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**THE SECOND ROAD TO PHENOMENOLOGICAL SOCIOLOGY:
Socioontology and the Question of Order**

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Socioontology and the Question of Order

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Introduction

Few social scientists have taken the direct route to the roots of phenomenology. They have instead been lead, guided, and accompanied by others, whose works have been like bridges of knowledge. The work that has spawned the interest among social scientists in phenomenology is Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's famous work, *The Social Construction of Reality* (1991; Berger 1970:15).

Berger and Luckmann's work has also profoundly affected the social sciences, and above all sociology.¹ It is through their works that social scientists have come to appreciate another Austrian, namely Alfred Schütz (1899-1959). And through Schütz, some have travelled the road all the way back to the father of phenomenology, the German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). Thus, the first, and by far the most well-known, road to phenomenology goes from Berger to Schütz and ends with Husserl.²

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Clearly, the idea of social construction has been crucial for the influence of phenomenological sociology.³ It was, if I am correct, in a review by Peter Berger that the notion with the meaning it has today was first introduced. In the review of "Truth in the Religions: A Sociological and Psychological Approach" by W. Montgomery Watt, Berger used the phrase "the social construction of reality" (1964:292). Today, more than 40 years after this term was coined, it is in fashion to call a paper, dissertation, or a book, "The Social Construction of..."

It would be easy to continue, and in a text like this only discuss Peter Berger's contributions to sociology. We would then, however, have to cover much ground, and obviously not restrict our investigation to the first road of phenomenology. Such a study would take us, for example, from phenomenology, to Max Weber, to the role of society in man, to capitalism and religion. More specifically, I would like to mention the role of values in society, and the centrality of conflicting values in modern society (Berger 1997). Berger is thus a *Gesellschaftsforscher* who has analyzed

¹ Few books, if any, have had more impact in the social sciences than Berger and Luckmann's work, and it is a modern classical text of sociology. The effects of the book were seen directly in the 1970s, in terms of sociologists who took up their ideas.

² Another road, but with a less clear phenomenological character goes from the works of ethnomethodology, and above all Garfinkel, to Schütz. But this is not independent from what I refer to in this text.

³ Others had used the notion "social construction", but then referring to different things.

our contemporary social life in a Weberian spirit, taking the different life-spheres into account. It is to me clear that Berger's work points at the importance of meaning and meaning production for the well-being of man. Religion plays here a central role (Berger 1969), and also capitalism is a large theme (Berger 1986) in his list of publications. His work is, hence, deeply rooted in the European tradition of sociology, with a clear focus on the most central concept in the social sciences, meaning.

In this text I will neither "review" nor discuss Berger's work in detail; instead I will do what I think is the best way to pay tribute to a thinker (Heidegger 1985:6), namely a kind of *Auseinandersetzung* ("confrontation") with the central idea of the first—the epistemic—road to phenomenology. This will keep a clear focus on the central notion of meaning.

* * *

This text takes the reader on a tour along the second road to phenomenology, which will take us to the German philosopher, the phenomenologist Martin Heidegger (1889-1976).⁴ The point of bringing up the philosophy of these two giants is to show that it is of relevance to sociology and other social sciences. It will also show how this fundamental question has implications for one of the most central questions in the social sciences, namely the question of order (Aspers Forthcoming 2010, 2009c; Beckert 2009; Parsons 1968). More specifically, I shall claim that Heidegger's ontological approach points at a more radically sociological starting point than the Cartesian egological that has come to dominate the social sciences. These two approaches represent different takes on social order; the egological sees man as essentially separated from each other, and the socioontological sees man as essentially social.

The text is organized as follows. I begin by discussing the first road to phenomenology. I shall focus on the defining characteristics, and in the second step, critically discuss it. After having identified its problems, I then turn to the second road, and discuss Heidegger's ontological approach. This road is rarely used, and we will have to use a mower to see the road that is indeed is a *Holzweg* (Heidegger 1957), which one can easily miss, but which is equally rewarding and useful when

⁴ Heidegger worked close together with Husserl, but he gradually developed his own approach (Frede 2006).

one knows one's way around. I will restrict the paper to a discussion of the socioontological foundation of the second phenomenological road. As the literature on Heidegger and the social sciences is limited, in combination with the fact that Heidegger has an extensive list of publications, my presentation can only point at the value of the ontological road. The discussion of this ontological approach will lead us to the questions of order.

