

# DISKUS

The Journal of the British Association for the Study of Religions ([www.basr.ac.uk](http://www.basr.ac.uk))  
ISSN: 0967-8948

*DISKUS* 17.2 (2015), 21-37

## The Prejudice of Being Human in the Study of Non-Ordinary Realities

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### ABSTRACT

Over the course of its history Religious Studies has come to use many terms to describe beings that to a certain mind frame are difficult to grasp. We have spoken of 'non-ordinary reality', 'superhuman beings', 'non-natural entities', 'humanlike but non-human beings', 'counter-intuitive agents', and 'non-falsifiable alternate realities' to name but a few. It is the contention of this paper that all these terms, whether deliberately or not, appeal to a conception of reality that presumes that the 'believers' under study have deviated from the ordinary and made a category mistake. The basis of this is a human prejudice: only the biological human can properly be considered a subject. Based on a phenomenological analysis I argue the human prejudice is the result of a European-centric rationalism: there is only one form of rationality (which is the European) against which all others are to be measured. The result of accepting the human prejudice, then, is that social science will consistently become the study of deviancy. To avoid this, we must reformulate the idea of 'man' which sits at the basis of social science.

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The task of philosophy, as conceived by Alfred Schutz (1899-1959), is to uncover and clarify certain foundational difficulties that may have been overlooked in the concepts and notions used by social scientists in their empirical research (in Schutz, 2011, p. xiii). For instance, Schutz pointed out that 'choice' and 'decision' are fundamental categories for any theory of social science, yet few social scientists have clarified these basic concepts (Schutz, 2011, p. 75). The focus of this paper will be to uncover and clarify the foundational difficulties of speaking about 'non-ordinary realities' and similar equivalents that were the focus of 2014 BASR panel: 'Research among spirits, ghosts and deities – How to study non-ordinary realities'.

The significance of 'non-ordinary realities' ties almost fundamentally to the general issue of there being "little consensus across the social sciences as to basic methods, aims, and fundamental assumptions about human beings"

(Steel and Guala, 2011, p. 1). Tracing the history of social science reveals little consensus has ever been established on this score (see Nagel, 1952[1963]; 1961[2003]; Machlup, 1963; and Toulmin, 1972). The latter concerns identified by Steel and Guala have predominated in philosophical phenomenology as an approach to the philosophical anthropological question: 'What is man?' As Schutz saw it, social science required a basis in philosophical anthropology in order to proceed properly (in Schutz, 1962, pp. xlvi-xlvii). As he wrote regarding the study of symbols:

The analysis of these transcendences – from those going beyond the limits of the world within his actual reach to those transgressing the paramount of everyday life – is a major task of any philosophical anthropology. At the same time, the clarification of the categories of common-sense thinking within everyday life is indispensable for the proper foundation of all the social sciences. (1962, p. 356)

The project of philosophical anthropology should not be confused as some kind of 'ethnography' but rather indicates "the broader meaning of a general preoccupation with man and his existence" (Gurwitsch, 1974, p. 9). As such, it is a concern with the invariant structures at the core of the 'human condition'. In brute terms, we may say that social science is the study of the world as it is for 'man'. But how we then define 'man' as the object of study has far reaching consequences. The philosophical phenomenological approach began as a consideration that 'man' has not been sufficiently defined. One of its foundational considerations is that hidden behind the very language of 'human being', 'human condition', 'humanity', or any other such term which references the 'human', is a form of Euro-centrism. To speak of the 'human' is to refer to a biological species, or the 'man-animal' as Scheler called it (1980, p. 195), and it is out of this that such phrases like 'non-ordinary realities' have arisen. It was the avoidance of the 'man-animal' and its connotations that drove the earliest phenomenologists to speak of the Transcendental Ego (Husserl), Persons (Scheler), *Dasein* (Heidegger), and *réalité humaine* (Sartre). By these terms they were trying to grasp the 'idea of man' (Scheler, 1978, p. 185). However, as 'man' - even as an idea - carries sexist connotations in the English language I will instead use the Old English equivalent 'wer'. The word finds predominant use in the concept of *wergild*: the restitution paid to a family for the murder of their kin. The point of using this term is to promote an 'idea of man' as opposed to a 'man-animal' – *wer* indicates a social valuation. Thus, to say of someone/something that they are 'wer' is to say they have a being like myself.<sup>1</sup> The crucial question that follows is what this shared 'being' entails, as the answer to this has consequences for how we understand, and study, 'non-ordinary realities' like ghosts, spirits, and deities.

