed or denied by the next face-to-face interaction with him.⁴² I have to start from the premise that the other has remained unchanged since the last time I saw him, although I am theoretically aware that he must have accumulated various new experiences while we lacked direct contact. Without the concrete quality of the face-to-face interaction, I can relate to him only in this way, until such time as we meet again face-to-face, giving me the possibility to confirm or modify my presuppositions.⁴³

The *They*-type relationship refers to anonymous individuals that are framing each other reciprocally under a certain typology, as being a certain kind of individuals, instead of considering each other in their concreteness, as subjects whose consciousness may be directly experienced in a *We*-type relationship.⁴⁴ In other words, if in *We*-type relationships the interactions are taking place between concrete singular subjects, each unique in their biographical situations that cannot be generalized, in *They*-type relationships the interactions are taking place between types of individuals considered as anonymous, typified, the uniqueness of whom is disregarded, and who are being assigned to a certain social group with whom they presumably share common passions, activities, responsibilities etc.⁴⁵ The other is

⁴² „I ascribe, therefore, to my partner a scheme of typifications and expectations relative to me as a personal ideal type. A social relation between contemporaries consists in the subjective chance that the reciprocally ascribed typifying schemes (and corresponding expectations) will be used congruently by the partners.” Schutz (1976), 53.

⁴³ „I hold on to the familiar image I have of you. I take it for granted that you are, as I have known you before. Until further notice I hold invariant that segment of my stock of knowledge which concerns you and which I have built up in face-to-face situations, that is, until I receive information to the contrary.” Schutz (1976), 39.

⁴⁴ „The object of the *They*-orientation is my knowledge of social reality in general, of the conscious life of other human beings in general, regardless of whether the latter is imputed to a single individual or not. The object of the *They*-orientation is not the existence of a concrete man, not the ongoing conscious life of a fellow-man which is directly experienced in the *We*-relation, not the subjective configuration of meaning which I apprehend if experiences of a fellow-man constitute themselves before my eyes.” Schutz (1976), 43.

⁴⁵ „The ideal type is anonymous in relation to any existing person. Hence, the contemporary – who can be apprehended only as an ideal type – is anonymous in this sense.” Schutz (1976), 48.

„As social relations in face-to-face situations are based on the »pure« *Thou*-orientation, so are social relations between contemporaries based on the »pure« form of the *They*-orientation. This means that while face-to-face social relations are constituted in the reciprocal mirroring of direct

no longer considered as a subject, being reduced to the status of an object, an animated utensil, and our relationship itself becomes typified, empty of life, thus meaningless.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, considering concrete individuals as individual types has its uses in orienting oneself through society, since ideal types are more easily understood as concrete living individuals are, because the common stock of social knowledge available to all members of society offers detailed information on ideal individual types and not on actual individual people with their subjective life. The other as my contemporary remains relevant to me only insofar as he proves to be a typical performer of the social role I have attributed to him, therefore for as long as I remain oriented towards him as towards an individual type in general and not as a specific individual.

If in *We*-type relationships, the emphasis is on understanding the subjective meaning of the other's actions, in *They*-type relationships it lies on typifying the behaviour, actions and attitudes of my contemporary. I will deduct and typify both the behaviour and the actions of my contemporary in function of the characteristics of the type of individual under which I have classified him.

experiences of the Other, the Other is given only as an ideal type in social relations between contemporaries. A person involved in a social relation with a contemporary must be content with reckoning that the Other whom he grasps by a more or less anonymous typification is in his turn oriented to him by means, of typification. Social relations involving mere contemporaries have a hypothetical character." Schutz (1976), 53.

„Only in the face-to-face relation, however fugitive and superficial it may be, is the Other encountered as a unique individual, with his own biographically determined situation. In all other dimensions of the social world, the Other is experienced and apprehended as »typical«, in terms of typical motives, attitudes and behaviour. Nevertheless, Schutz emphasizes, even in the face-to-face relation of consociates, the partners enter into social action with only a part of their respective personalities; that is, you and I encounter and have to do with one another most often in terms of »social roles«." Zaner (1961), 88.

⁴⁶ „In the They-relation my partners are not concrete and unique individuals, but types." Schutz (1976), 45.

