Social Phenomenology of Alfred Schutz and the Development of African Sociology

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Abstract

The major task in this paper is to give a critical exposition of social phenomenology of Alfred Schutz and its relevance in the understanding of the development of African sociology. The paper attempts theoretically a mental journey to examine the condition, which led to the development of contemporary sociological strands shortly after the Second World War, and Alfred Schutz (1899 –1959) is introduced within the context of his milieu. Following the definition of social phenomenology, an overview of some of the various versions of phenomenology is provided before attempting an exposition of the social phenomenology of Alfred Schutz. The limitations of Alfred Schutz's brand of social phenomenology as well as its contributions to the development of contemporary sociological theorizing in African societies are then discussed.

Introduction

We cannot pretend to enter into a serious academic enterprise, such as the theme of this paper, on the premise of conjecture, but on a sound historical scientific basis, knowing fully that, "the present is a mere reconstruction of the past. Hence, we may not be able to understand the present without adequate knowledge of how it was, changes that had taken place, how it is now and what is likely to happen in the near future. Ninalowo Adebayo (1999) shared the above view when he said that, "contemporary sociological theoretical development did not evolve as manna from heaven, but came out of classical sociological theorizing". He further quoted from William Whitehead (1979) that, "a science which hesitate to forget its founding fathers is lost".

Having understood the foregoing therefore, and using it as our point of departure in this paper, the problem of order in society, which led to the emergence of classical sociological theorizing in those days, had been a perennial issue. The Hobbessian question (problematique) of order has re-echoed since the 17th century. To Hobbes, because the individual was unruly, the only way to achieve order in society was through absolutism, a demand for legal sovereignty, which could be wielded by any social interest(s). According to Rossides (1979), though over looked and neglected at the time, Hobbes was more prophetic than all other philosophers of his era in his prediction of the emergent capitalist society. The radical changes brought about by the industrial revolution of the 18th century and the experiences of the two world wars in the middle of the 20th century had led to changes in values, norms, aspirations and obligations of the people. Without mincing words, the situation described above could be said to be the features of the contemporary African societies.

Disenchantment with the inventions of human rationality (evidence of science and world war two) from about 1945 into about late 1960s had led to an emergence in Europe and later in America but recently in Africa, of various new perspectives of resolving the problem of order in the new society. Put differently, the dimension of previous ideas provides a building block for the contemporary theoretical development, particularly, since the Second World War. Beginning from this period, theoretical development has emerged, a theoretical development that came from logical empiricism, functionalism, symbolic interactionism and a host of others.

However, the demise of logical empiricism in the early 1960s and the weaknesses of the subsequent theoretical perspectives such as structuralism, symbolic interactionism, conflict theory, etc and their inabilities to cope with issues being raised, particularly, in the 1960s and 1970s led to a boom in several other theoretical perspectives that Monika Morris (1977) lumped together under the heading of "creative sociology". Included under this heading are, ethnomethodology, which is the offshoot of phenomenology, and existential sociology, phenomenological sociology (Ritzer, 1985. 1993). In a nutshell, the disenchantment of people with the invention of human rationality in the society, and subsequently, the demise of logical empiricism and the weaknesses of the subsequent theoretical approaches and their inability to cope with the issues arising out of the problems of social order as a result of the complexity in the nature of the society or state led to the boom in several theoretical perspectives. Therefore, it was the resolve of the scholars of the post war era to find solutions to the myriad of problems growing out of the complex nature of the new society, which the people in the various modern societies

were going through including African societies. These include the problems of the forcible destruction of social groups, loss of social values, and sudden disappearance of principle of affectivity among others all over the world and in particular, contemporary African societies. The situation in Africa is more critical, more precarious and pathetic due to the differences in cultural norms and values. Therefore, the experience of the developed societies may not be of any help the new African societies, hence, the need for theoretical explanation within the content of Schutz's phenomenological sociology.

Alfred Schutz's social milieu

Alfred Schutz (1899 – 1959), like many of the philosophers of his period especially Herbert Blumer, Manford Kuhn, Edmund Husserl, Harold Garfinkel, etc, was so concerned about the nature of man and his social world. He was concerned with the problem of order in society and how members of society actively engage in making sense of social life. This became his main pre-occupation for the most of his professional life.

