The Phenomenological Foundations of Ethnomethodology's Conceptions of Sequentiality and Indexicality.
Harold Garfinkel's References to Aron Gurwitsch's "Field of Consciousness"[1]

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Abstract

Some of the opaquest and cloudiest passages and formulations in Garfinkel's writings directly refer to Aron Gurwitsch's gestaltist phenomenology. In this text I will clarify the borrowings and intentional misreadings of Gurwitsch's philosophy by Garfinkel drawing on the topic of sequentiality and endogenously unfolding indexicality. These borrowings and intentional misreadings have been overlooked for a long time, but materials from the Garfinkel Archive now allow us to reconstruct them in more detail.

In doing so, this text at the same time provides an introduction to the many references in the work of Garfinkel to Gurwitsch. The paper offers a treatment of Gestalt contexture and its details, theme, and thematic field, discusses how time and temporality matter, and explains how Garfinkel has been using and taking inspiration from the work of Gurwitsch. It does so also by reference to some unpublished materials in the Garfinkel archive. Furthermore, the text refers to some other sources of inspiration for Garfinkel, like Hubert Dreyfus and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Finally, it offers reflections on the theoretical foundations on which empirical strands of ethnomethodology such as Conversation Analysis and Membership Categorization Analysis are based as well as methodological considerations of video-based interaction research.

Keywords: Ethnomethodology – Garfinkel – Gestalt theory – Gurwitsch – indexicality – phenomenology – sequentiality.

German Abstract

Einige der undurchsichtigsten Formulierungen in Garfinkels Schriften beziehen sich direkt auf die Gestalt-Phänomenologie von Aron Gurwitsch. In diesem Text werde ich die Anleihen und absichtlichen Fehlinterpretationen (*intentional misreadings*) von Gurwitschs Philosophie durch Garfinkel anhand der Themen Sequentialität und der endogen sich entfaltenden Indexikalität klären. Diese Anleihen und absichtlichen Fehlinterpretationen wurden lange Zeit übersehen, aber Materialien aus dem Garfinkel-Archiv erlauben uns nun, sie genauer zu rekonstruieren.

Mit diesem Ziel führt der Text zugleich in die vielen Bezüge im Werk Garfinkels zu Gurwitsch ein. Der Beitrag behandelt Gestaltgebilde (*gestalt contextures*) und ihre Details, Themen und Themenfelder, diskutiert die Bedeutung von Zeit und Zeitlichkeit und erklärt, wie Garfinkel die Arbeit von Gurwitsch verwendete und sich von ihr inspirieren ließ. Dies geschieht auch durch Verweis auf einige unveröffentlichte Materialien im Garfinkel-Archiv. Der Text verweist zudem auf einige

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weitere Inspirationsquellen für Garfinkel, wie Hubert Dreyfus und Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Nicht zuletzt bietet er Reflexionen über die theoretischen Grundlagen, auf der empirische Ansätze der Ethnomethodologie wie Konversationsanalyse und Kategorisierungsanalyse basieren, sowie methodologische Erwägungen zur videographischen Interaktionsforschung.

Keywords: Ethnomethodologie – Garfinkel – Gestalttheorie – Gurwitsch – Indexikalität – Phänomenologie – Sequentialität.

1. Introduction

Some of the opaquest formulations in Harold Garfinkel's writings directly refer to Aron Gurwitsch's gestalt phenomenology. An example is:

> Haecceities make up a new descriptive vocabulary of object production. The vocabulary is being worked out by ethnomethodologists. To replace organizational Things produced in their details. Its purpose is to describe Durkheimian Things by addressing their neglected (figural) (contextual) (configurational) characteristics. Not only is this their central and identifying property. It is also strikingly ignored and neglected. Durkheim's Things are (deep gestalten) (patterns). Accountable analytic units composed endogenously, in-and-as-of-their-lived-temporal-in-course sequentiality, in-vivo, local historicities. "Strings" of coherent contextural constituents of lived orderlinesses in practices of ordinary society (Garfinkel 2007a:42).

The quote is an excerpt from a manuscript that Harold Garfinkel intended to develop into the second volume of his book project on "Durkheim's aphorism", the first volume of which had appeared in 2002 (Garfinkel 2002). The manuscript was first presented orally at the Schutz Memorial Lecture in October 2004 to which Garfinkel had been invited. It was read, however, by Ken Liberman and Larry Wieder, due to a car accident that Garfinkel had suffered shortly before. The part that Liberman had read was then published as Garfinkel (2007a), and the second volume on "Durkheim's aphorism", dedicated to ethnomethodological studies of work and sciences and the Lebenswelt origins of the sciences, was never completed.

In one way, the manuscript, including the quoted passage, is representative of Garfinkel's later phase of work as published, where he writes in a condensed and bold, if not radical, way in style and wording. However, as we will see, most of the theoretical concepts and thoughts referred to in these later texts were already present in their essential features in Garfinkel's works of the first half of the 1960s

when he developed ethnomethodology in its proper sense and emancipated himself from Parsons (see Garfinkel 2021:23).