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<sup>1</sup> This Old English 'wer' is not inconsistent with its occurrence in German where the word usually means "who". To see this we need only recognise that we are speaking of a "who" as opposed to a "what". Similarly, in its colloquial uses to mean "somebody" or "someone", this can be contrasted with "something".

## The Human Prejudice

Social science is predominated by what I call a *human prejudice*: only (biological) humans are *wer*. That is, to use the word 'human', in whatever construct (e.g. human being or humanity), automatically makes us think of a particular biological species alone. This human prejudice is a product of a European-centric rationalism: the view that there is one correct form of rationality (European) and all other forms of rationality must be made derivative or rendered false. As Husserl saw it, European rationalism takes the form of viewing the world presented by the natural sciences as the only true world.

The origins of this rationalism are credited to Galileo who was among the first to achieve the *mathematisation of nature*: "*nature itself* is idealised under the guidance of the new mathematics; nature itself becomes – to express it in a modern way – a mathematical manifold" (Husserl, 1970b, p. 23). In short, everything in the universe becomes amenable to quantification. As Husserl describes it:

The indirect mathematisation of the world, which proceeds as a methodical objectification of the intuitively given world, gives rise to general numerical formulae which, once they are formed, can serve by way of application to accomplish the factual objectification of the particular cases to be subsumed under them. The formulae obviously express general causal interrelations, "laws of nature," laws of real dependencies in the form of the "functional" dependencies of numbers. (1970b, p. 41)

The consequence of this is that "the 'construction' of the idea of *nature* as understood by modern science ... has now become so thoroughly implanted in our culture that we somehow think of this scientific nature as if it were the 'natural' or common-sense view of modern humanity" (Moran, 2012, p. 74). Beginning with Galileo, there is a "surreptitious substitution of idealised nature for prescientifically intuited nature" (Husserl, 1970b, pp. 49-50). In this new science emerging from Galileo as physics, "things 'seen' are always more than what we 'really and actually' see of them" (1970b, p. 51).

An important factor in this is what de Caro and MacArthur have call the 'Great Success of Modern Science Argument': the technical achievements of natural science to encompass more and more data engendered scientism, the view that the only true picture of reality is provided by natural science (de Caro & MacArthur, 2004, p. 4). Thus, Hobbes formulated the doctrine of subjectivity in which the intuited world of our lives is taken to be subjective and insofar as it relies on pre-scientific thinking is necessarily false. And Descartes declared that only the sun constructed by astronomers using geometry and mathematical physics was the true sun (Moran, 2012, p. 77). Husserl claims that it is through the 'garb of ideas' this mathematisation creates that "we take for *true being* what is actually a *method* – a method which is designed for the purpose of progressively improving, *in infinitum*, through 'scientific' predictions, those rough predictions which are the only ones originally

possible within the sphere of what is actually experienced and experienceable” (Husserl, 1970b, pp. 51-52). As the various successes mounted, they began to be taken for granted by scientists and in such a way that any attempt to get the scientist to reflect upon the “*original meaning* of all his meaning-structures and methods” was rejected as ‘metaphysical’ (Husserl, 1970b, pp. 56-57).

To contextualise this, it is worth drawing on Scheler’s notion of the ‘natural view of the world’ (1980, pp. 73-74). In the phenomenological sense ‘natural’ refers to what is taken as given – i.e. true without question. Thus, the consequence of Galileo and the Great Success of Modern Science Argument is that ‘Nature’ – understood as a mathematical manifold – becomes naturalised. Its findings and the world it presents are taken as given without question. With regard to rationalism this means that the specific European ‘natural view of the world’ is *absolutized* so that it is deemed as universal (1980, pp. 74-75). That is, rather than having a view of the world *as it is for us*, we instead get a view of the world *as it is*. The human prejudice as an expression of this European rationalism states that: if only humans can be *wer* then to recognise subjectivity in the non-human is wrong. This means that groups that recognise spirits, ghosts and deities, etc., as *wer* are *deviant*. Such groups have failed to grasp the presumed ‘absolute natural view of the world’ – i.e. the way the world *is*. The task of social science is to then account for this deviancy. This alone is obvious by the very use of the term ‘non-ordinary’ around which the panel at BASR focused. To speak of the non-ordinary presupposes that what is ordinary has already been established – i.e. an ‘Is’.

