

Phenomenology and Sociological Research: The Constitution of “Friendship”

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This analysis combines phenomenological and sociological research for an investigation of the social relationship of “friendship”. From a phenomenological perspective, it focuses on the epistemological basis, on the subjective constitution of the phenomenon of “friendship”. The social construction of friendship however, is described from a sociological research perspective with reference to concrete empirical expressions of this specific social relationship. The key for the reflections on friendship is the adaptation of Edmund Husserl’s method of phenomenological reduction for the analysis of social phenomena, based on the argumentations of Alfred Schutz and Aron Gurwitsch. This leads to the assumption that friendship is symbolically constituted with reference to everyday transcendent ideas which substantially define the specific expression of this social relationship.

Introduction

The aim of this investigation is to describe a possibility of how phenomenological reflections can have a purpose for questions focused by the social sciences. I will demonstrate how analogous to the application of phenomenological reduction – the basic methodical procedure of phenomenology – there can be a specific reduction, oriented towards the analysis of the constitution of social phenomena. I will focus on the analysis of the constitution of “friendship” as a specific form of human relationship to be described as example for applied phenomenology on the interface of sociological and phenomenological research. The essential intention of these phenomenological reflections is to discover the subjective preconditions of the social relationship of friendship.

Phenomenological reduction, on the one hand, can have a specific purpose for an epistemological reflection of the methodology of the social sciences, which will be of less relevance for these reflections. Essentially, I will show how analogous to the application of phenomenological reduction, this methodological procedure can be used to analyze specific social phenomena. (1) First of all, I will briefly describe the fundamental procedures of phe-

nomenological reduction, relying on Edmund Husserl's respective writings. (2) Secondly, I will follow the ideas of Alfred Schutz and Aron Gurwitsch who work out the "epoché of the natural attitude," adapting Husserl's method to confront social scientific problems. (3) In the third part of my paper, I will demonstrate how a modified reduction method can be used to analyze a specific social phenomenon; my "applied theoretical" reflections will concentrate on the constitution of a specific form of human encounters, in analyzing the constitution of "friendship."

The Phenomenological Reduction

The basic methodical procedure within phenomenological philosophy is the "phenomenological reduction" as it was essentially developed by Edmund Husserl in his *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* (Husserl 1982 [1913]) and *Cartesian Meditations* (Husserl 1960 [1931]). The phenomenological reduction is characterized by the fundamental inhibition of any statement about the *world* or *existence* with the aim of describing the mechanisms and potentialities of the intentionality of the subjective consciousness. Husserl's reflections on the meaning of "existence" are searching for an answer to the question of how the world "exists," i.e. how our ideas, perceptions, and judgments can be considered "objective." All of our statements on meaning and existence have to be identified as well-founded. According to the tradition of the Kantian transcendental philosophy, not the objects are being focused; it must be analyzed how they appear to our consciousness. It is precisely the phenomenological reduction which aims at revealing the constitutive principles of the subjective consciousness. Husserl mainly differentiates between (1) the *eidetic reduction*, (2) the *transcendental reduction* and (3) the *phenomenological reduction* (also called *phenomenological* or *transcendental epoché*). I will now briefly describe these three reduction procedures, and I will also point out their relevance for the analysis of social scientific problems.

(1) The *eidetic reduction* leads to a description of the intuition, of what presents itself as the eidos of the constituted object being in the focus of consciousness. As Husserl argues, it serves to uncover noetic-noematic correlations, the noetic-noematic structures that are present within the constituting process of objects. The "eidetic variation" reveals the eidetical structure in abstracting from the coincidences and individual particularities of factual acts of thinking.

(2) The *transcendental reduction* serves to describe "pure phenomena" in a sense that these are liberated from anything that is part of reality. From such a perspective, phenomenology is supposed to be not only the theory of the eidos of *real* phenomena but also of transcendently reduced phenomena.