In this text I will try to clarify some of these condensed, bold, and sometimes seemingly radical formulations and concepts by relating them to, and re-reading them with, thoughts developed in Gurwitsch's philosophy. In doing so, I will focus particularly on the topics of sequentiality and endogenously emerging indexicality. Garfinkel's many references to Gurwitsch have – with few exceptions (Wieder 1974; Lynch 1993:chapter 4; Maynard 2005; Fele 2008; Eisenmann/Lynch 2021) – not received the attention they deserve, but especially recently published as well as still unpublished materials preserved in the Garfinkel Archive, Newburyport, now allow us to reconstruct them in greater detail. This text thus also provides an introduction to the many references to Gurwitsch that Garfinkel makes in his work. The text offers a treatment of Gestalt contexture and its details, theme, and thematic field, discusses how time and temporality matter, and explains how Garfinkel has been using and taking inspiration from the work of Gurwitsch. It does so also by reference to some unpublished materials by Garfinkel that can be found in the Garfinkel archive in Newburyport. Furthermore, the text refers to some other sources of inspiration for Garfinkel, like Hubert Dreyfus and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, while leaving out others, like Wittgenstein, Parsons, or Heidegger. Finally, the text offers reflexions on the theoretical foundations on which empirical strands of ethnomethodology such as Conversation Analysis and Membership Categorization Analysis are based.

2. Garfinkel and Gurwitsch

Garfinkel had come into contact with phenomenology as a student of sociology at the University of North Carolina (1939-1942), including with a text of Gurwitsch through an early English collection of Farber (1940), and he cultivated this interest further during his time in the army (1942-1946) (see Rawls 2002). In the fall of 1946 when he moved to Harvard to study with Talcott Parsons, he came to personally know Gurwitsch, who had emigrated from Germany to France in 1933 and to the US in 1940, where – after some initial years at Johns Hopkins – he first taught physics at Harvard until 1947 and then mathematics and philosophy at Brandeis University until 1959.[2] While at Harvard (1946-1951), Garfinkel met regularly with Gurwitsch in his house in Cambridge to discuss "subjects in phenomenology and sociology" (Garfinkel 2002:84), particularly Gurwitsch's at the time still unpublished manuscript *The Field of Consciousness* (2010 [1964]) that he wrote in English, relying on earlier outlines in German and French, between 1943 and 1947. When completed in 1951, Gurwitsch offered the manuscript to Harvard University

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[2] Gurwitsch, a Russian-Lithuanian Jew, was refused his habilitation (second thesis) in Germany after the National Socialists came to power. When he discussed his manuscript (later published as "Human Encounters in the Social World", 1979) with Husserl in 1932 in Freiburg, Husserl established contact with Alfred Schütz with whom Gurwitsch shared a life-long friendship since their first personal encounter in Paris in 1937. While in Paris (1933-1940), Gurwitsch (who had grown up speaking French) lectured philosophy at the Sorbonne where Maurice Merleau-Ponty attended his lectures and was heavily influenced by Gurwitsch's phenomenological re-interpretation of gestalt psychology and experimental neurology (cf. Embree 1972; Moran 2019; Pintos 2005).

Press for publication, but, even after revisions, it was rejected in 1953, partly because of Gurwitsch's refusal to accept profound changes (Grathoff 1989:134-170), partly because of the "professorial German syntax of the Weimar years" (Alexandre Métraux, personal communication) that transpired from Gurwitsch's English manuscript. After all, in the 1950s, phenomenology, in the context of US-American philosophy, was still "exotic", as Cairns (1950:363) puts it. Eventually, Gurwitsch's book was first published in 1957 with Desclée de Brouwer in Bruges and Paris in a French translation of the English manuscript that Gurwitsch was dissatisfied with (Grathoff 1989:216-225; Métraux, personal communication). The revised English original was published in 1964 with Duquesne University Press in Pittsburgh, and a German translation, approved by Gurwitsch, as late as 1975 with de Gruyter in Berlin and New York.

Garfinkel apparently did not come into possession of the original English manuscript and did not know about Gurwitsch's dissatisfaction with the French translation, and the relationship between the two after 1951 remains enigmatic. But Garfinkel kept an interest in Gurwitsch's philosophy even after he had moved to California. In 1957, when he was teaching at UCLA, he hired a graduate student in sociology to (re-)translate Gurwitsch's book *The Field of Consciousness* into English when it was first published in French. As Garfinkel says, he thus gained "textual access in English to Gurwitsch's argument on the functional significations and their coherence of figural contexture in its empirical perceptual details" (Garfinkel 2002:84) – functional signification, coherence of figural contexture, empirical perceptual details being among the formulations that he subsequently used generously and that he himself attributes to Gurwitsch's influence.

Garfinkel states in retrospect that Gurwitsch's philosophy "has been a foundational point of departure in all my teaching. It has lasted a long time. It has also been missed as Ethnomethodology's key resource in identifying Ethnomethodology's concerns to specify 'the problem of meaning' with a program of certain positive empirical researches and instruction in sociology's identifying 'problem of social order'" (Garfinkel 2002:84). In what follows, I will contribute to remedy this negligence.