Alfred Schutz was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1899. Schutz received his academic training at the University of Vienna (Wagner, 1983). Soon after completing his law examination, he embarked on a lifelong career in banking. Although, rewarding economically, banking did not satisfy his need for deeper meaning in his life. Schutz found that meaning in his work on phenomenological sociology (Ritzer, 1993).

Although Schutz was not an academician in the 1920s, many of his friends were, and he participated in a number of informal lectures and discussion circles (Prendergast, 1986). Schutz was drawn to Weberian theory, especially Weber's work on action and the ideal type. Although impressed with Weber's work, Schutz sought to overcome its weaknesses by integrating ideas from the philosophers such as Edmund Husserl and Henri Bergson. According to Christopher Prensergast (1986), Schutz was motivated to provide the Austrian school of Economics with a scientific subjective theory of action. These influences led to the publication by Schutz in 1932 of what was to become a very important book in Sociology, the Phenomenology of the Social World. Although, it was not translated into English until 1967, so that a wide appreciation of Schutz's work in the United States and else where was delayed for thirty-five years.

Schutz emigrated as World War II approached with an intervening period in Paris to the United States, where for many years he divided his time between serving as legal counsel to a number of banks and writing about, and teaching phenomenological sociology. Simultaneously with his work in banking, Schutz began teaching courses in 1943 at the new school for Social Research in New York City. Not until 1956 did Schutz give up his dual career and concentrate entirely on teaching and writing phenomenological sociology. Because of his interest in phenomenology, his dual career, and his teaching at the then avant-garde New School, Schutz remained on the periphery of sociology during his lifetime. Nevertheless, Schutz's work and his influence on students (for example, Peter Berger, Thomas Lukman and Harold Garfinkel) moved him into the center of sociological theory. Alfred Schutz finally died in 1959 (Ritzer, 1993).

Operational Definition Of Terms

The word phenomenology derives from the word "phenomena" or "phenomenon" which has crystallized into a technical philosophical concept of diverse usage since the inception of western scholarship. The term "phenomenology" is associated with the

philosophy of Edmund Husserl, a German Jew, who lived between 1859 and 1938. By phenomena, it meant things, events or occurrences or as Heidergges (1972) put it, the totality of what lies open for inspection or what can be brought to light (Unah, 1998). Philosophers of the platonic tradition have construed phenomena as characterizing the tangible, the transient, or the ephemeral aspects of reality or the imperfect copy of original reality.

Kant defined phenomenology as the theory of things as they appear to the human mind. Hegel defined phenomenology as the science of the spirit or mind or reason or idea as it is in itself in its itinerary from self-rejection to self-reconciliation (Unah, 1998). Peirce in his view described phenomenology as the perceptions of objects or anything whatsoever whether they are real or imagined. It should be pointed out here that, this characterization of phenomenology by Peirce is different from the others sketched above and it comes very close to the broad outlines of Husserl's phenomenology. From all the foregoing, all the characterizations of phenomenology can be summarized as follows.

Things have a double, which are normally open to inspection through ordinary perceptual apparatus. There is a dichotomy between what appears and what is truly. Consequently, phenomenology is the study of the transient, ephemeral, outward features of human experience.

According to Unah (1998), unfortunately, none of these can pass muster when juxtaposed with contemporary phenomenology as espoused by Alfred Schutz and his successors, as we shall see in the course of this article. They merely constitute a prolegomenon, as introductory to the study of phenomenology.

Maurice Merleau-Pority, a philosopher, defined phenomenology as a philosophy, which replaces essences in existence. It is a philosophy, which holds that man and the world could be understood only on the basis of a return to genesis. According to her, it is a transcendental philosophy, which brackets or suspends the general thesis of the natural standpoint, our assumptions and presuppositions about the world, "our spontaneous natural affirmations" in order to grasp them correctly. According to her, the aim of phenomenology is to perform a basis-free or prejudice-free analysis and description of experience.

Heiderger (1962), simply understood phenomenology as "the letting be of beings", "letting what is show itself clearly as it is without preconceptions". To him, the Ego does not need to completely detach from the world to do this because the Ego is still part of the world. All that is required is for the inquirer – the ontological researcher – to purge himself of his previous assumptions, conceptions, suppositions or dispositions about the object of his analysis (Unah, 1998).