(3) What Husserl denotes as *phenomenological reduction* is also called “phenomenological” or “transcendental epoché.” What is being achieved with this methodological procedure is the “bracketing” or “inhibition” of the world; assumptions and previously constituted knowledge are bracketed with the help of phenomenological reduction. With the bracketing of the unquestionable validity of the being of the world, this world is being focused as constituting world of a constituting consciousness. The world which is being constituted in the natural attitude, which is discovered as real in experience, has to be put into brackets, has to be inhibited.

What significance do these phenomenological procedures have for the social sciences? Why should this highly subjectivist position be relevant for the analysis of social phenomena? Of course, as Schutz and Gurwitsch have demonstrated, the phenomenological method can be used to epistemologically challenge the methodology of the social sciences. Alfred Schutz in his basic work *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt* (Schütz 2004 [1932]) phenomenologically revises Max Weber’s notion of social action in the heart of his interpretive sociology. Using phenomenological reflections, Schutz shows that Weber’s perception of the individual actor who confers meaning to his actions, needs to be formulated more precisely, taking into consideration the perspective of the constituting subjective consciousness. Finally, in revising Weber’s basic sociological concepts, Schutz establishes the phenomenological foundations for the social sciences.

In analogy to the different reduction procedures as described by Husserl, Schutz challenges the issue of “subjective meaning” being conferred to social actions by the acting subject. He does not explicitly refer to the reduction method, while challenging Weber’s notion of subjective meaning. What becomes obvious is the fact that Schutz is using the phenomenological position to epistemologically found Weber’s sociology.

The aim of this argumentation is to apply the phenomenological reduction method to analyze concrete social phenomena. The question for me is whether insights on the constitution of social phenomena can be reached through the application of phenomenological reduction, or, to be more precise, through an analogous procedure to phenomenological reduction. In my opinion, neither Schutz nor Gurwitsch explicitly applied this methodological procedure to analyze concrete social phenomena. One could argue that for example Alfred Schutz, in his studies on the stranger and the homecomer, is using reduction procedures, which still remain on the level of a sociology of knowledge. Anyhow, he does not evidently relate to the reduction method when conducting these studies in applied theory.

I will elaborate on this interface between phenomenology and the social sciences by referring to what Schutz and Gurwitsch developed following Hus-

serl's position on phenomenological reduction. They further develop Husserl's perspective – I would not say they distance themselves from Husserl, in establishing the *epoché of the natural attitude*.

The Significance of Phenomenological Reduction for the Social Sciences

In his reception of Husserl's earlier phenomenology and coming from the social sciences, Alfred Schutz focuses on a "phenomenology of the natural attitude" rather than transcendental phenomenology. Although he acknowledged "the importance of the phenomenological and the eidetic reductions for the foundations of a presuppositionless philosophy", Schutz analyzes social reality on the account of time-consciousness, discovered by Husserl within the transcendental sphere but still valid within the natural attitude (cf. Michael D. Barber 2004). According to his theory of the life-world, Schutz emphasizes the life-world as science's substrate, unquestioned unless there were some motivations for questioning it, and admits that his idea of the "epoché of the natural attitude" surpassed Husserl's work without being incompatible with it. The way I argue, Schutz's reflections "sociologize" Husserl's subjectivist position in concentrating on the we-relationship as the fundamental social relationship from which subjectivity needs to be explained.

In his essay on multiple realities, Schutz describes the "natural attitude" as an epistemological position that takes the world and its objects for granted, until counterproof imposes itself. "As long as the once established scheme of reference, the system of our and other people's experiences, works, and as long as the actions and operations performed under its guidance yield the desired results, we trust these experiences. We are not interested in finding out whether this world really does exist or whether it is merely a coherent system of consistent appearances" (Schutz 1962 [1945]: 228). This attitude, which is part of our everyday life experience, can only be interrupted if a "strange," not expected experience appears. Comparing the "natural attitude" to a phenomenological attitude, Schutz discovers the relatedness of the phenomenological epoché and the natural attitude. He describes phenomenological epoché as the suspension of our belief in the reality of the world as a device to overcome the natural attitude by radicalizing the Cartesian method of philosophical doubt. Schutz suggests that human beings within the natural attitude also use a specific epoché which is of course rather different to the one used by a phenomenologist. Human beings within the natural attitude do not suspend their belief in the outer world and its objects, but on the contrary, they suspend doubt that the world and its objects might not be how they appear to them. Schutz calls this epoché the *epoché of the natural attitude* (ibid.: 229).