3. The Autochthony of Phenomena

In the manuscript that Gurwitsch discussed with Garfinkel and that was later published as *The Field of Consciousness* (2010 [1964]), Gurwitsch argues against the psychological "constancy hypothesis" of the early 20th century which assumes an ego who – in perception – synthesizes unconnected sense-data that in themselves possess a stable meaning. But he also called out the concurrent gestalt theoretical critique of the constancy hypothesis for not being radical enough and still presuming extrinsic, particularly spatial, principles that guarantee holistic perception. I will not go into details of the specific argumentation of the two approaches here. For us, it is important that, in his critique, Gurwitsch advocated an argument that he had already developed much earlier as his "non-egological conception of consciousness" (1941).[3]

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[3] Gurwitsch shares this non-egological conception with Merleau-Ponty and (partly) Sartre in contrast to Husserl and Schütz who are proponents of the egological "spotlight" conception. In

In phenomenological diction, intentionality, among other things, implies that *something* (e.g., a collectivity of forms and colors such as an ensemble of branches, leaves, limbs, and a trunk) appears to us *as something*, i.e. in a certain sense, a certain shape, structure or regulation (e.g., as a tree). The fact that something appears *as* something also means that it appears *not otherwise*, that is, that in and through perception, certain possibilities of experience are singled out and others are excluded.

Gurwitsch's point is that the experience of this appearance *as* something – perception – is not organized like a voluntary spotlight-kind singling out of elements in the world guided by the interested and attentional ego. Instead, as he puts it, the individual elements (branches, leaves, a trunk, limbs) of totalities we perceive (a tree) to some degree *self-organize*. As he puts it, "saliency of a group of data so that this group emerges and segregates itself from the stream is a feature not introduced into the stream, but yielded by the stream itself" (Gurwitsch 2010 [1964]:29; original emphasis omitted). Thus, the recognition of a coherence of elements of perception as being parts of an interrelated whole is not actively and consciously directed by the ego, but by the phenomenon that appears to us. "Organization must be considered as an autochthonous feature of the stream of experience and of the experiential field in its original form" (Gurwitsch 2010 [1964]:52). Gurwitsch illustrates this thought with well-known reversible figures such as the Necker Cube.
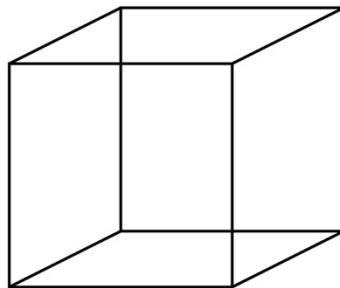

Fig. 1: Necker Cube (own depiction)

What Gurwitsch states in regard to these figures (other well-known reversible figures are Rubin's vase or the rabbit-duck illusion) is that they are somehow reluctant and recalcitrant to our voluntary focus of attention and mental singling-out. If, in Necker's Cube, we actively try to see, say, the bottom left corner as being in the back or alternatively in the front we are often disappointed because we are unable

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Schütz, relevance results from interests as outcomes of personal, e.g., biographical reasons. The ego actively performs controls and choices and plays a decisive role in the performance of intentional acts. According to its knowledge and motivations, the ego selects from the mass of objects in the world of everyday life those which are relevant for them. This occurs in either an intrinsic manner or in an imposed way, and the ego also interprets the actions of others in regard to possible motives attributed to them. In Gurwitsch, in contrast, relevance results from perceptual routines that have a cultural, not an individual basis (cf. Waldenfels 1983; Embree 2015; Vincini/Gallagher 2017). This debate also relates to the question of the reflectiveness of self-awareness. Henrich (1982) and Frank (2019), for example, hold in a similar stance that self-consciousness is pre-reflective, consciousness thus being more foundational than any self, or I. In their argumentation, they draw on German Idealist philosopher Fichte's claim that it is not the I which gives rise to consciousness but consciousness which gives rise to the I.

to entirely control our perception. We might sometimes be able to actively do so, but only by tricking ourselves through the manipulation of our eye direction (Einhäuser et al. 2004). Only rarely, these figures appear as an active achievement of our voluntary mental perceptual action. Much more frequently they change their configuration without our intention and will. Therefore, Gurwitsch calls their organization *autochthonous*: Perceptions are self-organizing. Gurwitsch emphasizes the autonomy and self-regulation of meaning structures and meaning processes as they appear to consciousness. He thus repudiates a monadic ego from which intentionality transpires and that focuses on the world and its objects. For Gurwitsch, the "saliency", or relevance, of a "group of data" (2010 [1964]:29) emerges from the field itself in ever recombining and shifting manners.[4] Moreover, the Necker cube, the rabbit and duck, or the vase and the faces are not perceived in a specific way according to the biographic background of the perceiver but according the perceiver being a member of a culture (of perception).