Having understood the above therefore, I shall then give my working definition of phenomenology from Edmund Husserl perspective whose influence was predominant or highly significant on Alfred Schutz. According to Husserl, 'phenomenology' referred to his attempt to describe the ultimate foundation of human experience by 'seeing beyond' the particulars of everyday experience of the world depends on our ability to grasp the 'essences' of the phenomena we perceive. The grasping of the essences is the foundation of all experience because only in this way are we able to recognize and classify in a manner, which makes it intelligible to us.

An overview of Social Phenomenology

It would be germane at this juncture to mention that the concept of phenomenology is not peculiar to Alfred Schutz alone. Therefore, in order to perfectly understand the social phenomenology of Alfred Schutz, we shall take a cursory look at a few of the various versions of phenomenology that have been propounded over time.

Historically, the standard account of phenomenology as a method of philosophy, a presuppositionless inquiry of a critical a priori, research was given by Edmund Husserl who studied under Franz Bretano, a descriptive psychologist. The initial studies in mathematics, Bretano's teachings and the influence of Cartesian Cogilo, among other things, were germane to Husserl's rigorous science of philosophy.

Edmund Husserl (1859 – 1938), is often credited with being the "father of phenomenology". There can be little doubt that his thought has profoundly influenced contemporary social science. Yet, as will become evident, his ideas have been transformed (Turner, 1978). However, from the point of view of Husserl, the basic questions confronting all inquiry are: What is real? What actually exists in the world? How do we know what exists? As a philosopher, these were central questions for Husserl. Husserl reasoned that humans know about the world only through experience. All notions of an external world, "out there", are mediated through senses and can only be known through mental consciousness. The existence of other people, values, or norms, and physical objects is always mediated by experiences as they register on people's conscious awareness. One does not directly have contact with reality, although contact is always indirect and mediated through the processes of the human mind.

It is this concern with the process of consciousness of how experience creates a sense of an external reality that was to become the central concern of phenomenology. Husserl initially made reference to the "world of the natural attitude" but later used the phrase "life world". In either case, Husserl's emphasis is that humans operate in a taken-for-granted world that permeates their mental life (Turner, 1978).

Equally of importance to mention is Max Weber's contribution to the development of phenomenological sociology. Although, Schutz maintained that Weber's ideas are only the starting point for an analysis of social reality, he believes that Weber's analysis of social reality ended at the very point the real problems begin. He argues that Weber's concept of social action is limited (Cuff and Payne, 1979).

However, Weber's methodology in his work on "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" was at least partially subjective, in that he tried to see the world from the point of view of the Calvinist/Capitalist. He explained his theory in terms of the idea actors' hold of their actions. He combined in his work large scale comparative historical studies with social action theory, the examination of intentions behind actions. Weber, of course, did not deny that choices of action arise from historical circumstances, but he stressed that actors choose between alternative actions, Individuals may not write their own parts, to extend the theoretical analogy, but they extemporize a good deal. Thus Weber provides a bridge between positivist and phenomenological methods in sociology (Susan and Peter Calver, 1992).

Put differently, Weber defines 'action' as "all human behaviour when and in so far as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to it", and defines "social action" as action which "takes account of the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its

course". Social action, then, is subjectively meaningful behaviour, which is influenced by, or oriented towards, the behaviour of others. He stressed that, in any investigation, sociologists must try to "understand" the subjective meanings of social actions for the actors he is studying. If he fails to understand correctly or adequately, his theories and explanations will be based upon a misrepresentation of social reality and will be scientifically of little value. What we are saying in essence here is that, for, Weber, a science of society must seek to understand social reality "at the level of meaning". Sociological inquiry must penetrate people's consciousness and discover how they view, define, and see the world. Weber advocated the method of "verstehen", or "sympathetic introspection". Investigators must become sufficiently involved in situations to be able to get inside the subject world of actors. He maintained that causal and statistical analysis of complex social structures would be incomplete and inaccurate without such verstehen analysis (Turner, 1998). These analogies of Weber have been criticized by Schutz for failing to bring out the inter-subjective nature of the social world. In Schutz's eye, Weber simply assumes that actors share subjective meanings, leading Schutz to ask; Why and how do actors come to acquire common subjective states in a situation? How do they create a common view of the world? This is the problem of inter-subjectivity and it is central to Schutz's intellectual scheme.

