

The Social Psychology of Phenomenological Structuralism

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ABSTRACT

In the attempt to resolve the structure/agency problematic of the social sciences, Paul C. Mocombe offers his phenomenological structuralism in response to structuration theory. Building on structurationist sociology via Haitian epistemology, Haitian/Vilokan Idealism, this work explores the social psychology in Mocombe's theory of phenomenological structuralism.

Keywords: *Structuration theory; phenomenological structuralism; structure/agency; mythopraxis; quantum mechanics; social class language game; Haitian Epistemology; Haitian/Vilokan Idealism.*

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

The structural-functional and structural Marxist turn in the mid-to-late 1960s and early 70s in explaining ethnic/racial identity or for that matter identity in general, privileged socially constructed relations within and via language and symbolic representation, as opposed to biology (i.e., race, genetics, structure of the mind, etc.), as the determining factor in identity or consciousness formation. This move, however, encountered a peculiar problem: to what extent should identity or consciousness formation be attributed to internal (individual subjective responses), as opposed to external and expressed processes (the social relations)? In other words, as Teresa Brennan (1997) so eloquently phrases the problem, “[f]or if everything is socially constructed, how do novel ideas emerge? How does originality, or genius in the extreme case, come into being?” (Brennan, 1997, pg. 89). She continues, “this problem is equivalent to the old conundrum of [(structural)] functionalism. How do we know, do or write anything at odds with a received view? How do we explain those moments, or movements, which escape from the compound of socially constructed identifications?” (Brennan, 1997, pg. 89). Phenomenological structuralism attempts to resolve these three dilemmas through a phenomenological ontology (Haitian epistemological transcendental idealism) of identity, consciousness, and societal constitution and development, which accounts

for individual agency or social action in the world and structures of signification amidst the structurationist emphasis on structural reproduction and differentiation.

In this work, I argue that the “moments, or movements, which escape from the compound of socially constructed identifications” are the product of an individual actors’ stance/analytically vis-à-vis three types of structures of signification amidst societal structural reproduction and differentiation, 1) the (chemical) drives (forms of sensibility and understanding) of the body and brain, 2) impulses or phenomenal properties of residual past consciousnesses or recycled subatomic particles encapsulated in the neuronal energies of the brain, 3) and actions resulting from the deferment of meaning in ego-centered linguistic and symbolic communicative discourse.

Generally speaking, consciousnesses, actions, learning, and development within my phenomenological structural ontology are the product of the embodiment of recycled subatomic neuronal energies of the multiverse objectified in the space-time of multiverses via the aggregated body and the brain. Once objectified and embodied the neuronal energies encounter the space-time of physical worlds via a transcendental subject of consciousnesses and the drives and sensibilities of the aggregated body and brain in reified structures of signification, language, ideology, ideological apparatuses, and communicative discourse defined and determined by other beings that control the resources (economics), and modes of

distributing them, of the material world required for physical survival in space-time. The (mental) stances/analytically, ready-to-hand, unready-to-hand, and present-at-hand, of the transcendental ego vis-à-vis, 1) the sensibilities and drives of the body and brain, 2) drives of embodied residual memories or phenomenal properties of past recycled subatomic particles, 3) the actions produced via the body in relation to the indeterminacy/deferment of meaning of linguistic and symbolic signifiers as they appear to individuated consciousnesses in ego-centered communicative discourse, 4) and the dialectical and differentiating effects, i.e., structural reproduction and differentiation, of the structures of signification, social class language game, of those who control the economic materials (and their distribution, i.e., mode of production) of a world are the origins of practical consciousnesses. All four types of actions, the drives and sensibilities of the body and brain, drives or phenomenal properties of embodied recycled past consciousnesses, structural reproduction/differentiation stemming from the mode of production, and deferential actions arising from the deferment of meaning in ego-centered communicative discourse via the present-at-hand stance/analytic, exist in the material world with the social class language game, i.e., the physical, mental, emotional, ideological, etc. powers of those who control the material resource framework as the causative agent for individual behaviors. In other words, our stances in consciousness vis-à-vis the drives and sensibilities of the body and brain, (societal) structural reproduction and differentiation, drives of embodied past consciousnesses of recycled subatomic particles, and deferential actions arising as a result of the deferment of meaning in ego-centered communicative discourse determines the practical consciousness we want to recursively reorganize and reproduce in the material world. The power and power positions of those who control the resources (and their distribution, i.e., mode of production) of a material resource framework, and the threat it poses to the ontological security of an actor, in the end determines what actions and identities are allowed to organize and reproduce in the material world without the individual actor/agent facing marginalization or death.