Garfinkel emphasizes this point in a lecture given in 1993 and recently published: "Gurwitsch's achievement was to provide for the appearance of the [phenomenon] as an endogenous – what he called an 'autochthonous' – achievement" (Garfinkel 2021:21). Thus, Garfinkel reconceptualizes the property of perceptual qualities as independent from the perceiving ego and calls their relevancies that Gurwitsch has called autochthonous, "endogenous" (Garfinkel 2002:176). He elaborates as follows:

> Gurwitsch's "idea was that the coherence of the object was endogenous to what he called its details, its functional significations, its perceptual units. It was found as the salience of the group of data; i.e., the coherence arose and was given in and as the stream of perception and was not needed in an exterior provision. It didn't then enter the stream of perceiving in order to provide for what the coherence was, but the coherence was already given as the kind of thing the stream consisted of" (Garfinkel 2021:21).

The expressions that Garfinkel uses here – details, functional significations, perceptual units – will become clearer in the next subsections. Garfinkel (2002:281) thus adopts Gurwitsch's perspective, agreeing that salience consists in "the endogenous coherence of a figure of organized gestalt contexture." Instead of "field of consciousness", however, he uses Merleau-Ponty's expression of "phenomenal field" (1962:52ff.) to speak of "organizational objects specified as the produced coherence of objects in phenomenal details" (Garfinkel 2021:33).

4. Against the Constancy Hypothesis

A second argument that Gurwitsch advocates in his *Field of Consciousness* is directed against the idea, included in the constancy hypothesis, of a constant mental effect and stable significance of individual perceptual units that our consciousness encounters. He illustrates his point with figures 2 and 3 below, presenting a small 'perceptual miracle' that lays the groundwork for Garfinkel's "miracle of ordinary society" as discussed below in this text. The example consists in a triple of dots in

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[4] Gurwitsch draws on Ernst Mach's and the gestaltist concept of field where a field is characterized prominently by endogenous forces that constitute it.

the middle plus one dot to the left, positioned in a bit of a distance to the triple, and another dot to the right, equally positioned in distance to the central triple.
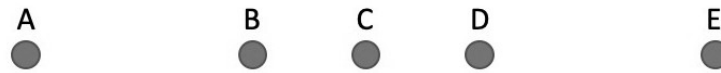
Fig. 2: Sequence of dots (own depiction after Gurwitsch)

Now if we take this figure and remove the two dots C and E (figure 3 below), the whole gestalt of the figure re-organizes and we again see a triple of dots which is not identical with the one of figure 2, but which, again, configures itself as such. Having no possibility of directly comparing the two figures, the differing distance between the dots of each triple becomes irrelevant.
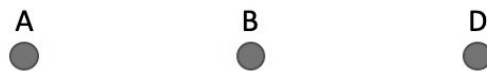
Fig. 3: Sequence of dots re-organized (own depiction after Gurwitsch)

From this surprising small example of figural re-organization that reveals perception as situational "work", or "achievement", Gurwitsch concludes that the individual perceptual units, the parts of the whole, do not possess an intrinsic significance, but only a relational meaning that is relative to the whole.

In a paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association of 1965, Garfinkel used Gurwitsch's model to criticize semiotic models of signs that assume a core signification (or proto-typical semantic meaning) of individual perceptual units (Garfinkel 1965:7-8). In his paper, Garfinkel also re-named what Gurwitsch called "perceptual units" "indexical particulars". We will explain why in the next sections.

Gurwitsch's criticism against sign-based models of communication are based on several basic thoughts. For one, constituent elements of a whole do not each possess, or carry, a meaning. A musical note, for example, "contributes towards constituting the melody as a whole, but it cannot in any sense mean the melody. When the melody is heard, there is no carrier of meaning at all" (Gurwitsch 2010 [1964]:256). Secondly, he says, we do not need any supplementary information to see configurations as, e.g., triples or pairs. This is rather an effect of the gestalt configuration itself.

> If I hear a melody (or even an interval of two notes), if I perceive geometrical figures, compare the lengths of two lines or brightnesses of two colors – the impression of the melody, musical interval, the figure, the differences of lengths or brightnesses, all constitute an enrichment of perception which has no additional stimulus corresponding to it (Gurwitsch 2010 [1936]:10).

These arguments were levelled against contemporary gestalt theorists, but can equally be applied against Bateson's concepts of frame and meta-communication (Ruesch/Bateson 1951) that assume necessary supplementary information that produce situational frames and were a constant point of dispute between Garfinkel, who rejected them, and Goffman (1974), who used them. Let us consider Gurwitsch's argument in more detail.

5. Gestalt Contextures in Space

The configurational coherence of perceptual wholes that we have seen in figures 2 and 3 above was the reason why Gurwitsch spoke of "gestalt contextures". The concept denotes the internally composed and yet integrated character of the wholes. Gurwitsch explains the perception of collectivities such as "pairs" or "triples" drawing on Husserl's notion of "figural moments" (Husserl 1891:288ff.; Farber 1943: 46ff.):

> In speaking of the perception of a 'row of trees', a 'column of soldiers', a 'swarm of birds', etc., we render by the terms 'row,' 'column,' and 'swarm' a certain aspect, a certain characteristic property or organizational form with which the group in question presents itself in our very sense experience. Geometrical configurations, all kinds of arrangements of points and lines belong here, as well as the characteristic aspect of the chessboard pattern, the specific nature of a rhythm, a melody, etc. '*Figurale Momente' denote characters, properties, aspects of groups, and are no more and no less a matter of mere sense experience than the groups themselves and the 'elements' of which the groups consist.* Among such group aspects there must also be reckoned – deserving special attention in the present context – the perceptual feature of qualitative homogeneity. We see at a glance 'a heap of apples' or 'a heap of nuts' (Gurwitsch 2010 [1949]:406; original emphasis).