While the phenomenological attitude, reached through phenomenological reduction, is so to speak artificially assumed by the scientist, the epoché of the natural attitude is a position taken by human beings in their everyday life.

When describing different reality spheres, such as the world of dreams, of imageries and phantasms, the world of art, the world of religious experience, the world of scientific contemplation, the play world of the child, etc., Schutz argues that a peculiar cognitive style belongs to each of these different provinces of meaning. A specific tension of consciousness and, consequently, also a specific epoché, a prevalent form of spontaneity, a specific form of self experience, a specific form of sociality, and a specific time perspective belong to these provinces of meaning as well. It is crucial that the world of working in daily life is the archetype of our experience of reality. All other provinces of meaning may be considered to be its modifications.

Schutz proposes a systematical grouping of these provinces of meaning, according to their constitutive principle. This analysis would prove, he says, that the more the mind turns away from life, the larger the slabs of the everyday world of working which are put in doubt; the epoché of the natural attitude which suspends doubt in the existence of the world is replaced by other epochés which suspend belief in more and more layers of the reality of daily life, putting them in brackets (Schutz 1962 [1945]: 232f.). Like this, a typology of the different provinces of meaning could be established, and each one – this is highly important for my argumentation – could be described with a particular epoché. Dreaming, reading a poem or novel, playing with children requires some kind of suspension of what is pre-given by the everyday life-world. Following Schutz, this is in each case achieved through a specific kind of epoché.

A slightly different argumentation is presented by Aron Gurwitsch who describes the interface between phenomenology and the social sciences. The central notion for him would be the concept of the life-world which, the way I argue, is the key concept to connect the two disciplines. Gurwitsch argues with the following words: «Whether we concern ourselves with the life-world along the lines of Husserl's orientation or, following the direction of existentialism and philosophical anthropology, we deal with human existence within the life-world, in raising the problem of access, we are led to consider consciousness and its acts. These include the acts through which the life-world presents to us and is interpreted in the sense it has for the sociohistorical group to which we belong [...] and the acts through which we conceive of ourselves as mundane existents, as human beings in a sense which is congruous in that we interpret our life-world. Acts of consciousness are in play in all our conduct – in all our doings, involvements, commitments, hopes, fears, actions, and projects» (Gurwitsch 1974 [1970]: 12).

When, the way Gurwitsch argues, consciousness in this context is considered to be «the universal and sole medium of access», a special methodological device is required «by means of which consciousness is stripped of the sense of mundanity or, as it may also be put, one which permits us to consider consciousness exclusively under the aspect of its presentational or presentifying function, that is opening up access to objects and entities of every kind, including those which pertain to the life-world. The device is the phenomenological or transcendental reduction» (Gurwitsch 1974 [1970]: 13).

What the phenomenological reduction does, according to Gurwitsch, is putting the existential character of the world and the objects out of play, out of action, so that it is no longer in use. «*The belief in question is suspended and correlatively the existential character is placed between parentheses; it is inhibited, but inhibition is not suppression*» (Gurwitsch 1974: 185). Therefore, according to the phenomenological attitude, an object which continues to offer itself to consciousness as existing is considered not simply as existing, not as such and such a reality, but as presenting itself *as* existing, as laying claim on existence. Comparing these reflections to what is achieved in the natural attitude, Gurwitsch argues that in the natural attitude the subject is convinced that he or she is in the midst of a real world, confronted by levels of being whose objects also comport themselves as existing in one form or another. Phenomenological reduction is less concerned with the objects themselves, or with the convictions the subject has about them, than with the way in which these objects and convictions enter into phenomenology.