THEORY AND METHOD

Theoretically speaking, Mocombe's phenomenological structuralism, synthesizes Merleau-Ponty's and Heidegger's phenomenology, with Haitian idealism and

phenomenology, Karl Marx's materialism, Althusser's structural Marxism, and Ludwig Wittgenstein's language game to suggest that being-in-the-world with others, our practical consciousness, is a product of our acceptance or antidialectical rejection of the symbols of signification, social class language game, of those bodies in institutional/ideological power positions who control via their bodies (practical consciousness), language, ideologies, ideological apparatuses, and communicative discourse the economic conditions (mode of production) of a material resource framework as we encounter them and their symbols/signifiers in institutions or ideological apparatuses via our own transcendental ego, bodies, language, and communicative discourse. Hence, we never experience the things-in-themselves of the world culturally and historically in consciousness. We experience them structurally or relationally, "the structure of the conjuncture" (Marshall Sahlins's term) of the mode of production, and our stances/analytically, ready-to-hand, unready-to-hand, present-at-hand, vis-à-vis these ideological structures as they stand in relation to the drives (forms of sensibilities and understanding) of our bodies/brains, impulses of subatomic particles, and the ability to defer meaning in ego-centered communicative discourse determine our practical consciousness or behaviors we recursively organize and reproduce in the material resource framework. So Mocombe rejects the ability to know noumena, as posited by Haitian Idealism, via divinations, revelations, intuitions, etc., because of ideology, which requires the human agent and their viewpoint, gaze, or disposition to change in order to access it.

"Presence-at-hand," "Readiness-to-hand," and "Un-readiness-to-hand,"

We initially know, experience, and utilize the things of the world in the preontological ready-to-hand mode, which is structural and relational. That is, our bodies (*nanm* in Haitian Idealism) encounter, know, experience, and utilize the things of the world in consciousness, intersubjectively, via their representation as objects of knowledge, truth, usage, and experience enframed and defined in the relational logic and practices or language game (Wittgenstein's term) of the institutions or ideological apparatuses of the other beings-of-the-material resource framework whose historicity comes before our own and gets reified in and as language, ideology, ideological apparatuses, communicative discourse, and

social action stemming from the mode of production (i.e., how they organize and distribute the resources of the material resource framework). This is the predefined phenomenal structural, i.e., ontological, world we and our bodies are thrown-in in coming to be-in-the-world. How an embodied-hermeneutically-structured Being as such solipsistically view, experience, understand, and utilize the predefined objects of knowledge, truth, and experienced defined by others and their conditions of possibilities in consciousness in order to formulate their practical consciousness is albeit indeterminate. Martin Heidegger's (1962 [1927]) description of Being is accurate, however, in suggesting that three stances or modes of encounter (Analytic of Dasein), "presence-at-hand," "readiness-to-hand," and "un-readiness-to-hand," characterizes our views of the things of consciousness represented intersubjectively via bodies, language, ideology, and communicative discourse, and subsequently determine our practical consciousness or social agency. In "ready-to-hand," which is the preontological mode of human existence/consciousness thrown in the world, we accept and use the things in consciousness with no conscious experience of them, i.e., without thinking about them or giving them any meaning or signification outside of their intended usage. Heidegger's example is that of using a hammer in hammering. We use a hammer without thinking about it or giving it any other condition of possibility outside of its intended usage as defined by those whose historicity presupposes our own. In "present-at-hand," which, according to Heidegger, is the stance of science (and ideology for me), we objectify the things of consciousness and attempt to determine and reify their meanings, usage, and conditions of possibilities. Hence the hammer is intended for hammering by those who created it as a thing solely meant as such. The "unready-to-hand" outlook is assumed when something goes wrong in our usage of a thing of consciousness as defined and determined by those who adopt a "present-at-hand" view. As in the case of the hammer, the unready-to-hand view is assumed when the hammer breaks and we have to objectify it, by then assuming a present-at-hand position, and think about it in order to either reconstitute it as a hammer, or give it another condition of possibility. Any other condition of possibility that we give the hammer outside of its initial condition of possibility which presupposed our historicity becomes relational, defined in