Gurwitsch's theory of contextural gestalt perception encompasses three parts, metaphorized by a circle:

> The theme with which we are dealing occupies the center of this circle, it stands in the thematic-field, which – to abide by the metaphor – forms the area of the circle; and around the thematic-field, at the periphery as it were, the objects of marginal consciousness are arranged (2010 [1929]:296).

The *theme* is organized by the "saliency of a group of data" (2010 [1964]:29), producing an internal *gestalt coherence*, where each component is interdependent with all other components and possesses a "functional significance" for the whole.

Here is a typical figure that Gurwitsch used to illustrate his ideas about gestalt perception: A pair of dots which are in a mutual relationship of left or right, above or below, far or near.

Fig. 4: Three pairs of dots (own depiction after Gurwitsch)

We see three pairs of dots which are positioned in different distances to one another. Closest is the pair on the upper right, the farthest away from one another is the pair on the upper left. As Gurwitsch says, "the terms 'neighborhood', 'relative proximity', 'moderate proximity', 'immediate surroundings', 'wider surroundings', 'close by',

'next to' and others designate phenomenological qualities and not distances in a merely quantitative sense" (Gurwitsch 2010 [1955]:218-219). However, even the apparent great distance between two dots of a pair does yield to the perception of proximity, if the distance to the other pairs of the whole is taken into consideration.
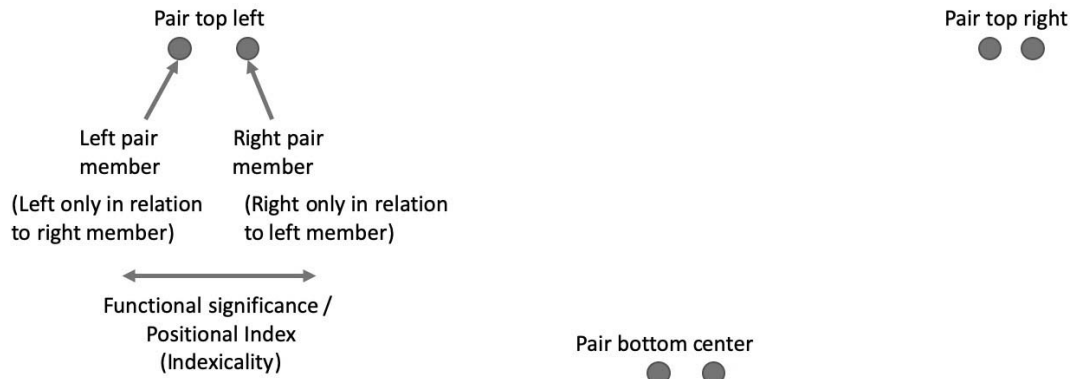
Fig. 5: Gestalt contexture and "details" of one of three pairs of dots
(own depiction after Gurwitsch)

Each of the pairs has a left and a right member. But the left member is only left within the constellation of the pair itself, not in absolute terms. Equally, the right member is only right to the left pair member, not in regard to, e.g., the other pair top right of the figure. If we would add one dot to the pair top left, e.g., to the left of the pair, the dot that is currently left would become a middle dot of a triple, and the whole gestalt would re-configure. Thus, what we have here, says Gurwitsch, is an indexing structure, in which the individual dots do not possess an intrinsic but a context-dependent, functional significance, a positional index, which only holds for the internal gestalt structure of the pair. It is an indexical structure "from within". It is the internal *constellation*, the gestalt contexture, that produces meaning, not the aggregation of individual intrinsically meaningful elements. Each dot, we might say, "incarnates" and at the same time "reflects" its role within the gestalt (here: the pair).

This finding by Gurwitsch was an inspiration for Garfinkel's thoughts about indexicality as we know from several published and unpublished texts and papers from the early 1960s. Again, like in the Necker cube, these relations are not subjectively imposed on primarily unordered data, but inherent in the perceptual field as it constitutes itself in the observer (Gurwitsch 2010 [1964]:26).

We said that the individual dots do not possess an intrinsic but a context-dependent, functional significance. However, the context upon which the functional significance of each individual dot depends – the pair – is not external to the individual dots, but produced by these dots themselves (Gurwitsch 2010 [1964]:331). Details, totality, and context mutually constitute one another. This is what Gurwitsch calls the thematic field. The *thematic field* is the context that acquires unity by its *relevancy* for the theme.