Relationship between Symbolic Interactionism and Phenomenological sociology

This school of thought derives primarily from the work of the philosopher and psychologist George Herbert Mead (1843 – 1931) at the University of Chicago, though the term was coined much later. Both symbolic interactionists and phenomenologists are principally concerned with studying inter-personal social interaction. Both regard social interaction as consisting of meaningful communicative activity between persons, involving mutual interpretive work. For instance, George Herbert Mead deal with the growth of 'self' from the 'I' and the 'Me' in his work. In fact, he dealt not only with the observable actions of individuals but also with overt activities.

Herbert Blumer, a student of Mead took symbolic interactionism a stage further. Working from Mead's assumptions, Blumer distilled the three main propositions, which characterize the symbolic interactionist approach.
(i)   Actions rest on meaning held by the actors,
(ii)   Meanings develop out of social interaction with other people, and
(iii)   Group action is the sum of individual actions, the collective level exists, not in its own right as something separate from individuals but as a product of the shared symbols and meanings held by individuals which influence their behaviour.

Erving Goffman was also a student at the University of Chicago in the 1940s, much influenced by the legacy of Mead. In "The presentation of self in Every day Life" (Goffman, 1969), he examined how the individual's social identity was self-defined and maintained through the adoption of roles. In the late 50s, Goffman did extensive works, which could be seen as providing a bridge between symbolic interactionism and the main strand of phenomenology (Susan and Calvert, 1992). Yet, while there is considerable affinity, and perhaps some cross-fertilization between early symbolic interactionist's conceptualizations and Schutz's phenomenology, Schutz was to inspire a line of sociological inquiry that leads away from interactionism.

Social Phenomenology of Alfred Schutz

The philosophy of phenomenology, with its focus on consciousness, has a long history, but the effort to develop a sociological variant of phenomenology can be traced to the publication of Alfred Schutz's "The phenomenology of the social world" in Germany in 1932 (Ritzer, 1993). Put differently, the general approach adopted by phenomenology is a type of philosophy of knowledge, rather than a sociological perspective. Alfred Schutz published his book *"Der Sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt" (*The sense structure of the social world) in 1932, developing Max Weber's theory of social action still further by differentiating between various strata of such actions according to the abstractness or concretness of experiences of intimacy and distance (Mause, 1962). Schutz's book *"Der Sinnhafte Aufbau der Sozialen Welt"* interpreted to mean "The Phenomenology of the social world" was not translated into English until 1967, so that a wide appreciation of Schutz's work in the United States was delayed for thirty-five years. Nevertheless, Schutz's work and his influence on students (for example, Peter Berger, Thomas Lukman, Harold Garfinkel, etc) moved him to the center of sociological theory (Ritzer, 1993).

Alfred Schutz was the first to try to explain how phenomenology could be applied to develop insights into social world (Haralambo, 1998). Schutz was focally concerned with the way in which people grasp the consciousness. Schutz questioned the nature of the social reality with which sociologists and students concern themselves. He looked for answers in human consciousness and in his mind. To him, nobody constructs reality from the inter-subjective experiences that they go through. Schutz asked further, what this social world means for each person as an actor or even means for him as a person observing other people's action? What would the social world mean for the observed actor, and what does he mean by his actions within it? This kind of approach has implications, not only for people we are studying, but also for ourselves who are studying others (Odetola and Ademola, 1985).

In essence, Schutz's main contribution was that the way humans classified and attached meaning to the outside world was not a purely individual process. Human action therefore consists of establishing or interpreting meanings. His analysis of social life is concerned, with the structure of the social world as it is experienced by individuals within it, and with how that experience is itself socially constructed and organized (Cuff and Payne, 1979).

From the above therefore, one can deduce that the principal concerns of Schutz's work include the following:

Inter-Subjectivity:

Most broadly, Schutz's phenomenology focuses on inter-subjectivity. The study of inter-subjectivity seeks to answer questions such as these: How do we know other's mind? Other selves? How is reciprocity of perspectives possible? How is mutual understanding and communication possible?