relation to any of its other conditions of possibilities it may have been given by others we exist in the world with. Hence for Heidegger, the ontological status of being-in-the-world-with-others, via these three stances or modes of encountering the objects of consciousness hermeneutically reveal, through our view, experience, understanding, and usage of the predefined objects of knowledge, truth, and experience. Whereas Heidegger in his phenomenological work goes on to deal with the existential themes of anxiety, alienation, death, despair, etc. in Mocombe's phenomenological stance regarding societal constitution or Beings-as-such's-being-in-the-world-with-others via our stances to the body, language, ideology, ideological apparatuses, communicative discourse, and social relations of production he is not concerned with the phenomenological preoccupation of individual solipsistic existence as defined in Jean-Paul Sartre's work who claims to take off from Heidegger. Instead, he is interested in the universal ontological structure, i.e., social structure or societal constitution and practical consciousness, which arise out of Heidegger's three stances vis-à-vis embodiment, language, ideology, ideological apparatuses, communicative discourse, and social relations of production, which prevents Being from relating their existence to the noumenal world, which is possible as suggested in Haitian/Vilokan Idealism. That is, Mocombe is not concerned with Sartre's phenomenologization of the Cartesian *res cogitans*/transcendental ego, i.e., the present-at-hand transcendental ego, which he gives ontological status in the world as a solipsistic individual seeking to define themselves for themselves lest they be declared living in bad faith. In his view, the overemphasis of that particular aspect of *Dasein* is a product of a specific historical and relational mode of production, and only accounts for one of its analytics as highlighted by Heidegger.

For Mocombe, the transcendental ego, which is a part of a universal *élan vital* existing in another dimension at the subatomic particle level, does not, initially, originate out of the historical material world, but several variations of it becomes objectified via embodiment and the aforementioned stances in a universe, galaxy, and historical material world structured, via mode of production, language, ideology, ideological apparatuses, by other embodied Beings and their stances. Upon death its historicity via subatomic neuronal particles (and

their properties) gets reabsorbed into the *élan vital*, the pan-psychoic field of physics, to be recycled to produce future beings. As such consciousness, i.e., practical consciousness, is a product of the stances of *Dasein* or the human subject vis-à-vis the structures of 1) its embodied recycled past consciousnesses via the microtubules of neurons, 2) the drives and sensibilities of the aggregated body and brain, 3) language and ideology, which can be deferred in ego-centered communicative discourse, and 4) structural reproduction and differentiation resulting from the social relations of production. Be that as it may, as with Heidegger, who refutes Sartre's existential rendering of his phenomenological ontology, Mocombe is interested in the objectified societal constitution and practical consciousnesses of the transcendental egos and their relations that emerge within a dominant constitution of Being that controls a material resource framework of the world via bodies, mode of production, language, ideology, ideological apparatuses, and communicative discourse vis-à-vis the stances of the transcendental ego.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Phenomenological structuralism, therefore, seeks to highlight the ontological universal modes of embodied human existence with others, which relationally has emerged out of the phenomenological processes (Heidegger's three stances) of the transcendental ego experiencing, interpreting, and using the representational facts of its embodiment vis-à-vis the world as defined by and in the language game of others who control objects of a material resource framework, and how these modes of human existence come to (re) shape practical consciousness and constitute social structure or societal constitution.