„In order to grasp the concept of fullness, it seems fruitful to turn to the work of Gabriel Marcel, who, in emphasizing that the concepts of »the full« and »the empty« are far more descriptive of human reality than any other, seems to use these concepts in much the same way that Schutz intends them. Similarly, Marcel has shown throughout is work that in so far as I regard the Other as a mere object (in Schutz's terms, as »typical« or »anonymous«), I tend to ignore him as this person, and he becomes »just anyone«. As a consequence of this reduction our relationship more and more »empty« (»typified« or »anonymous«), my fellowman becomes typified and consequently myself am typified (absorbed in »playing a role«, that is, in »shamming«). Conversely, the more I am able to understand him from his subjectivity (the subjective meaning is actions have for him), or as a Thou, the more intimate he becomes to me: »our« relationship becomes »fuller«, we are truly »with« one another and we confront each other as persons." Zaner (1961), 91.

Conclusion

The *They*-type relationship, in which I consider my contemporary as an anonymous individual, part of a category of individuals having in common certain characteristic traits, may become again a *We*-type relationship, but this last one cannot be identical with the pure relationship of before, in which we have been involved as dialogue partners.

The passage from the *They*-type relationship back to the *We*-type one takes place in the moment we find ourselves again in a face-to-face situation where I will have to apply the typifications I am using on my contemporary who, in this case, is proven a concrete individual, whose conscious life unfolds before my eyes. As this interaction is happening in the „here and now“ present, I will have to consider my contemporary as both a type of individual and as singular.⁴⁷ My access to his conscious life will not be a direct one, as it was in the case of the pure *We*-type relationship, requiring an act of interpretation.⁴⁸ In other words, we find ourselves again in a face-to-face situation where each of us will have to correlate our presuppositions and expectations concerning each other with the actuality of the other's presence.

Since memory tends to abstract the lived encounter, classifying the encountered other as an intelligible instance of an ideal type, this typification that the other has underwent through in my consciousness in the interim of his actual absence from face-to-face interaction must be overcome for me to be able to relate to him as to a living subjectivity (the same requirement standing for the other as well).

⁴⁷ „The objective matrix of meaning which originated in the construction of typical experiences of typical contemporaries, coordinated with typical performances, may be retranslated into subjective configurations of meaning. I apply the typifications that are part of my stock of knowledge to concrete fellow men in face-to-face situations. I apprehend the fellow-men as individuals »like others« of a designated type. At the same time, these fellow men, as partners in a *We*-relation, are experienced directly. Therefore, they are »people like others« and yet unique individuals, endowed with a conscious life which goes on before my eyes. This double status of a fellow-man is the basis of a further, more complex transposition: the contemporary who is basically apprehended by me as a type is conceived of as an individual endowed with a »genuine« ongoing conscious life. However, I do not grasp his conscious life directly, but only by an act of interpretation. Therefore, the contemporary ultimately remains a type whose consciousness, too, is »typical« and, in that sense, homogeneous.” Schutz (1976), 47.

⁴⁸ „The existence of the contemporary is not directly experienced, whether it be assumed, considered likely, or even taken for granted.” Schutz (1976), 48.

A passage from *They*-type to *We*-type relationship takes place, for example, in the case of an individual attending a stage play.⁴⁹ For as long as the staged performance happens, the individual, as spectator, is situated in face-to-face interaction with the actor on stage, but the actor will not relate to the individual spectator in a similar fashion, considering the respective spectator just as an anonymous individual, part of the public.

Another passage from *They*-type to *We*-type relationship is the one through which a new *We*-type relationship is established during a first face-to-face encounter. The other encountered here was previously just a contemporary, possibly utterly unknown, and hence completely anonymous with regard to his subjective character. My first impressions on the other are necessarily of a typifying kind, and these must be passed through in order to reach understanding of and contact with the subjectivity of the other.

As this interaction is happening in the „here and now“ present, I will have to consider my contemporary as both a type of individual and as singular. My access to his conscious life will not be a direct one, as it was in the case of the pure *We*-type relationship, requiring the interpretation of the symptoms of the other's subjectivity that are unfolding before me. A similar process, and a similar willingness to understand me, must take place on the other side. Finally, a common ground of shared values and interests must be found before the new *We*-type relationship may be established.

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⁴⁹ „In general, we must observe that the transition between the structure of *We*-relations and the structure of *They*-relations is fluid. When I attend a performance in a theatre, for example, I am face-to-face with the actor. Yet I am relevant for the actor merely as an anonymous member of the audience.“ Schutz (1976), 54.

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