Schutz's response to the above questions revealed that, an inter subjective world is not a private world, it is common to all. It exists "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, 1973 as cited in Ritzer, 1993). Inter-subjectivity

exists in the "vivid present" in which we speak and listen to each other. We share the same time and space with others. "This simultaneity is the essence of inter subjectivity to Schutz, for it means that "I" *grasp the subjectivity of the alter ego at the same time as I live in my own stream of consciousness…* And this grasp in simultaneity of the other as well, as his reciprocal grasp of me makes possible "our" being in the world together" (Natanson, 1973 as cited in Ritzer, 1993). The italicized portion of the last quotation gets to the essence of Schutz's thinking on inter-subjectivity. Schutz was not interested in the physical interaction of people but in the way they grasp each other's consciousness, the manner in which they relate to one another inter-subjectivity. Thus, while phenomenological philosophers focused primarily on consciousness, Schutz turned phenomenology outward to a concern for the inter-subjective, social world.

Typification And Recipes:

Human developed what Schutz called "typification" (first order constructs) in the social world, the concepts attached to classes of things that are experienced (Haralambos, 1998). Thus, a "Bank Manager", a "Football Match", a "Tree", etc. are typifications which are not unique to each person, but are shared by members of a society. They are passed on to children through learning a language, reading books or speaking to other people. In any given situation in the world of everyday life, an action is determined "by means of a type constituted in earlier experiences" (Schutz, 1973 as cited in Ritzer, 1993; Haralambos, 1998). Typification ignores individual's unique features and focuses only on generic and homogenous characteristics. While we routinely typify others, it is also possible for people to engage in self-typification. "Man typifies to a certain extent his own situation within the social world and the various relations he has to his fellow-man and cultural objects" (Schutz, 1979 as cited in Ritzer, 1993).

Recipes:

Recipes, like typifications, "serve as techniques for understanding or at least controlling aspects of … experience" (Natanson, 1973). Schutz sometimes and often uses the terms synonymously. Recipes, however, tend to deal with situations, while typifications refer more to people. People use recipes to handle the myriad routine situations that they encounter each day. Thus, when some one greets us with the recipe "How are you?", we respond with the recipe "fine, and you?". Continuing the cooking analogy, Schutz argues that we function with "cook book knowledge…..recipes….to deal with the routine matters of daily life. Most of our daily activities from rising to going to bed are of this kind. According to Ritzer (1998), these our daily activities are performed by folkway recipes which has been reduced to cultural habits of unquestioned platitudes" (Natanson, 1976 as cited in Ritzer, 1998). He further maintained that, even when we encounter unusual or problematic situation, we first try to use our recipes. Only when it is abundantly clear that our recipes won't work do we abandon them and seek to create, to work out mentally new ways of dealing with the situations.

The Life World:

The Life World (or in the language of Schutz "Lebenswelt") is Schutz's term (derived from Husserl) for the world in which inter-subjectivity and the use of typifications and recipes take place. Schutz uses many terms to communicate his sense of

this world, including :common sense world", "world of everyday life", "everyday working world", "mundane reality", "the paramount reality of common-sense life", and so on and so forth (Natonson, 1973 as cited in Ritzer, 1993). It is in this world that people operate in the "natural attitude", that is, they take the world for granted and do not doubt its reality or existence until a problematic situation arises.

Schutz defines six basic characteristics of the life world as follows: It is characterized by

➢ A special tension of consciousness, which Schutz labels "wide awakeness",
➢ Actor suspends doubt in existence of this world;
➢ It is the life world in which people engage in working;

> *The core region of the life world is the world of working…Specifically, it is a sphere of activities directed upon objects, animals, and persons "within our actual reach". Typically, operations in it follow "tested recipes of action": It is "my world of routine activities".. such working is planful physical acting upon tangible objects in order to shape and use them for tangible purposes (Wagner, 1983 as cited in Ritzer, 1993).*

➢ There is a specific form of experiencing one's self in which the working self is experienced as the total self,
➢ The life world is characterized by a specific form of sociality involving the "common inter-subjective world of communication and social action", and
➢ There is a specific time perspective that involves the interaction of the person's own flow of time and the flow of time in the larger society.