To see this we can look at naturalism within philosophy and the study of religion as the predominant expression of this European rationalism. For instance, there are the following claims from naturalists: Sidney Hook claims that science is “the only way of reaching truths about the world of nature, society, and man” (1944, p. 45); Wilfred Sellars that “science is the measure of all things, of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not” (1956, p. 173); and more recently Luther Martin and Donald Wiebe that science is a “different, and epistemically superior, method for understanding and explaining the world” (2012, p. 69). Naturalism, then, gives us the absolute natural view of the world – the ‘Is’. This, however, leads to the consequence identified by Scheler of “the peculiar positivist idea of judging the development of *all* human knowledge on the basis of a small curve segment that shows only the development of the *modern West*” (Scheler, 1980, p. 148). By this he means that if you accept that there is the way that the world *is*, when you do social scientific work you will encounter groups who don’t agree with this ‘Is’. As such, on the naturalist conception the task of social science becomes the study of deviance: explaining how it is these various groups have failed to appropriate this ‘Is’. This is then formalised in the terminology used by naturalists. Thus, Spiro (1966), Lawson and McCauley (1990) speak of ‘superhuman beings’, Stuart Guthrie (1980; 1993) of ‘humanlike but nonhuman beings’, Justin Barrett and Keil (1996) of ‘non-natural entities’, Peter Boyer (2001) and Ilka Pyysiainen (2003) of ‘counter intuitive agents’, and Russell McCutcheon (2001) of ‘nonobvious beings’. In all these cases

various groups that recognise subjectivity in the non-human are accused of a cognitive default in which they erroneously identify human characteristics in non-humans, thereby deviating from the European norm.

However, it is important to recognise that the human prejudice is not a consequence of naturalism, rather it is a consequence of the entire European worldview. In his discussion of the 'natural view of the world', Scheler makes a distinction between the 'group-soul' which is expressed as folk traditions, customs and mores, and the 'group-mind' which expresses as philosophy, art, and science. He comments that 'natural views of the world' "belong at the bottom of the automatically functioning 'group-soul' – and certainly not to the 'group-mind'" (Scheler, 1980, p. 75). By this he means that what is determined as natural – i.e. given – is determined by the 'group-soul' and that the 'group-mind' is 'artificial' in the sense that it is a formalisation of this pre-existent 'group-soul' (1980, p. 76). To say this, then, is to say that the human prejudice is embedded in the everyday thinking of European life. It requires an 'unnatural' move to bring it into question. As Husserl explained, philosophical phenomenology involves moving in an "unnatural direction" which allows it to throw into question the normally unquestioned meaning of '*wer*' (1970a, p. 254).

As such, the human prejudice finds expression in other areas of the 'group-mind', not just naturalism. Thus, while the naturalists are often quite open that they are identifying deviancy, scholars who would think of themselves as not being engaged in such a task nevertheless are by their very adoption of the human prejudice. For instance: Robert Redfield claims that "every man separates other human beings from one another ... and *looks upon other human beings as significantly different from all else that is not human*" (Redfield, 1952, p. 30); Benson Saler (1977) speaks 'other-than-human-being'; Hans Penner defines religion as "a verbal and nonverbal structure of interaction with superhuman being(s) (1989, p. 7); and in the BASR panel on non-ordinary beings, Fiona Bowie (2014) conceived the study of religion as 'reflect[ing] on what it means to be human.' We even find the human prejudice in the phenomenology-of-religion. The title is hyphenated to indicate that this invention of 'phenomenology' differs from philosophical phenomenology. Primarily this so because of this phenomenology's claims regarding the *sui generis* status of religion which has a consequence for its understanding of what 'phenomenology' means.<sup>2</sup> Thus, to give two examples from the phenomenology-of-religion: Gerardus van der Leeuw claimed that "the essentially human remains essentially human, and is, as such, comprehensible" (van der Leeuw, 1963, p. 675); more recently James Cox (2010) spoke of 'postulated non-falsifiable alternate realities'. Although these scholars do not purport to be engaged in the sort of evaluative task that naturalists pursue, my point is that the very language they use above implicates them in presuming to know world as it 'is'.

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<sup>2</sup> See Tuckett (forthcoming) for a discussion of the different inventions of 'phenomenology'.

## The consequences of rationalism

Thus far, I have claimed that there is a human prejudice involved in the study of non-ordinary realities that is a consequence of a European rationalism. To see the consequences this has for such study I will take Cox's phrase 'postulated non-falsifiable alternate realities' as an example. To see the problem of this phrase we must ask a simple question: what is meant by 'non-falsifiable'? In what respect are these realities non-falsifiable and, perhaps more importantly, to *whom* are they non-falsifiable?