The First Road to Phenomenology: Egological Epistemology

The first road to phenomenology is well known. When talking to people in the social sciences who have a serious interest into phenomenology, their stories are often identical. After having read Berger and Luckmann, they got interested in Schütz, and they may even have looked at or studied the works of Husserl.⁵ In this paper, I will say less on Berger and Luckmann, some on Schütz, and more on Husserl. This is a strategy to uncover what has become more sedimented the less people have direct contact with the philosophical roots of phenomenology. This will also show how radical his approach is, but it is this radically and essentially non-social approach, serve as the foundation for the social sciences. My argument is that the discussion of Heidegger will uncover the paradigmatic assumptions (Kuhn 1962) of the social sciences that are taken for granted. Husserl will be partly taken as the example of this Cartesian epistemic position because of his clarity.

Phenomenology can be defined as the study of “that what appears.” To Husserl, who wanted to establish a new scientific foundation based on phenomenology, the central question was epistemic. His starting point, however, was man living in real life—the lifeworld. Husserl argues that each person lives in a world, in the natural attitude, as a “human person living among others in the world” (Husserl 1989:411). The world I experience in the natural attitude, or lifeworld is always there for me. It is the world that I perceive: I hear the breaking waves, I see my neighbor go to work, and I talk to my family; this world is immediately there for me, and I need not do anything but to take part in this world (cf. Husserl 1962:91-93). In this attitude people take, for example, the social surrounding, houses, values, and social life, including one's friends and the court of appeal, for granted, and people do not

⁵ Berger and Luckmann open up at least two additional roads that also are of importance: Nietzsche and Scheler.

normally reflect upon this. Husserl, however, argues that this world cannot serve as the foundation of true knowledge. This basic idea led Husserl into a major project of establishing a true base of knowledge.

Phenomenology is a descriptive science, which in the end results in an eidetic science, or a universal ontology, as it is the “science of the transcendental intersubjectivity or universum of fact” (Husserl 1945:702). This starting point aims at generating an ontology, a formal ontology, upon which all regional ontologies, for example of the empirical sciences, can be based (Wolf 1984:1195). To solve this, Husserl readdresses the Kantian question of how knowledge is possible (Zahavi 2003:8). To address this issue he could not take anything of what is considered as true by ordinary people, or by the scientists and philosophers, for granted; everything has to be put into question. He follows Descartes and asks if there is a justification for his experience, and he answers: “No! I have based my previous life and scientific activities on it without even justifying it” (Husserl 1981:318).

Husserl’s study, which in his case includes the invention of the reduction, aims at creating a new beginning, a “radical beginning,” or “first philosophy” as he (1962:19-20) calls it. Husserl explains his approach: “transcendental phenomenology is not a theory...it is a science founded in itself...that stands absolutely on its own ground” (Husserl 1962:13).⁶

A key idea in Husserl’s project is that all consciousness is intentional, in the sense that there is a mental directedness (Husserl 1945:700). This simply means that one thinks of something, wishes, means, intends. It follows that judgments, values as well as perceptions of objects are “intended” in the stream of consciousness. What Husserl refers to as phenomenological psychology studies these in order to learn “the nature of the psychical, and comprehend the being of the soul” (Husserl 1945:700). To accomplish this, one must perform the psychological reduction, which puts the world as we know it in brackets, and what will remain is two parts, the way things are experienced (“the noetic”) and what is experienced (“the noematic”). This

⁶ Obviously, to question this world, including its values, conceptions, truths, etcetera cannot be done in one strike—something has always to remain undisputed, taken for granted, if something else is questioned. Husserl’s solution to this dilemma is what can be called the zigzag method, which means that one first take one thing for granted while questioning something else, then one gradually replace the thing (statement, finding, or logical principle) with something else that is taken for granted while one can study the first thing that was left as the secure ground from which the study was launched.

means that the study is epistemic in its nature, starting with the question of what there is, based on the idea of an ego (the knowing subject).