From the above points, it has been discovered that the life world is an inter-subjective world, but it is one, which existed long before our birth, it was created by our predecessors. It is given to us to experience and to interpret thus in experiencing the life world, we are experiencing an obdurate world that constrains what we do. However, we are not simply dominated by the pre-existing structure of the life world. According to Schutz:

> *We have to dominate it and we have to change it in order to realize the purposes which we pursue within it among our fellow men… these objects offer resistance to our acts which we have either to overcome or to which we have to yield…a pragmatic motive governs our natural attitude toward the world of everyday life. World, in that sense, is something that we have to modify by our actions or that modifies our actions (Schutz, 1973).*

It is here that we begin to get a sense of Schutz's thinking as dialectical, with actors and structure mutually affecting one another. Wagner (1983) takes such a dialectical position when he argues that Schutz's ideas on the life world blend individual experience "not only with those of social interaction and therefore with the life worlds of others but also with the socially pre-given interpretive schemes and prescriptions for practical conduct" (Ritzer, 1983). In his analysis of life world, Schutz was mainly concerned with the shared social stock of knowledge that leads to more or less habitual action.

Realms Of Social Reality:

Schutz identified four distinct realms of social reality. Each is an abstraction of social world and is distinguished by its degree of immediacy (the degree to which situations are within the reach of the actor) and determinacy (the degree to which they can be controlled by the actor). The four realms are Umwelt, the realm of directly experienced social reality; Mitwelt, the realm of indirectly experienced social reality; Folgewelt, the realm of successors; and Vorwelt, the realm of peripheral interest to Schutz. Accordingly, we will not be able to deal with them in detail in this paper because of time constraint. However, we would like to mention at this juncture that, the essential point here is that the objective of these abstractions of social world for Schutz was to develop a sociology based on the interpretations of the social world made by the actors being studied. According to Schutz, it is difficult to know the interpretations of predecessors and impossible to understand those of successors. However, it is possible to understand contemporaries (Mitwelt) and the interpretations of those with whom we are in immediate face-to-face contact (Umwelt).

Having understood the above therefore, we shall proceed a step further to explain what Mitwelt and Umwelt meant in the language of Schutz. Mitwelt is that aspect of the social world in which people deal only with actual actors. People do feel these types and these structures, but in this world of "contemporaries", these people are not experienced directly. Because actors are dealing with types rather than with actual people, their knowledge of people is not subject to constant revision on the basis of face-to-face interaction. This relatively constant knowledge or general types of subjective experience can be studied scientifically and we can shed light on the general process by which people deal with the social world. While the Umwelt people co-exist in the name in the same time and space, in the Mitwelt spatial distances make it impossible, but if it occurs, we have returned to the Umwelt. People who were once in our Umwelt may draw away from us and ultimately, because of spatial distances, become part of the Mitwelt. Thus, there is a gradual transition from Umwelt to Mitwelt as people grow apart from one another. Schutz described this gradual transition in the quotation below as:

> *"Now we are face-to-face, saying good-bye, shaking hands, now he is walking away. Now he calls back to me; now I see him waiving to me; now he has disappeared around the corner. It is impossible to say at which precise moment the face-to-face situation ended and my partner became a mere contemporary of whom I have knowledge (he has probably, arrived home), but no direct experience (Schutz, 1976 as cited in Ritzer, 1993).*

As we move further into the Mitwelt relationships, they become impersonal and anonymous. People do not have face-to-face interaction with others and thus cannot know what goes on in others' minds. Their knowledge is therefore restricted to "general types of subjective experience" (Schutz, 1932).

Schutz's Contributions to the Development of African Sociology

Schutz was profoundly influenced by Husserl's phenomenology. And yet he departs immediately from Husserl's strategy of holding the individual in "radical abstraction" and of searching for "pure mind" of the abstract laws of consciousness. Although, Schutz accepted some lines of thought from Husserl, he nevertheless advocates

Weber's strategy of sympathetic introspection into people's consciousness. Only by observing people in interaction, rather than in radical abstraction, can the processes whereby actors come to understand how and why actors create a common subjective world independently of watching them do so. The abandonment of Husserl's phenomenological project liberated phenomenology from philosophy and allowed sociologists to study empirically what Schutz considered the most important social reality; the creation and maintenance of inter-subjectivity –that is a common subjective world among pluralities of interacting individuals.