Strictly following Husserl's reflections on phenomenological reduction, Gurwitsch does not see any possibility to connect phenomenology with philosophical anthropology and the biological and psychological sciences. These disciplines refer to consciousness in its relation to mundane realities, as pertaining to the concrete human self, and therefore are impregnated with human reality. Above all, consciousness can be described as a pure field of experienced acts which are related to objects, acts by which the real concrete self is itself grasped and in which it is constituted. This is, as Gurwitsch argues, why consciousness possesses the absolute character assigned to it by Descartes and reaffirmed by phenomenological reduction. «Therefore no anthropological element may be allowed to enter into phenomenological considerations. One of the fundamental reasons for the phenomenological reduction is that it carves an impassable gulf between phenomenology and every species of philosophical anthropology» (Gurwitsch 1974: 187f.). When phenomenological reduction is being practiced as a methodical procedure, what is retained is the reduced consciousness, that is, consciousness viewed solely in terms of the appearing and constituting of objects before it. Reduced consciousness, above all, is defined as a field of experienced acts which refers to objects.

If we follow Gurwitsch in this argumentation, the social sciences as well as philosophical anthropology remain separated from phenomenology, especially if the specific aim of phenomenological reduction was to be taken into consideration. Reduced consciousness is free of any kind of social category and predominantly consists of noetic-noematic structures. Still, I would say, that there is the possibility to analogically apply the reduction procedure to analyze the constitution of social phenomena. Basically, Alfred Schutz is proposing a similar procedure when identifying a specific kind of epoché which belongs to each of the experienced multiple realities. As far as I can see, concrete descriptions of reductions by phenomenologically oriented social scientists are missing. That is the reason why I would like to propose a possible social scientific equivalent to phenomenological reduction.

Focusing on the social phenomenon of “friendship,” first of all, I will define it from a sociological perspective. To describe the sociological relevance of phenomenological reflections, after all, I will paraphrase three different reduction levels that can be established in analyzing this phenomenon.

The Phenomenon of “Friendship”: Transcending the Intersubjective Life-World

Although “friendship” is a common term in modern cultures, surprisingly it has rarely been the focus of investigation by social scientists. There are differing cultural conceptualizations in relation to the quality of the phenomenon of “friendship” as a social relationship. The golden age of friendship in Europe was clearly the period of romanticism when Schiller and Goethe celebrated “friendship” as specific form of human relations. The idea of “friendship” was most probably invented in antiquity, as is brilliantly demonstrated in Homeric legends. In all these contexts, friendship is not defined as a kin term; however, it does imply some type of reciprocity and obligation between otherwise unrelated individuals. Friendships can range from the relatively casual, dependent on shared activity or setting (such as a sports club), to deep and enduring relationships of mutual support.

Within highly differentiated societies, given social relations – such as family and kinship relations – as well as roles are not sufficient to provide complete orientation to human action (Simmel 1999: 383ff.), hence personal relations and especially friendship, consisting of two partners that were chosen voluntarily among themselves, become more and more important. The crucial characteristic of friendship is that understanding and involvement are shared within a mutual spiritual and emotional relationship encompassing typified convictions and ideals agreed upon by the friends (Kracauer 1971: 45f.). One of the founders of the Western tradition of thought, Aristotle, disclosed the

core issue in the concept of friendship when he described a friend as one's "other self." Sociological interpretations of friendship share this view, arguing that the human being in the socially heterogeneous world does not find a second ego in addition to a previously existent ego, instead he or she encounters his or her own ego in discovering an ego within a friend (Tenbruck 1964: 440).

From a *phenomenological perspective*, "friendship" as an *idea* and as a specific form of *human encounter* transcends the everyday life-world of the individual and establishes a certain bond between human beings, thus constituting a unique form of social relation (Schutz 1962 [1955]: 316-318; Dreher 2003: 147f.). The systematic phenomenological – one can also say proto-sociological – analysis of "friendship" as an element of the intersubjective life-world is the focus of this presentation. I will describe the basic constitutive activities of consciousness in establishing a "friendship" within the social world.