Bracketing the Real World

It must always be remembered that the reductions proposed by Husserl starts from the real world, it is its starting point as well as the condition for reductions (cf. Husserl 1981:337). As mentioned, Husserl addresses the Kantian question of how knowledge is possible, and his answer, in brief, is that there is an apriori foundation on which everything we know rests. Each individual can “reach” or “establish” this foundation, given that they perform what Husserl refers to as phenomenological reduction. This is a method of bracketing our everyday knowledge, i.e., the natural attitude that we hold as empirical real persons in social life, and instead see eidetic truths and transcendental laws (Nenon 1999).⁷ This bracketing includes, man, personality, gender, history, many sciences including sociology (Husserl 1962:155-167). The various sciences are of course also bracketed since they lack the grounding that can be used as a stepping-stone for further analysis of knowledge. Consequently, the theoretical results of empirical sciences, cannot be assimilated by phenomenology (Husserl 1962:56-57). Only after the transcendental reduction is performed, which is done, and can only be done, in the first person, the ego is able see the essential being, and this seeing is based on pure intuition (e.g., Husserl 1962:174-175). It must be underlined that any reduction is based on the idea of experiences, but these experiences are analyzed from within the transcendental sphere, not the natural attitude (Husserl 1980:20).⁸

The transcendental (Cartesian) reduction not only brackets the real world, but the existence of souls as well. Husserl says that it provides the foundation for the

⁷ Husserl sees the transcendental reduction as more profound, and the phenomenological-psychological reduction, if it is eidetic, “may establish a phenomenological psychology” (Husserl [1929] 1945:701).

⁸ Husserl essentially works with two reductions, the first is the phenomenological psychological, and the second, and undoubtedly more profound, is the transcendental, they are occasionally brought together, and then called the phenomenological reduction (e.g., Husserl [1913a] 1962:7-8). The phenomenological psychological gives us the world as appearances, and it “the soul’s own essence, a phenomenological psychology...psychic life in general” (Husserl 1962:8).

existence of subjectivity and that “which makes the world” ([1929] 1945: 701). Through this reduction the Ego pole is reached. Thereby the soul is left out, as well as the body that belongs to the soul. Husserl describes the effect of this reduction:

I am no longer a human Ego *in* the universal, existentially posited world, but exclusively a subject *for* which this world has being, and purely, indeed, *as* that which appears to me, is presented to me, and of which I am conscious in some way or the other, so that the real being of the world thereby remains unconsidered, unquestioned, and its validity is left out of account (Husserl 1962:8).

Bracketing, then, represents a shift from “external experiencing of the world...into transcendental subjectivity” (Husserl 1997:245). It means that the world, including me as a person living among others is no longer the center of attention; it is bracketed, and the center of attention is the world as mere phenomenon (Husserl 1997:246). By the epoché, “the meant” is reached “purely as meant” (Husserl 1960:§23).⁹

The epistemic relation is clearly expressed by Husserl; the world is experienced and known by the transcendental subject in isolation—the ego. It follows that the ego is the constituting pole of both everyday knowledge and the knowledge of the objective world of science that is built on that everyday knowledge (Husserl 1960:§40, 59). The mental becomes the foundation, rather than the external world of objects, as in the objectivistic tradition. This is a radical shift, and Husserl as seen, refers to this as a “Copernican turn” (Husserl 1960:§61). All in all, Husserl is outlining a transcendental “community” of identical egos. What we see as social is also by Husserl seen as central problem, but it is clearly a derivative question, and social communities are “personalities of a higher order” (Husserl 1960:132). This is the grounding of what may be termed egology. This is no interpretation as he says:

⁹ This meant, noema, however is not the same as essence. In other words, a noema need not contain “the essence of the physical thing” ([1952] 1980:73). If I understand Husserl correctly, the intuition of a noema is one thing, but that does not in itself imply a Judgement on the ontological and objective status of the essence. To make the latter Judgement is to make an ontological Judgement. If a noema “exists,” there is not only an intuition of the noema, but also an important eidetic relationship “between noema of intuition and essence of what is intuited” ([1952] 1980:73). A word may then refer to a noema, but this does not imply that what the word refers to exists (cf. [1952] 1980:87-89).