According to Gurwitsch, each element possesses a "positional index" which establishes and appresents a specific thematic field as its context that makes it understandable.[5] In his lecture on Gurwitsch of 1993, Garfinkel calls Gurwitsch' "functional significance" "organizational" or "figurative details" (Garfinkel 2021:25). Consistent with Gurwitsch, these details, as Garfinkel put it (e.g., 1967a:40), mutually point to, and elaborate, one another, thus establishing the "essential indexicality" (e.g., 2007:43ff.) of, in his case, social phenomena.

E.g., pair top left = thematic field

E.g. left pair member = theme

Fig. 6: Thematic field (own depiction after Gurwitsch)

We have had three pairs in our figure 4, which constitute three thematic fields if we focus on one of the dot pair members as a theme. The pair is then the thematic field, or context, from which we consider the dots as right and left pair members which constitute together their own context as a pair. Alternatively, we can focus on the three pairs in the figure as themes and their configuration as thematic field. Then, the indexical structure goes between the pairs: We have one pair in the upper left, one in the uper right and one in the bottom center of the figure. We can say, for example, that the pair in the upper right is the one with the smallest distance between its dots. This is equally a relational statement which is true only for the internal structure of the figure. If we attempt at replacing the relational linguistic expressions for the internal structure of the figure with objective expressions, we "lose the phenomenon", as Garfinkel (2007a:31) says. Thus, Garfinkel shares Gurwitsch's judgment that the index of a theme as it is often expressed in "occasional expressions" is irreducible to "objective expressions" that – at first sight – might be able to replace them. The reason for this is that they would destroy the inextricable here-and-now-ness of the situation of perception of a specific configuration that might change at any moment and create a new one of which they are part.

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[5] Gurwitsch refers to Husserl's concept of index that he uses to make clear that in phenomenological reduction "that which is parenthesized is not erased from the phenomenological blackboard but only parenthesized, and thereby provided with an index" (Husserl 1983 [1913]:171).

E.g., pair top left = theme

(Top left only in relation to pairs
top right and bottom center)

Functional significance / Positional Index
(Indexicality)

(Greater distance between dots)
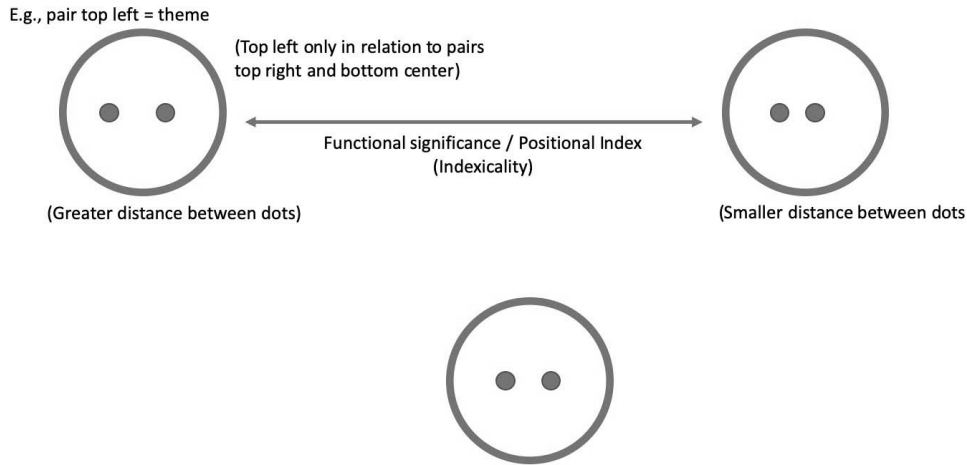
(Smaller distance between dots

Fig. 7: Theme-thematic field relation of different scales
(own depiction after Gurwitsch)

Finally, the three pairs of dot figures can also become our theme, for example, if we consider its limits on this page. We could compare several figures with different configurations of dot pairs or other details on it.

Gurwitsch at this point has distinguished a third dimension of perception which he calls the "margin" and which is the unthematic background of perception and experience. It encompasses not currently relevant dimensions such as background noises, time, or our bodies as media of perception.