Phenomenological structuralism posits consciousness to be the by-product or evolution of subatomic particles unfolding with increasing levels of abstraction within a material resource framework enframed by the mode of production, language, ideology, ideological apparatuses, and communicative discourse of bodies recursively reorganizing and reproducing the ideals of the latter factors as their practical consciousness. Subatomic particles, via the Higgs boson particle, gave rise to carbon atoms, molecules and chemistry, which gave rise to DNA, biological organisms, neurons and nervous systems, which aggregated into bodies and brains that gave rise to the preexisting

consciousness of the subatomic particles, bodies, and languages. In human beings, the indeterminate behavior of subatomic neuronal energies that produced the plethora of consciousnesses and languages in the neocortex of the brain gave rise to ideologies, which in turn gave rise to ideological apparatuses and societies (sociology) under the social class language game or language, ideology, and ideological apparatuses of those who organize and control the material resources (and their distribution) required for physical (embodied) survival in a particular resource framework. So contrary to Karl Marx's materialism which posits human consciousness to be the product of material conditions, the logic here is a structural Marxist one in the Althusserian sense. That is, the aggregated, atomic, mature human being is a body and neuronal drives that never encounters the (ontological) material world directly. Instead, they encounter the (ideological) world via structures of signification, which structures the world or a particular part of it through the body, language, ideology, and ideological apparatuses, i.e., social class language game, of those whose power and power positions dictate how the resources of that framework are to be gathered, used, and distributed (means and mode of production).

Hence in the end, subject constitution is a product of an individual's stance, i.e., analytics, vis-à-vis three structures of signification and the ability to defer meaning in ego-centered communicative discourse stemming from the social class language game (i.e., language, symbols, ideology, ideological apparatuses, and communicative discourse) of those who control the mode of production of a material resource framework. It is the ready-to-hand drives of the body and brain, ready-to-hand and present-at-hand manifestation of past recycled residual consciousnesses/subatomic particles, the present-at-hand phenomenological meditation and deferment of meaning that occurs in embodied consciousness via language, ideology, and communicative discourse as reflected in diverse individual practices, within the ready-to-hand, unready-to-hand, and present-at-hand differentiating logic or class divisions of the social relations of production, which produces the variability of actions and practices in cultures, social structures, or social systems. All four types of actions, the drives/impulses of the body and residual past consciousnesses of subatomic particles, structural reproduction/differentiation, and actions

resulting from the deferment of meaning in ego-centered communicative discourse, are always present and manifested in a social structure (which is the reified ideology via ideological apparatuses, their social class language game, of those who control a material resource framework) to some degree contingent upon the will and desires of the economic social class that controls the material resource framework through the actions of their bodies (practical consciousness), language, symbols, ideology, ideological apparatuses, and social relations of production. They choose, amidst the class division of the social relations of production, what other meaning constitutions and practices are allowed to manifest themselves without the Beings of that practice facing alienation, marginalization, domination, or death.

The individual being is initially constituted as recycled and embodied subatomic particles of the multiverse, which have their own predetermined form of understanding and cognition, i.e., phenomenal properties, based on previous experiences as aggregated matter (this is akin to what the Greek philosopher Plato refers to when he posits knowledge as recollection of the Soul). Again, the individual's actions are not necessarily determined by the embodiment and drives of these recycled subatomic particles. It is conflict and an individual's stance, ready-to-hand, unready-to-hand, and present-at-hand, when the subatomic particles become aggregated matter or embodied, which determines whether or not they become aware, present-at-hand, of the subatomic particle drives and choose to recursively reorganize and reproduce the content of the drives as their practical consciousness.

This desire to reproduce the cognition and understanding of the drives of the recycled subatomic particles, however, may be limited by the structuring structure of the aggregated body and brain of the individual subject. That is to say, the second origins and basis of an individual's actions are the structuring drives and desires, for food, clothing, shelter, social interaction, and sex, of the aggregated body and brain, which the subatomic particles constitute and embody. In other words, the aggregated body and brain is preprogrammed with its own (biological) forms of sensibility, understanding, and cognition, structuring structure, by which it experiences being-in-the-world as aggregated embodied subatomic particles. These bodily forms of sensibility, understanding, and cognition, such as the drive and desire for food,

clothing, shelter, social interaction, linguistic communication, and sex, are tied to the material embodiment and survival of the embodied individual actor, and may or may not supersede or conflict with the desire and drive of an individual to recursively (re) organize and reproduce the structuring structure of the recycled subatomic particles. If these two initial structuring structures are in conflict, the individual moves from the ready-to-hand to the unready-to-hand stance or analytics where they may begin to reflect upon and question their being-in-the-world prior to acting. Hence just as in the case of the structuring structure of the subatomic particles it is an individual being's analytics vis-à-vis the drives of its body and brain in relation to the impulses of the subatomic particles, which determines whether or not they become driven by the desire to solely fulfill the material needs of their body and brain at the expense of the (phenomenal) drives/desires of the subatomic particles or the social class language game of the material resource framework they find their existence unfolding in.