Cox explains that the phrase is drawn from the work of Karl Popper "who argued that for a theory to be genuinely scientific it must be falsifiable. If any assertions about reality cannot be falsified, they are not subject to empirical investigation" (Cox, 2010, p. 16). Cox's 'non-falsifiable' serves the same function as Pyysiäinen's 'counter-intuitive' – to draw a parallel in naturalism – in that both imply that there is a particular way the world 'Is' that is then violated by what we have dubbed 'religions'. This is made clear in Cox's explanation of 'alternate realities': "alternate in the sense that for the believers the ordinary enters into the experiences of the non-ordinary" and "'realities' denotes a multi-dimensional non-ordinary world" (2010. p. 16). But, the Buddhists of Pyysiäinen's study do not think of the Buddha as counter-intuitive and the indigenous tribes of Cox's studies (2007) do not think of their ancestors as belonging to a reality which is non-falsifiable (or non-ordinary). That such is the case was identified in the 1970s by Evans-Pritchard's study of the Azande and witchcraft. He recognised that for the Azande witchcraft was falsifiable because they were perfectly capable of determining whether or not it had taken place. As Evans-Pritchard observed, the occurrence of witchcraft is not miraculous (i.e. non-ordinary) (Evans-Pritchard, 1976, p. 19). The best known example of this is the case of collapsing granaries – the Azande are quite clear whether witchcraft has caused the collapse or not (1976, pp. 22-23). In my terms, this is to say that the Azande have a conception of rationality which allows them to ascertain the presence or non-presence of witchcraft. But to then apply such terms as 'counter-intuitive', 'non-falsifiable' or 'non-ordinary' is to, whether deliberately or not, accuse them of making some sort of error. The very language negatively implicates the Azande in being irrational simply because what they deem rational is not what the European deems rational.

But, the European rationality is a culturally determined sense of rationality – founded in Galileo and the Great Success of Modern Science Argument. Pyysiäinen's case makes this very clear:

Our knowledge, for example, partly consists of *panhuman preferences and inclinations encoded in our minds in evolution*. It is, however, cognitively easier for us to consider our moral intuitions as someone's viewpoint; this someone is a god. Ascribing moral ideas to a divine mind both explains these ideas (their existence and their binding nature) and makes it easier for us to process moral knowledge in the mind. (2003, p. 162)

The findings of evolution – i.e. the findings of natural science – set the standard for *all* rationality against which the rationality of the Buddhists, Azande, etc., are to then be judged.

This should not, however, be taken to imply that philosophical phenomenology is immune to the human prejudice. Schutz openly admitted to being anthropomorphic and criticised Husserl for considering consciousness in animals (Schutz, 2004, p. 131; Barber, 2013, pp. 321-322). This is taken up by various followers: Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann claim that: “As soon as one observes phenomena that are specifically human, one enters the realm of the social. Man’s specific humanity and his sociality are inextricably intertwined. *Homo sapiens* is always, and in the same measure, *homo socius*” (1966, p. 69); Maurice Natanson claimed that “the reality of everyday existence presupposes the possibility of mutual interaction for all human beings of whatever epoch or culture” (1981, p. 333); and more recently Alessandro Duranti restricted intersubjectivity to humans alone, denying the possibility of non-human intersubjectivity (2010, p. 12).

In all the cases above we find that when it comes to a consideration of subjectivity the human prejudice involves privileging the ‘man-animal’ over other animals. But to give two examples to the contrary: Hallowell observed in the case of the Ojibwa that “‘persons’ comprise one of the major classes of objects to which the self must become oriented, this category of being is by no means limited to *human* beings” (1960, p. 20); and, conversely, Levi-Strauss also saw: “a very great number of primitive tribes simply refer to themselves by the term for ‘men’ in their language, showing that in their eyes an essential characteristic of man disappears outside the limits of the group” (1969, p. 46). In the case of Hallowell this entails that being human is not a requisite for being *wer* (person) and for Levi-Strauss not all humans are *wer* (men).

We may well ask in what way is the human prejudice problematic at this juncture. Certainly, depending on your stance toward the function of social science and religious studies there may be nothing wrong in endorsing the human prejudice. However, certainly from the perspective of philosophical phenomenology the human prejudice cannot be endorsed. Indeed, even though it can be found in Schutz, it is a contradiction of his own requirement of social science that “the results of an analysis of the mundane sphere, if true, cannot be impugned by any basic assumption (metaphysical or ontological) which might be made in order to explain our belief in the existence of Others” (Schutz, 1962, p. 175).