This universal concrete ontology (or universal and concrete *theory of science*—this concrete logic of being) [transcendental phenomenology] would therefore be the intrinsically first universe of science grounded on an absolute foundation. In respect to order, the intrinsically first of the philosophical disciplines would be the “solipsistically” reduced “egology,” the egology of the primordially reduced ego. Then only would come intersubjective phenomenology, which is founded on that discipline (Husserl 1960:155).

In other words, this egological approach assumes a subject who somehow reaches out and tries to understand everything, including social life. It is, in my view, a fictitious approach as it turns its back on every-day knowledge, as “Daily practical living is naive. It is immersion in the already-given world, whether it be experiencing, or thinking, or valuing, or acting...Nor is it otherwise in the positive sciences. They are naivetés of a higher level. They are products of an ingenious theoretical technique” (Husserl 1960:152-3). That this is a non-social starting point is thus clear, especially in the fifth Cartesian meditation (Husserl 1960), which shows that Husserl’s approach remains within the boundaries of the ego and its transcendental world. It is, moreover, an approach that is “first of all monadic, and then intermonadic” (Husserl 1960:156). Its social science offspring is the knowing and acting subject, though this subject is often located in the lifeworld.¹⁰

The Schützian Turn to Sociology

Husserl did not show much direct interest in sociology, his ambition was to provide a foundation for all sciences, including sociology. Husserl’s approach implies that the scientist should bracket the world of everyday knowledge, which usually is the domain of research for sociologists and other social scientists. Despite this, the phenomenological ideas of Husserl were one main source of inspiration for Alfred Schütz. The other main source was Max Weber. Schütz social ideas were developed in his dissertation, *The Phenomenology of the Social World* (Schütz 1976); ideas which he later developed and refined. Though he acknowledges the centrality of phenomenology, Schütz clearly says that he does not really follow Husserl: “as we

¹⁰ Sometimes also Husserl seems to argue that

proceed to our study of the social world, we abandon the strictly phenomenological method....The object we shall be studying, therefore, is the human being who is looking at the world from within the natural attitude” (Schütz 1976:97-98, cf., 43-44). According to Schütz, the starting point of the social sciences is, the “*intentional conscious experiences directed toward the other self*” (Schütz 1976:144). This approach is clearly oriented to the mental side of human life, but says less on human practice. It is, moreover, no social theory, and despite its focus on the mental, does not refer to a full theory of action. What Schütz take from phenomenology is a theory of meaning. He takes over the large bulk of social thinking from Max Weber, but adds a phenomenological theory of meaning to Weber, which indeed he lacks. But unfortunately, by accepting Weber, Schütz inherits the non-social starting point of Weber. Weber’s idea of sociology refers to actions that are oriented to others, but this is merely a sub-category of action (Weber 1978). This is clear from the following quotation from Weber. “We shall speak of ‘action’ insofar as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to his behavior—be it overt or covert, omission or acquiescence. Action is ‘social’ insofar as its subjective meaning takes into account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented to its course” (Weber 1978:4).

Husserl’s work is the condition for any later phenomenology, but it has also created a strange gulf between philosophical phenomenology and sociological phenomenology, as the latter has essentially stayed outside of the transcendental sphere, following Schütz’ abandonment of the “strictly phenomenological method.” Peter Berger has taken up the Schützian approach and says that the “Lebenswelt” is the world “in der wir, zusammen mit anderen Menschen unseren ‘normalen’ Tätigkeiten nachgehen” (Berger 1970:15), and it is the reality of the lifeworld that is the “natural” environment for us. I have in my own work built on this sociological tradition of phenomenology with its roots in Husserl, Schütz and Berger and Luckmann, but taking it in a more empirical direction (Aspers 2006), which lead me to develop what I call empirical phenomenology (Aspers 2009a).¹¹

These approaches have come to stress the mental, though we all know that practice matters, the phenomenologists have essentially followed the tradition of sociology to start with the idea of man as something that is not inherently social;