Side edges of figure = thematic field

E.g. three pairs of dots
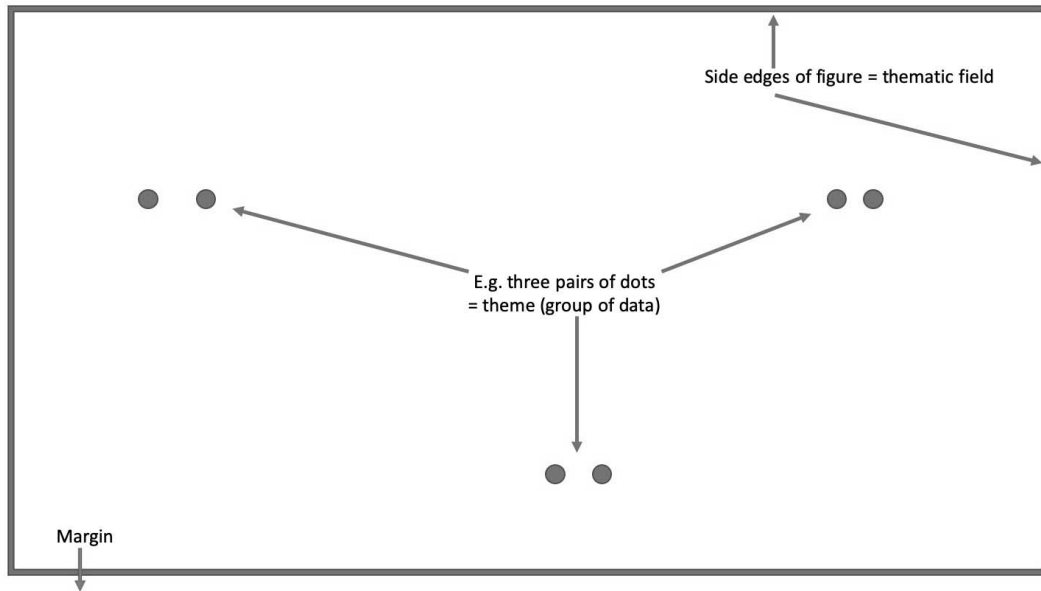= theme (group of data)

Margin

Fig. 8: Theme, thematic field, and margin
(own depiction after Gurwitsch)

For Gurwitsch, the thematic field is not a clear-cut dimension, but a field in which its theme can be contextualized with different possible references. Through indexical references it spreads "indefinitely" into domains of "ever fading clarity" (Gurwitsch 2010 [1964]:369-371).
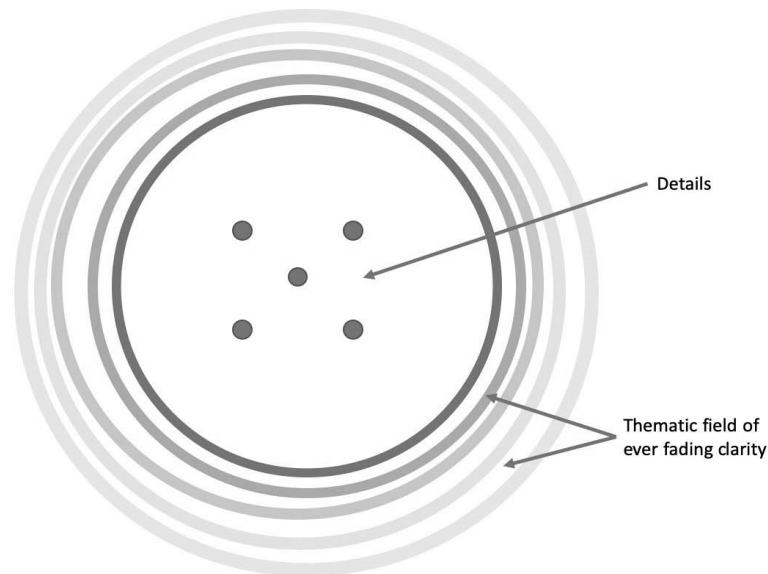
Fig. 9: Thematic field of ever fading clarity
(own depiction after Gurwitsch)

However, the picture – and with it all the examples above – is misleading because it does not take into consideration the temporal dimension of ever-changing contextures. Garfinkel (2021:26-27) criticized this type of examples for presupposing a "transcendental perceiver" who is in the position of observing from the outside a stable, non-temporal world of objects. Gurwitsch was aware of this problem and situated his examples also in time, drawing on the example of music.

6. Gestalt Contextures in Time

Gurwitsch never intended to develop his theory of "gestalt contexture" only on the example of visual gestalts, but also situated it in time. Both visual perceptions in space and auditory perceptions in time, he says,

> are but specifications of one and the same fundamental structure, namely, the equilibrated coexistence of mutually dependent constituents. Each of these constituents exists in the very qualifications by which it is defined and made to be that which it is in a given case, only in conjunction with, and as determined by, co-constituents (Gurwitsch 2010 [1964]:135).

Defining a gestalt contexture as consisting of "a plurality of constituents, each one of which is qualified and made to be what it is by its relation to, and significance for, the other constituents", he applies the definition to melodic gestalts in the same way as he did with visual gestalts:

> Each of its notes has a certain musical function and significance within the melodic contexture; it has its functional significance with regard to the other notes of the melody. When, objectively speaking, an identical note appears in different melodies, it can obviously not have the same functional significance in all of them. The note, because of its being qualified by its functional significance, can by no means preserve its functional identity when it is made to belong to different melodic contextures (Gurwitsch 2009 [1965]:403; cf. Gurwitsch 2010 [1964]:114).

This implies that "no constituent of a Gestalt-contexture is determined by properties which it has in its own right, which belong to it per se, regardless of the contexture into which it is inserted, i.e., of the other constituents of that very contexture" (Gurwitsch 2009 [1965]:403). The relation between the constituents is mutual:

> As each note of the melody has its functional significance with regard to the other notes, and may in this sense be said to derive it from them, so it confers, in turn, their functional significances on the other notes. It is this strict reciprocity between the constituents, in their mutually determining and qualifying each other, that is denoted by the term Gestalt-coherence as descriptive of that specific kind of structural organization (Gurwitsch 2009 [1965]:403).