In order to understand this claim we need to relate it to two postulates which Schutz formulated as part of his definition of social science. The first is his claim that social science requires becoming a *disinterested observer* which “consists in the abandoning of the system of relevances which prevails within the practical sphere of the natural attitude” (natural view of the world) (1962, p. 246). Unlike the practical person, the scientist’s interest lies not in whether their anticipations will prove useful to the solving of some problem but in whether their anticipations will be verified. Because confusions can stem from the meaning of ‘disinterested’ I have, elsewhere, called this the *postulate of*

*nonpractical knowledge*: knowledge pursued for the sake of knowledge alone (Tuckett, 2014).<sup>3</sup>

Related to this is the *postulate of adequacy* that: “each term used in a scientific system referring to human action must be so constructed that a human act performed within the life-world by an individual actor in the way indicated by the typical construction would be reasonable and understandable for the actor himself as well as for his fellow-man” (1962, p. 44, 64; 1964, p. 19, 85). As such, by ‘true’, above, Schutz means whether the likes of Hallowell and Levi-Strauss have accurately represented the people they are talking about.

The assumption of the human prejudice (whether metaphysical or ontological) simply cannot be accepted on Schutz’s own understanding of social science as it violates both these postulates. The findings of Hallowell and Levi-Strauss reveal that subjectivity is not tied to the ‘man-animal’, therefore any understanding of *wer* used in the social sciences that is built off the human prejudice will be *inadequate* as the analyses it produces will not accurately represent the groups in question. By consequence, the knowledge these studies produce is *practical* in the sense that it accuses – whether deliberately or not – these groups of *deviancy*, implying they should change their natural view of the world.

### **Conceiving subjectivity**

The challenge, then, is to formulate an idea of *wer* that recognises subjectivity in a way that is not tied to the biological human alone. It is only in such a manner that we can begin to discuss spirits, ghosts, deities, and more without using deviant-implying phrases like ‘non-ordinary’, ‘non-falsifiable’ or ‘counter-intuitive’. Only then can we satisfy the *postulates of nonpractical knowledge* and *adequacy*. In the case of philosophical phenomenology, tackling this issue has taken shape as a consideration of intersubjectivity.

First, it is necessary to clarify what I mean by ‘intersubjectivity’. The present understanding of intersubjectivity comes under what is commonly known as the ‘problem of Other minds’: how it is I know what the Other is thinking. For example, there is the notion of *interpolation* found in phenomenology-of-religion. To use Cox’s formulation: “To interpolate means to insert what is apprehended from another religion or culture, which to the outsider often appears strange or unusual, into one’s own experience by translating it into terms one can understand” (Cox, 2010, p. 52). In this sense, intersubjectivity is understood as an achievement: “how people come to know what others have in mind and how they adjust accordingly” (Bruner, 1996, p. 161). This understanding of intersubjectivity is, ironically, a consequence of the introduction of the term to English speaking audiences by works like that of Merleau-Ponty and Schutz who take it from Husserl. However, as Duranti

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<sup>3</sup> Originally the *postulate of nonpractical interest*. The alteration, based on my thesis work, is due to a more technical sense that has since accrued to the term ‘interest’.



(2010) explains, Husserl's original use of term meant something slightly different. The issue stems from how certain compound words in Husserl's writings (usually featuring the component "*Wechsel*"<sup>4</sup>) are translated into English as "mutual understanding", a practice that begins with Royce Gibson's translation of *Ideas I* (2012[1931]). In turning to *Ideas II*, however, Duranti suggests that these "*Wechsel*" compounds mean something akin to "trading places". For example, take the following passage:

The things posited by others are also mine: in empathy I participate in the other's positing. E.g., I identify the thing I have over and against me in the mode of appearance  $\alpha$  with the thing posited by the other in the mode of appearance  $\beta$ . To this belongs the possibility of substitution by means of trading places [*Platzwechsel*]. (Husserl, 1989, p. 177)

Intersubjectivity is not to be understood as the *achievement* of "mutual understanding". Rather, as "trading places" intersubjectivity is the existential condition upon which "mutual understanding" becomes *possible* (Duranti, 2010, pp. 6-7).

This same distinction can be found in Scheler's *The Nature of Sympathy* (1913; 1954[1923]).<sup>5</sup> Here Scheler points out that it isn't sufficiently recognised that rather than there being one problem of intersubjectivity, there are in fact six problems. Important to this is that each of these problems form an order of precedence in which they are addressed (1954, p. 227). The particular problems we are concerned with here is the distinction between: (3) when "in the order of *dependence* among cognitive intentions (or the corresponding spiritual acts of the person), at which social and other-consciousness *commences*, i.e. what kind of cognitive acts must already have been accomplished before awareness of others can appear" (1954, p. 217); and (4) "the emergence and development of knowledge on the part of actual men concerning the minds of those about them" (1954, p. 221). As the problem of intersubjectivity as possibility the question of (3) is how we recognise the Other as Other.