From a subjectivist perspective, the I as experiencing subject is confronted with the transcendences of space, time, the intersubjective (social) world and multiple reality spheres (worlds of dreams, imagination, play, religion, science etc.). Social phenomena such as "friendship" or "love" develop within face-to-face-relationships (according to their original idea) – they require the face-to-face-relationship as a basis, while simultaneously transcending this form of human encounter because they are *symbolized* at a higher level – and this is of crucial importance. In this way, these social phenomena endure independent of *time* and *space*. The fact that the person I love or a friend is on another continent does not necessarily affect the social relationship; no matter what temporal or spatial distance exists between lovers and friends, this social relationship in its specificity establishes a strong bond between human beings. The phenomenon of "friendship" in its symbolically super-elevated form usually develops – within a face-to-face-relationship, so that for the *two* persons (the constitution within which the basic form of this social phenomenon most often occurs), a high level of *individuality* (cf. Simmel 1999) is involved in this form of human encounter. It is a highly personal and individual decision who is chosen to be one's friend.

According to Alfred Schutz's theory of the life-world, "friendship" must be symbolized by an idea originating in another reality – a reality transcending the everyday life-world and which is shared by the persons involved in a friendship. This idea of a unique "friendship" can be the result of common experiences of an existential character which form part of the unique biography of each person involved in the friendship (Schutz 1989 [1956]: 255-257). For example, the shared experiences of adventures, catastrophes, journeys, coping with a crisis etc. often form the basis of a friendship. What these experiences all have in common is that they transcend everyday reality – they are experienced by friends in a common reality sphere that lies beyond the

experiences of the everyday life and, because of their symbolic meaningfulness, they represent something crucial within one's biography.

Construction and Constitution of "Friendship"

Starting from Husserl's, Schutz's and Gurwitsch's assumptions on the phenomenological reduction, I will analyze the social phenomenon of "friendship," taking into consideration different reduction levels. My reflections part from the general differentiation between *construction* and *constitution* that is proposed by Thomas Luckmann (1999) (cf. also (Berger/Luckmann 1987 [1966])). On the one hand it can be argued that historical worlds are socially *constructed* in concrete experiences; on the other hand, reality is *constituted* on the basis of general structures of experience within consciousness activities. Therefore, social phenomena like "social relationships", in this case "friendship", can only be constructed within concrete historical worlds. As substantial phenomena they are constructed in each of these social worlds in a specific way. However, the construction of "friendship" occurs on the basis of general constitutive principles of the subjective consciousness. Typical mechanisms within the process of the construction of "friendship" are briefly mentioned to inspire the phenomenological reductions that I will develop. Friendship, as I argued, first and foremost, is *symbolically* constructed, that is to say it is established with reference to a collectively shared symbolism which includes the cultural categories used within construction processes.

With phenomenological reductions the researcher describes the "formal" structures without which human experience would not be possible. The most obvious structures are the categories of the subjective orientation in space, like above/below, in front of me/behind me or categories of time. Life-world structures of social relationships with different levels of immediateness, familiarity/strangeness and anonymity are in contrast considerably more complex (Luckmann 1999: 20) and therefore more difficult to describe. I will now propose the three reduction levels of the analysis of the phenomenon of friendship; of course, more of them could be described.

The Reduction Levels

(1) The first reduction I propose is called the *mundane phenomenological reduction* which serves to discover the typically ongoing construction mechanisms of "friendship." From the perspective of a sociology of knowledge, it will be shown how friendship is constructed on the basis of knowledge structures that are part of the intersubjective life-world. On this level substantial categories

related to friendship are to be found. What can be found on this first reduction level are “first order constructs” (Schutz 1962 [1953]); we find the “natural concepts” being used by individuals in concrete situations of interaction and everyday communication. On this level of reflection, one discovers substantial constructs that the experiencing individual is using for the construction of friendship.