In a different mold, Schutz is primarily responsible for liberating Husserl's concern with the basic properties and processes of consciousness from radical abstraction. Schutz brought Husserl's vision of a "life world" back into the process of interaction. In doing so, he began to ask how actors come to share, or presume that they share inter-subjective state. He borrowed from interactionists their concern with socialization and role-taking as well as from their concern with pragmatic actors seeking to cope with their world, but he gave these concerns a view twist: Humans act as if they see the world in similar ways and they deal with each other as if others could be typified and categorized. If these presumptions allow for adjustment, social order is maintained not so much by real and external rules, codes, communities of attitudes, and the like, but by the practices that produce the illusion that there is a common world (Turner, 1978).

Criticism

In spite of its analytical advancements over previous works, Schutz's brand of social phenomenology has been criticized on many grounds. For example, Haralambos (1998) maintained that, although the idea of existence of a "stock of common sense knowledge" as posited by Schutz allows humans to understand, at least partly, each other's action, they convince themselves that in doing so, there are regular- and ordered patterns in the world, and to social life. From this point of view, he said, humans create between themselves the illusion that there is stability and order in society, when in reality there is simply a jumble of individual experiences that have no clear shape or form.

Furthermore, Cuff and Payne (1979) in their view, said although Schutz can be seen to have laid the groundwork for a 'phenomenology of social life', he did little himself to operationalize it by producing research to demonstrate how his ideas can be applied to the empirical study of the social world.
Also, in his own criticism of social phenomenology, Turner, (1978) said, what is clear, however is that current phenomenology, to the degree that it is to be distinguished from Chicago School-Symbolic Interactionism, has yet to become a unified or coherent theoretical perspective. According to him, it represents, at present, a series of criticisms of current theorizing and a set of associations about the primary level of studying the processes of human consciousness.

Conclusions

Although, the social phenomenology of Alfred Schutz served as a preliminary tool for the study of construction of social reality, Sociology has worked its way out of the fallacies that beset the human mind in the usage of the abstraction (i.e. mere observing) to the stage of empirical investigation of the occurrence of any social phenomenon in the society. In fact, present day theorists, including Ethnomethodologists,

that is, Schutz's successors with the weaponry of advanced multivariate analysis may therefore, wonder why anyone should still concern himself/herself or bother about Schutz's phenomenology, most especially at this age of positive science.

However, Schutz is still sufficiently close to us that his problems might be profitably regarded as our problems as well and we may learn from his solutions accordingly. One may derive from him, an appreciation of the rare combination of intellectual rigour and moral favour which respects careful, discriminating thought and avoids self-righteous dogmatism. Furthermore, Schutz failed to develop or operationalize his phenomenology by producing research to demonstrate how his ideas can be applied to the empirical study of the social world.

Finally, in spite of the criticism of schutz's work, an extrapolation of it to contemporary African societies enables us to understand the uniqueness of Africa culture and ways of life. Unfortunately, most scholars have not borrow a leave from Schutz experience of inter-subjective nature of human experiences therefore, both theories and explanations of these scholars about African societies are based upon a misrepresentation of social reality and will be scientifically of little value to the Africans. Furthermore, Schutz's phenomenological sociology has provided another ample opportunity to scholars to view, describe and present contemporary African societies in its correct perspective to the entire world.

Conclusively, we posit that Alfred Schutz's social phenomenology, particularly the realms of social reality still serves as framework for explaining the inherent characteristics of rural and urban societies in a country like Nigeria. His notion of Umwelt is tenable in the understanding of why we still have relative social order in our rural communities, where face-to-face interaction and principle of affectivity is still very much predominant. Conversely, the notion of Mitwelt helps to explain the issue of impersonal relationship that exists in the urban cities and most industrialized societies of the world.

We therefore submit with necessary modifications, that Schutz's social phenomenology can be a relevant basis for sociological theorizing of any given human society.

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