Scheler identifies two main approaches to this:

The theory of analogical inference, whereby, on perceiving expressive movements similar to those which we experience in ourselves in consequence of our own individual self-activity, we infer as a similar self-activity in others; and the theory of empathy especially associated with Theodor Lipps, whereby this assumption involves a belief in the existence of mind in others, based upon a process of empathic projection of the self into the physical manifestations evinced by the other. (1954, p. 238)

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<sup>4</sup> E.g. Wechselverständnis, Einverständnis, Wechselverständigung.

<sup>5</sup> *The Nature of Sympathy* was initially published as *Zur Phänomenologie der Sympathiegefühle und von Liebe und Hass* (1913). The second edition was then published as *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie* (1923). The translation used here is of the fifth edition (1948) which contains corrections by Maria Scheler of mistakes by the printer found in the second through fourth editions.

However, he lodges an ardent criticism of the analogical argument:

we are indeed conscious of our expressive movements, but apart from mirrors and suchlike, such consciousness takes the form, merely of intentions to *move*, and of the consequences which follow from sensations of movement or state; while in the case of others, the primary data are presented by the visual images of such movements, which have *no* sort of immediate resemblance or similarity to the data encountered in our own case. (1954, p. 240)

This creates two problems: first, how I experience my body performing a gesture is not the same as how I experience another body performing the same gesture; and, second, I can adequately recognise the behaviour of animals as expressive even though their bodily gestures may differ greatly from my own. As Scheler sees it, analogical arguments already presume the Other to be an Other. But this undermines the very point of such arguments to establish “that there are other conscious individuals, who as such, are different from myself” (1954, p. 241). The ‘self’ that is recognised by analogy is no more than a duplicate of my ‘self’ in that I place myself behind the expressive act. Empathy is subjected to a similar critique as “it would be blind chance that the process of empathy should coincide with the actual presence of mind in the bodies so perceived” (1954, p. 241). It could not distinguish between empathetic feelings toward a genuine Other or a painting or the character Hamlet. Indeed, like the analogical argument, the Other is already presupposed.

What should be emphasised here is that analogy and empathy are unable to pick out the Other as Other – i.e. they already assume a *separate* definition of *wer*. That is, they are solutions to intersubjectivity as achievement that try to solve intersubjectivity as possibility without recognising that in order to discuss achievement, a definition of *wer* must already be presupposed. Thus, the source of Scheler’s criticisms is that analogy and empathy violate the order of precedence of the problems of intersubjectivity. Consider, for example, if we were to apply analogy to the case of a spirit. Strictly speaking, there is no reason we could not as Scheler identified that analogy works even with biologically different animals. But the success of analogy would, for those that rely on it, mean that the spirit is a subject like them. However, many would deny this, just take this comment from Sydney Hook for example: ‘The existence of God, immortality, disembodied spirits, cosmic purpose and design, as these have been customarily interpreted by the great institutional religions, are denied by naturalists for the same generic reasons that they deny the existence of fairies, elves, and leprechauns’ (Hook, 1944, p. 45). This denial, though, lies not with analogy, but the human prejudice. This means that *the human prejudice is the European solution to the question of intersubjectivity as possibility*. That is, the human prejudice allows a European to recognise an Other as Other.

## The Idea of *Wer*

Simply put, as the European solution to intersubjectivity as possibility, the human prejudice cannot suffice in social science as it violates the *postulates of nonpractical knowledge* and *adequacy*. The challenge, then, is to formulate a definition of *wer* which does not violate these postulates and is therefore social scientifically acceptable. To do this we must abandon 'human' terminology and develop an idea of *wer* without reference to the man-animal.

As mentioned earlier, philosophical phenomenology as a consideration of philosophical anthropology aimed to present an idea of *wer* in a way that didn't succumb to the human prejudice. As explained by Scheler in 'The Idea of Man' (1978[1915]), this means developing "an idea of man according to which he is the locus for the emergence and coming to light of an order of things essentially distinct from all nature" (Scheler, 1978, p. 195). That is, rather than a development (as in the man-animal), *wer* represents a 'break'. It is for this reason that Husserl spoke of the Transcendental Ego, Scheler of the Person, Heidegger of *Dasein*, and Sartre of *réalité humaine*. One thing to note of these presentations, however, is that they were all denounced by the others. Particularly for the former three, each idea of *wer* was subjected to intense scrutiny by the other two as they all vied for dominancy of the Phenomenological Movement.