I argue that in order to be communicated by friends and to serve as a means of establishing a friendship, these “existential” experiences must be symbolized within the Here and Now with the help of symbols that belong to our everyday life. *Symbols* in this sense are *objects, facts* or *events* from our everyday reality which refer to the reality of the unique “friendship” which transcends the everyday life-world. These symbols, on a further level, can then be used repeatedly in communication between friends and in this way establish the friendship again and again. Narratives of common experiences of the friends that are told *ritually*, are examples that demonstrate how symbolic presentation of the social relationship of friendship is being constructed. If we concentrate on the sphere of the intersubjective life-world, these phenomenological reflections on the symbol show us how the social relationship “friendship” is established through common experience and communication by means of symbols. Interaction and communication between human beings establish “friendship” as well as other forms of social relations. For this reason, they serve to constitute the social world as an intersubjective life-world – in a specific way, the symbols of friendship enable the individual to overcome the transcendences of the intersubjective life-world.

Alfred Schutz explains the social relationship of “friendship” from an egological perspective as a life-worldly phenomenon, that is to say as a phenomenon based on the experience and perception of the ego, of the subject. On the basis of the *we-relation* – as the basic element of the social world or intersubjective life-world – human beings are able to constitute their subjectivity within the process of socialization. In terms of the phenomenon “friendship”, we have demonstrated that a great part of *individuality* resulting from a certain subjectivity of a human being with a distinct biography is involved in this kind of social relationship; the friend is individually chosen and reflects one’s own typical characteristics, for example by repeatedly telling the crucial narratives about oneself from the past or just by memorizing the mutual “idea of the friendship” – this is constitutive for the phenomenon of friendship.

As I mentioned before, there must be an *implied agreement* between the two friends about typified ideals and convictions. In other words, from their individual perspectives they supposedly share basic elements of their world views. When their biographies crossed, in the situation when they first met each other face-to-face, when their “inner times” were synchronized in mutually

shared experiences (Schutz 1962 [1955]: 317), then and only then a specific, unique “friendship” could be established through the process of symbolization. The crucial aspect of the mutual experience is the condition that the experience in itself has an “existential” character for both of the potential friends and that, in retrospect, they are able to connect the experience with an everyday transcendent idea which is identified as “friendship”.

In comparison to the love relationship, which is especially based on a sensual and sexual union of the lovers, “friendship” is symbolized and “lives” exclusively through the everyday transcendent idea. No physical attraction is required for the establishing of a friendship, friendships are possible between older and younger people, gender first and foremost is not decisive for friendship relations (although friendship frequently occurs in same gender constellations), and also, one can imagine without any problems friendships between individuals with a completely divergent cultural background. The relationship between Robinson Crusoe and Friday gives an excellent example of how extreme differences and contradictions can be overcome through the constitution of a bond called “friendship”.

From a phenomenological perspective the conviction that the social relationship of “friendship” is established through symbolization is relevant. The crucial mechanism within the structure of these symbols is their ability to harmonize contradictions or even paradoxes, and in that way, they serve to overcome borders between individuals (Soeffner 2000: 198-203). The two individuals who become friends may differentiate from each other tremendously – like Robinson and Friday –, the activity of consciousness called “symbolization”, a specific category of appresentation, enables them to establish a mutual social relationship with each other. The relation with the friend becomes part of the intersubjective life-world of the individual. Through symbolization the friend becomes part of one’s individual existence. Without the friend as the “alter ego”, the individual would not be the same anymore; the “unique friendship”, as symbolized social relationship, forms part of the totality of the life-world of the experiencing subject. Other social relations – the family, kinship, the nation or a certain culture – are also experienced as elements of the life-world of the individual; they are constituents of the individual’s self-identity.

With the help of the *mundane phenomenological reduction* I described the typicality of the specific social bond of friendship. Culturally and historically, this concept varies tremendously, however, common features of friendship can still be identified.