¹¹ Though it may be too early to finally judge the value of this approach, not the least as Husserl’s main contribution to the discussion of the lifeworld has only recently been published (Husserl 2008), it looks as if the old Cartesian approach holds a firm grip of this tradition.

man becomes, and is capable of being, social, but is not socially constituted. If we follow Husserl and Weber, meaning is individually constituted and only occasionally social. This bias in the social sciences, though it is often only a bias when it comes to the assumptions, towards Husserlian egology is not necessary. In fact, had we social science phenomenologists also studied Heidegger, we could have been better off. I will concentrate on this “second road” in the rest of the paper. I also intend to show that a different starting point in which man is socially constituted will have consequences for how we consider the most central question in the social sciences, the question of order.

The Second Road to Phenomenology: Social Ontology

Heidegger’s phenomenology can fruitfully be read as a critique of Husserl’s idea of phenomenology. Both, however, claim to have defined phenomenology. Heidegger defines philosophy as universal phenomenological ontology (Heidegger 2001b:436). This means that the point of departure is the human being living in society, and not an externally existing world to be discovered by solitary egos.

The ontological question, Heidegger argues, must start with who we are, and not with the epistemic question of how to know the world out there. The epistemic approach presumes a distinction between man and the world “out there.” Thus, the distinction between a subject that is there to detect the world already assumes an ontology (Heidegger 2001b:58-66). However, the main problem is not ontology, but to find a ground for any ontology (Heidegger 2001b:68). Heidegger, one may say, puts man at the centre of the “creation” of ontology, instead of posing the Cartesian question of how I—the ego—can get to know the “externally existing world” in an true way by a process of reduction. This has been noted by others: “the strategy of Being and Time...is to reverse the Cartesian tradition by making the individual subject somehow dependent upon shared social practices” (Dreyfus 1991:14; Schmid 2009).

To Heidegger, the starting point is our everyday life (Heidegger 2001b:28-31), which puts his position in radical opposition to Husserl, and allegedly closer to the position of most sociologists. Heidegger argues that we are part of this world, and it follows that we cannot do science as if we were not part of it. We are there in the

world, and it is because of this that he talk of *Dasein* [“being-there”] (Heidegger 2001b:15). *Dasein* is a being that is always mine—it is me (Heidegger 1979:325).

Heidegger’s hermeneutical phenomenology is radically different from Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology. Heidegger says that the detached subject (“Rumpsubjekt”) in the tradition of Descartes and Leibniz is unable to communicate with others. Husserl has tried to solve this by imposing “empathy” between the different ego-poles (Heidegger 2001b:140). It is thus this assumption of empathy that is the foundation of Husserlian intersubjectivity, and idea that is not, when one briefly looks at it, entirely different from what Mead (1934:221-226) represents. However also Mead essentially represents an epistemic-egological perspective when compared with Heidegger (Malhotra 1987). Heidegger’s approach, moreover, stands in contrast to the “thinking” ego-centered approaches, like rational choice (cf. Moran 2000:238). The egological approach is a historically created doctrine (Heidegger 2001b:22-23) of man as an ego, which has its root in Greek thinking, perpetuated by Christian ideas, and which Descartes refined. This idea was taken over as a tacit foundation by the social sciences. Husserl developed the egological approach further.

It is in this light that Heidegger argues that Husserl aims to solve a construed problem, which itself is the result of the epoché-method developed by Husserl. *Dasein* is essentially already in the world, and though there is a need for the general phenomenological method, Heidegger does not propose a negative or destructive method. He argues that we must have an hermeneutic starting point that accounts for our historically contingent positioning and knowledge (Heidegger 1994:109-114). We as human beings, or what Heidegger calls *Dasein*, are encapsulated in a structure of concepts, which has to be the focus of a deconstruction (“Abbau”), or taken apart, to understand *Dasein* (Heidegger 1994:117). According to Heidegger, any question must necessarily depart from “what we know,” which is knowledge rooted in the lifeworld, at the same time as he acknowledges that this lifeworld is a historical product of human culture, which is to say that our logic and ontology are products of the past (Heidegger 1994:113). The study is, as it were, affected by the point of view which we have, and thus conditioned by history (Heidegger 1994:115).