In the first instance, Scheler accused Husserl's Transcendental Ego of being a variety of rationalistic anthropologism: only what is capable of rationality can be considered *wer*. Scheler points out that this variation on the man-animal renders the idea of 'individual persons' a contradiction. Rather than recognising the autonomy of persons, the focus on 'anonymous eidetic structures' emphasises heteronomy in which one Transcendental Ego could not be told apart from another (1973a, p. 372). This violates the requirement, most lucidly formulated by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* (2003[1943]), that though we are 'alike', the Other in order to be Other "is the one who is not me and the one who I am not" (2003, p. 254).

In *Being and Time* (1962[1927]), Heidegger takes up Scheler's accusation of rationalistic anthropologism against Husserl only to then accuses Scheler's Person of being another kind of anthropologism when he speaks of the 'anthropology of Christianity'. This anthropologism arrives at its definition of *wer* through Genesis 1:26: And God said, 'Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness'. Modern variations have lost the original theological character. The focus of this kind of anthropologism is on 'transcendence': "that man is something that reaches beyond himself" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 74). Take the following passage from 'The Idea of Man':

'Man' in the wholly new sense is the intention and gesture of 'transcendence' itself. He is the being that can pray and seek God. Not 'man prays' – he *is* the prayer of life beyond itself; 'he does not seek God' – he is the living X which seeks God! And he is able to be this, and is just able to be this, to the extent that his intellect and his tools and his

machines give him more and more *free leisure time* for the contemplation and love of God. (1978, p. 192)

As such, the Person is defined as a being striving toward spiritualisation (in Scheler, 1980, p. 14). But, Heidegger notes, this again leads to a man-animal with a characteristic no less heteronomous than 'rationality'.

Sartre repeats the criticism of Husserl in *Being and Nothingness*, but then denies Heidegger's notion of *Dasein* too. Heidegger, building upon the work of previous thought, recognised two necessities: "(1) the relation between "human-realities" must be a relation of being, (2) this relation must cause "human-realities" to depend on one another in their essential being" (Sartre, 2003, p. 268). This leads to the claim that it is part of the existential of *Dasein*, its essential structure, that it is being-with (*Mit-sein*) and more specifically 'being-with-Others'. Sartre's criticism focuses on this 'with': "'with' does not intend the reciprocal relation of recognition and of conflict which would result from the appearance of a [*réalité-humaine*] other than mine *in the midst* of the world. It expresses rather a sort of ontological solidarity for the exploitation of this world" (2003, p. 269). Heidegger fails to account for the phenomenon of *resistance* identified by Scheler (Scheler, 1973a, p. 135; 1973b, p. 263). That is, our original relation to the Other is one of interdependence and solidarity rather than confrontation (Zahavi, 2004, p. 186). While *Dasein* is not a man-animal like the Transcendental Ego or Person, this focus on similarity risks descending into the same heteronomy nonetheless. That is, the Other would be no more than an identical *Dasein* projected onto another body.

What is interesting about Sartre's account is that, writing after the other three, there is little in the way of criticism of Scheler in his discussion. This is partly because Heidegger's charge of theological anthropologism against Scheler was entirely successful. Prior to 1922 Scheler was a well renowned Catholic apologist, and it is this that allows a theological edge to come through in his phenomenology. For various reasons, Scheler broke with the Catholic Church around 1922 which prompted a radical re-evaluation of his phenomenology. As a consequence he both accepted Heidegger's critique of his position and changed it accordingly (Scheler, 2009, p. 3). Most significantly, this involved a revision of the notion of '*Geist*' which purged it of a metaphysical understanding and instead gave it a sociological rendering. Thus, in *Problems of a Sociology of Knowledge* (1980[1926]) Scheler defines it thusly:

Mind [*Geist*], in the subjective and objective sense as well as in the individual or collective sense, determines only and exclusively the particular *quality* of a certain *cultural* content that may *come* to exist. Mind as such has in itself *no original trace* of 'power' or 'efficacy' to bring this content into *existence*. Mind may be called a 'determining factor' but not a 'realising factor' of possible cultural developments. (1980, p. 36-37)