The social class language game, and its differentiating effects, an individual find their existence unfolding in is the third structuring structure, which attempts to determine the actions of individual beings as they experience being-in-the-world as embodied subatomic particles. The aggregated individual finds themselves objectified and unfolding within a material resource framework controlled by the actions of other bodies, which presuppose their existence, via the actions of their bodies (practical consciousness), language, communicative discourse, ideology, and ideological apparatuses stemming from how they satisfy the desires of their bodies and subatomic particle drives (means and mode of production). What is aggregated as a social class language game by those in power positions via and within its language, ideology, ideological apparatuses, and communicative discourse attempts to interpellate and subjectify other beings to its interpretive frame of satisfying their bodily needs, fulfilling the impulses of their subatomic particles, and organizing a material resource framework at the expense of all others, and becomes a third form of structuring individual action based on the mode of production and how it differentiates individual actors.

That is to say, an individual's interpellation, subjectification, and differentiation within the

social class language game that presupposes their being-in-the-world attempts to determine their actions or practical consciousness via the reified language, ideology, etc., of the social class language game, the meaning of which can be deferred via the communicative discourse of the individual actors. Hence, the deferment of meaning in ego-centered communicative discourse of the language and ideology of a social class language game is the final means of determining an individual's action or practical consciousness outside of, and in relation to, its stance, i.e., analytics, vis-à-vis the drives of subatomic particles, drives and desires of the body and brain, and structural reproduction and differentiation.

Whereas the practical consciousness of the transcendental ego stemming from the impulses of embodied subatomic particles are indeterminant as with its neuronal processes involved with the constitution of meaning in ego-centered communicative discourse (Albeit physicists are in the process of exploring the nature, origins, and final states of subatomic particles, and neuroscientists are attempting to understand the role of neuronal activities in developing the transcendental ego and whether or not it continues to exist after death). The form of the understandings and sensibilities of the body and brain are determinant as with structural reproduction and differentiation of the mode of production, and therefore can be mapped out by neuroscientists, biologists, and sociologists to determine the nature, origins, and directions of societal constitution and an individual actor's practical consciousness unfolding.

The interaction of all four elements in relation to the stance of the transcendental ego of the individual actor is the basis for human action in the world. However, in the end, consequently, the majority of practical consciousness will be a product of an individual actor's embodiment and the structural reproduction and differentiation of a social class language game given 1) the determinant nature of embodiment, form of understanding and sensibility of the body and brain amidst, paradoxically, the indeterminacy of impulses of embodied subatomic particles and the neuronal processes involved in ego-centered communicative discourse; and 2) the consolidation of power of those who control the material resource framework wherein a society, the social class language game, is ensconced and the threat that power (consolidated and constituted via the

actions of bodies, mode of production, language, ideology, ideological apparatuses, and communicative discourse) poses to the ontological security of an aggregated individual actor who chooses (or not) either ready-to-hand or present-at-hand to recursively reorganize and reproduce the ideals of the society as their practical consciousness. It should be mentioned that in response to this latter process, those in power positions who internalize the ideals of the social structure and recursively (re) organize and reproduce them as their practical consciousness are in the unready-to-hand when they encounter alternative forms of being-in-the-world within their social class language game. They dialectically attempt to reconcile the practical consciousness of their social class language game with the reified practical consciousness of those who have deferred their meanings for alternative forms of being-in-the-world within their social class language. They can either accept, marginalize, or seek to eradicate the deferred or decentered subject or their practices.

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The Social Psychology of Phenomenological Structuralism

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