Heidegger criticizes Husserl’s egological approach which does not situate man in the world, but in an egological universe. To Heidegger, any knowledge must be grounded in man as living among other men. This is the relation between *Dasein* and *das Man* (the others). What does the idea of *das Man* imply? The first thing is the different ontological principles that defines, and thus separates man from other

existing entities. That man, according to Heidegger, is already in the world (Heidegger 2001b:53-60) is what, ontologically, makes man what he is. Man is from the very “beginning” part of a larger whole, the world, and never alone, others are always there. This is a strong proposal: Also when one or more others are not there (presence in the same spatio-temporal moment), they are there, as, for example, when someone is missed.¹² They are noticeable in their indirect presence, in the form of tools that are made for man, and the table that is made by someone, the umbrella that is forgotten by someone, in addition to the direct presence of others (Heidegger 1979:326-329). This is a constitutive relation, and also when *Dasein* is alone, the others are existentially there (though not *Vorhanden*). Obviously, we also meet others directly, when they are doing something, for example, at work (Heidegger 2001b).

Heidegger presents a holism in which the constitution of man must, on the one hand, be understood in relation to “tools” (*Zeuge*) that we use. These are ready-to-hand (*Zuhanden*) and make-up categories, which refers to the question “what.” The form, on the other hand, that is special of humans is called existential (not to be mixed up with existence) (Heidegger 2001b:44-45), and this refers to the question “who,” and the “what” question only makes sense given the idea of “who.” Humans have a form of being that is more profound than “objects;” they have a special role as the centre of constitution of the world. *Dasein*, moreover, is always mine, and I cannot escape myself.

An important aspect is that man is not alone. Though also stones and the sea are part of the world, man cannot be *with* them. Man can only be with others (*Mitsein*), which is a special ontological relation that characterizes man (Heidegger 2001b:137). An essential relation is the relation to *das Man*. This is a non concrete relation, and one may say that man is man because one has taken over the institutions and knowledge of one’s predecessors. Man’s activities are directly, as in activities as a supplier to a buyer, or indirectly, as when one reads a journal article, related to others (one reads a journal article as “one” reads it). The socially constructed norms and activities can never be excluded from how man acts, if so man would no longer be man. *Dasein* is in-the-world (Heidegger 2001a:138) doing things with others, for others, in the position of others, and with tools and knowledge generated by others,

¹² In contrast to things, which also are in the world, *Mitsein* refers to others in a special form; a man uses the boat at the lake, and is not standing in the same as ontological relation as the boat to me.

orienting to the norms of man. This ontological constitution, hence, is social. We may thus speak of socioontology.

It is here not possible to elaborate on the full meaning of Heidegger's project (see for example Dreyfus 1991; Safranski 1994), but one thing should be perfectly clear: as one part the constitution of man, i.e., what one cannot think away, is other men.

The Socially Primed Man and Order

According to Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, man cannot be analyzed as something that is non-social. Any making of institutions and order is conditioned by man, who is by definition social. But we have so far seen that Husserl, Schütz, and Weber in fact do *not* start with a social man. The egological approach, thus, penetrates sociology much deeper than merely being the ground rational choice or the idea of economic man. Let us here be clear that it is not Husserl's work that has affected the entire tradition of the social science; this is an issue that must be accounted for by the Cartesian epistemic approach. Husserl, however, has discussed and most explicitly made use of, and elaborated on, this idea.

What I have proposed is an ontological foundation based on the socioontology of Martin Heidegger. This foundation may provide at least some social constructivist approaches with an ontological foundation that clearly stresses that the constitution of man is social, and not to be found in certain biological (Park 1936) or psychological traits. It is man's relation to others, direct and indirectly (through *das Man*), which constitutes him. The empirical variation of social forms is, in one way, a second issue that we must study, but this takes place against the ontological foundation. This ontological foundation provides a starting point for scientific reasoning for social scientists and their regional ontologies (what Heidegger calls the "ontic" level). Heidegger adds the opportunity to ground work in ontological ideas that starts out from a social world, rather than a world of atoms who eventually create an ordered world.