Berger and Luckmann explain how this understanding of *Geist* ties to Scheler's sociology of knowledge as concerned "with the processes by which *any* body of 'knowledge' comes to be socially established as 'reality'" (Berger

and Luckmann, 1966, p. 15). In *The Human Place in the Cosmos*<sup>6</sup> (2009[1928]) Scheler then redefines the Person as possessing (sociological) 'spirit' (*Geist*) (2009, p. 26).<sup>7</sup> Sartre, who is notoriously bad at citing the people he agrees with (in Sartre, 2004, p. xxv), takes up Scheler's sociological understanding of '*Geist*' in his discussion of *freedom* in *Being in Nothing*: "freedom precedes essence in man and makes it possible; the essence of the human being is suspended in his freedom. What we call freedom is impossible to distinguish from the *being* of '[*réalité humaine*].' Man does not exist in order to be free *subsequently*; there is no difference between the being of man and his *being-free*" (Sartre, 2003, p. 49).<sup>8</sup>

How, though, does this idea of *wer* assist us in the consideration of spirits, ghosts, and deities? Quite simply, we can define *wer* as *a being who participates as a determining factor in cultural developments* – i.e. they are 'like' me because they participate in turning 'knowledge' into 'reality'. Where any such 'participant' is found, we find *wer*. Though we may disagree about the reality to be produced, the point is that they have the *right* to participate in this discussion – i.e. they are someone worth listening to. For instance, in the case of the Ojibwa we can take the myth, detailed by Hallowell, in which nine Thunder Bird sisters marry nine human brothers. Of this, Hallowell notes "the marriage of series of female siblings (classificatory or otherwise) to a series of male siblings" is common among the Ojibwa so that the myth sets "a kind of ideal pattern" for marriage (Hallowell, 1960, p. 33). As such, Thunder Birds are to be considered *wer* as they participate in determining the cultural development of marriage practices. Thus, in one of Hallowell's anecdotes, the old man who asks 'Did you hear what was said?' when he heard thunder was not making a category mistake, thunder is simply the means of communication by Thunder Birds (1960, p. 34).

## Concluding Remarks

The contention of this paper has been that in proposing to study the 'human', social science privileges the man-animal. That is, only the biological human can properly be considered *wer*. But in so presuming this European rationalism there are numerous consequences, particularly when we encounter groups for which subjectivity is recognised in more than just

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<sup>6</sup> While the title might seem problematic considering the nature of the argument, this is particular a translation issue. '*Dies Stellung des Menschen in Kosmos*' has also been translated as '*Man's Place in Nature*' (Scheler, 1962) and '*The Place of Man in the Cosmos*' (Farber, 1954, p. 393; Schutz, 1970, p. 151). The book itself is based on a lecture Scheler gave in 1927 under the title '*Die Sonderstellung des Menschen*' which in an oddity of Frings' translation is rendered as both 'The Special Place of Humankind' and 'The Special place of the Human Being' (Scheler, 2009, p. xix, 3).

<sup>7</sup> This switch from 'mind' to 'spirit' should not be considered a return to the metaphysical, both have a sociological sense. The reason for the switch is German-English translation issues faced by Frings who worked on both books (in Scheler, 1980, p. vii; in 2009, pp. 74-75).

<sup>8</sup> Note that the essence of 'man' and the essence of the 'human being' are separated here, Sartre is not falling into a human prejudice.

humans or not all humans. In such cases, social science cannot help but be the study of deviancy – it cannot help but describe those groups in terms that implicate them in a category mistake. The language that achieves this are terms such as ‘counter-intuitive’, ‘non-falsifiable’ and ‘non-ordinary’. In contradistinction to this I have proposed the following idea of *wer* as a being who participates as a determining factor in cultural developments as a definition that satisfies the social scientific *postulates of nonpractical knowledge and adequacy*.

The specific virtue of this idea of *wer*, as opposed to presuming the (European) human prejudice, is that it does not *prima facie* exclude spirits, ghosts or deities from being *wer*. That is, there is nothing, in principle, to say that spirits, ghosts and deities do not participate in cultural development. Indeed, whether they do, and are thereby to be considered *wer*, can only be determined on a case by case basis. It is for this reason that this idea of *wer* does not contradict the human prejudice as the European idea of *wer*. By this I mean that the human prejudice can be seen as a socio-cultural specification of the definition of *wer* by adding a further ‘man-animal’ qualifier to who/what are *wer*. Similarly, the tribes of Levi-Strauss’s study, for instance, have their own socio-cultural specifications for denying that all humans are *wer*. Recognising this pushes us to reevaluate the language we use to describe and analyse groups that recognise subjectivity in such entities in case such language actually implies deviancy or category mistakes. Such language, rather than being social scientific (as Schutz conceived it), reveals our cultural biases. This is important to bear in mind: the idea of *wer* presented here is a social scientific idea and as such only a first step. Further work must be done to understand how various groups determine rules for inclusion/exclusion for participating in determining cultural developments. Primarily this would first take the form of a consideration of the definition of rationality and its role in determining these rules.

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