(2) The second reduction reaches *the structural level of symbolic constitution of “friendship”*. To get to this level, the substantial contents of cultural symbolizations of friendship are bracketed within the reduction. Relational structures

defining the Otherness or the familiarity of the interaction partner are used to constitute specific bonds among human beings. The individual, who experiences and interacts in everyday life, structurally relates to an everyday transcendent realm of “friendship” in encounters with the Other. The individual relates on an everyday transcendent reality which contains constructions of this specific relationship relevant to interacting individuals. At this point of the argumentation, Alfred Schutz’s theory of the life-world is helpful (Schutz 1962 [1945], 1962 [1955], 1989 [1956]; cf. also Dreher 2003). The specific cultural symbolism which is used by the individual actors and which is present within the stock of knowledge of the interacting persons is used for the interpretation of the Otherness and familiarity of the opposed person. Everyday transcending ideas of friendship are exchanged in intersubjective relationships by communicating them in the everyday reality with the help of symbols. The crucial aspect about this second reduction level is the fact that on the basis of the structuring of the life-world of the experiencing subject – everyday life and multiple realities – the specific relationship of friendship is symbolically constructed. Because of the structurally prevalent potentiality to transcend the world of everyday life, these forms of social relationships are constituted by the experiencing and interacting subject.

The second reduction level that I am describing – the *structural level of symbolic constitution* – allows identifying subjective preconditions of this kind of social relationship, of friendship. Of course, at this point of realizing the reduction procedures, the concept of “friendship” has already been bracketed, which is why we are referring to the specific form of social relationship. As far as the subjective preconditions are concerned, we now know that this form of social relationship is highly dependent on the potentiality of human beings to use symbols. Experiencing and interacting subjects are able to establish common everyday transcending realities which include a common idea of the specific, unique social relationship.

(3) The third reduction I would like to discuss is the *reduction of the sensual sensation of the Otherness and familiarity of the encountering human being*. With this reduction level, “corporality” or “bodilyness” are in the center of the reflections. This reduction leads to a formal level of the encountering of the Other. The intentionality of the subjective consciousness on this level is directed towards the Other as another human being. Experiences of “strangeness” and “familiarity” or “anonymity” and “intimacy” determine the subjective perception of the Other whose appearance is perceived in relation to our analysis of “friendship” as familiar or acquainted. On this basic level of the encounter of human beings, language and also semiotic symbolic relations are bracketed and in reflection, they are not taken into consideration. What is reached is a pre-theoretical, pre-linguistic level of bodily human encounter in which

vague experiences of Otherness are constituted within the intentionality of the experiencing consciousness. On this proto-sociological or phenomenological reduction level, the general foundations can be discovered which serve the experiencing subject as a basis for the constitution of the specific social bond as the basis for “friendship.” On this level we can especially determine the difference to the love relationship. Physical or sexual attraction as pre-theoretical conditions are important for the constitution of the “love relationship”, for “friendship”, as we have seen, they are usually not of any relevance.

Of course, as I have shown before, “friendship” is structurally and substantially established on the other two reduction levels. On this level of sensual sensation of the Otherness and familiarity, it can be phenomenologically described how social bonds are being constituted. It gives an insight into how these social relationships are formally and substantially conferred with meaning and the way they are culturally coded becomes obvious from the first two reductions I described.

This was an attempt to demonstrate how analogously phenomenological reduction is used to analyze the constitution and construction of social phenomena. Instead of applying the epoché of the natural attitude, which is not the position of the scientist, I follow Husserl and Schutz and methodically use the reduction procedures for the reflection of social interrelations. This is achieved by focusing on the perspective of the experiencing subject with its life-world, but within situations of interaction of human beings. Therefore, the reductions have to stop on a level, on which the Other can still be perceived, that is to say the bodily level. Transcendental reductions would not make any sense in relation to the analysis of the social phenomenon of “friendship.” This analysis was meant to demonstrate how, with a focus on the constitution analysis of concrete social phenomena, phenomenology can be made fruitful for sociological research.

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