The critique of Husserl and other followers of the Cartesian tradition—which without any problem lets itself be expanded to include economic theory, rational choice, and Weberian sociology—is that man does not have to solve all problems

from within the egological house. This egological approach creates quasi problems, such as prisoners' dilemma, the emergence of the state and yet other problems.

The Heideggerian perspective suggests that man essentially is, as it is his ontology, to be social. The relation between man and others (*das Man*) is essential, and can from not be evaded. What are the consequences of this approach? Here I can only, and only briefly, comment on the consequences for the question of order.

Order

The discussion of social order, as presupposed by many economists, starts with an egological approach. Man is alone, and pursues essentially non-social ends that eventually can produce something that is social. Though ends may in some way be social, man's knowledge and meaning (including for example preferences) are independent of others. A sociological approach, in contrast, starts with the assumption of man as inherently social. The distinction between an egological and sociological approach, thus, is not merely that one stresses organized and the other spontaneous order (Aspers 2009b), but the different assumption of man.¹³

Let us then, before we conclude, look at the consequence of this socioontological perspective for the question of order. I have in other publications discussed the issue of order and outlined economic and sociological ideas of making of order in markets (Aspers 2009b). I hope that by discussing the question of order, the general argument of socioontology gets a more practical application. I shall thereby contrast the spontaneous order that is assumed by economists with the socioontological. The central idea of the ecological approach is that men as atoms come together and their interaction result in social order.

An insight of the more sociological starting point is that man is not born existentially free as his existential relation to the world is contingent upon others. This idea is clear in the writings of Nietzsche, who presents an analysis of how man is "embedded" in a social world, than presenting a normative view of an *Übermensch* (Aspers 2007). Put in another language: man cannot escape this situation in which he is thrown (Heidegger 2001b). Man is social, not only "empirically" or after she has met others, but ontologically (i.e., man is constituted as social). This is a stronger

¹³ Obviously, many sociological approaches make use of the very same assumptions that economists share. This has been the case ever since the battle of methods.

argument than that society is a human product and that man is a social product, as it says that the world is social.

That man is already in the world means that one cannot think away the lifeworld. Order of things is already there. Order does not have to be decided by people, nor is it merely a result of a spontaneous process. When we talk of spontaneous order this is often less “spontaneous” than some may think or hope; there is no way out of this inherently social world, as long as we are men. This is not say that everything is planned, but it means that “spontaneous” orders are always the result of historically contingent conditions, and most fundamentally on the lifeworld—the world in which we already are. We may thus put spontaneous in brackets to rectify the perceptions of social processes that are commonly held among social scientists. This could be discussed more in detail, for example, for markets (Aspers 2009b).

Conclusion

The central argument in this paper is that the social sciences have not taken what I have called the second route to phenomenology. This route takes us to its starting point, where we shall find the works of Martin Heidegger. Though this road is not directly visible to most social sciences, as there are few links between Heidegger and the social sciences, I have tried to show that there is a fruitful road to establish a social foundation for the social sciences. Of the two kinds of phenomenology—the Cartesian egology and Heidegger’s socioontology—it is, unfortunately, the first one that was taken by the founding fathers of sociology, most notably Weber. Thus, though few sociologists have followed Husserl’s Cartesian and monadological ideas for establishing a base of knowledge; the egological starting point has become established in sociology. The Weberian idea and definition of social action which, so to speak, is occasionally added to a non-social life, has given sociology, in my view, the false starting point. More generally, sociology, in this respect, is only something that has been added on to economics, as in the case of Weber. It is also this assumption that has remained, though tacit, in much social science thinking.¹⁴

¹⁴ A large review would be needed to fully substantiate this assertion.

This egological assumption in the social sciences is at least one hundred years old. Clearly sooner or later a new start must come. This paper has not outlined such an alternative in detail, only hinted to what could be a new beginning, taking off from what is the second road to phenomenology, namely the ideas developed by Martin Heidegger. His socioontology is an interesting step towards a truly *social* foundation of sociology.

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