The consequence is that, also temporally, "every part actualizes the whole, whose part it is, at its place and in the manner which corresponds to its functional significance" (Gurwitsch 2010 [1959]:386).
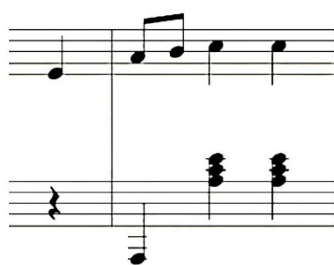

Fig. 10: Excerpt from Chopin's Waltz in A minor (B 150) (own depiction)

In the example above, we see a small portion of a chord, or melody, which, in contrast to the pairs of dots above, is not organized spatially but sequentially. Each tone has a tone that precedes it and that we have already experienced, and one that we can expect to succeeding it, an expectable next.[6] Each tone indexes the chord, or melody, as a whole as its thematic field. The immediate thematic field consists of three tones: the actual (experienced in the mode of "presentation"), the precedent ("retention"), and the one that is expected to follow ("protention"), while the wider thematic field includes the melody played so far as a whole, which we remember, and the rest of the play that we can anticipate based on our membership in a culture, or when we already know the particular melody. The melody thus appears as a succession of notes, each one of which is respectively qualified by all of its predecessors with ever fading clarity (Gurwitsch 2010 [1964]:251). If a significant part of the melody has already been played, so that its general "trend" is established, a "condition is imposed upon its continuation" (Gurwitsch 2009 [1965]:403). The continuation of the melody is not determined in an unequivocal manner, but must be in conformity with the trend established so far. Otherwise, the melody appears as marred and its soundness is violated (Gurwitsch 2009 [1965]:403-404).

However, in contrast to visual images in space, in the case of music we witness "mutual penetration, an interconnection and organization of elements," says Gurwitsch. Since they are ordered sequentially, the elements receive a certain "coloration", a reverberation, from their "surrounding milieu" (Gurwitsch 2010 [1964]: 137). In the process, each individual tone is "absorbed and qualified by the musical contexture" (Gurwitsch 2010 [1964]:114). This is what functional significance and

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6   I leave out here the undertones which, for a complete picture, should be included as well.

gestalt-coherence mean in the case of music (Gurwitsch 2010 [1964]: 137). In other words, preceding notes "intervene" in the present note in that the present note is essentially characterized by references to preceding notes. Even more, the note exists as that which is experienced only by virtue of those references. From Gurwitsch's point of view, therefore, the present note would not be what it is, had it been preceded by different notes (Gurwitsch 2010 [1964]:138-139). For example, a note following another from which it is indistinguishable, appears as a repetition of the first note. In this case, we are confronted with a "level-experience" since "with the second note we remain on the same tonal level as with the first" (Gurwitsch 2010 [1964]:121). When, instead, a higher note is presented after a lower one from which it can be distinguished, there is another experience of an elementary musical contexture: The experience is one of an ascending movement (Gurwitsch 2010 [1964]:122). And thus, the melody as a gestalt contexture moves through time. Each preceding tone, or preceding chord, constitutes the context (thematic field) for each next tone.
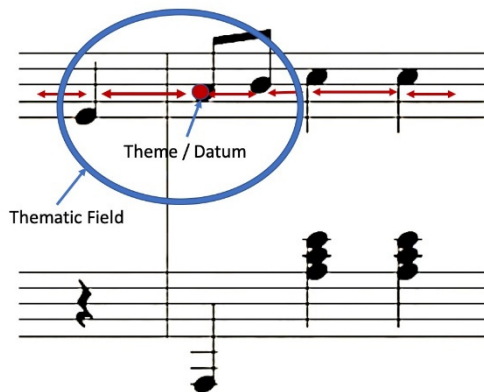
Fig. 11: Theme and thematic field in time I (own depiction after Gurwitsch)
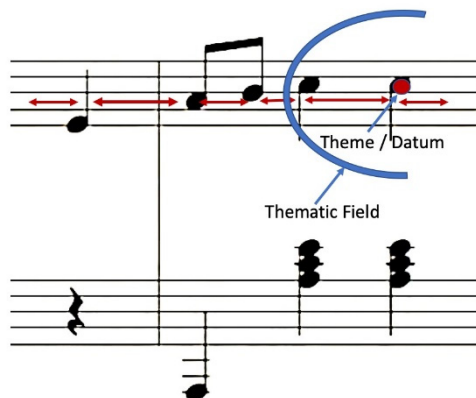
Fig. 12: Theme and thematic field in time II (own depiction after Gurwitsch)

Thus, for Gurwitsch, the unity of the melody as a whole is grounded in relationships of mutual foundation between the elements (Gurwitsch 2010 [1964]:80). Gestalt perception depends upon the sequentiality of the melody.

At this point, the gestalt laws of closure and of good continuation are of particular importance. The effectiveness of good continuation "appears most clearly in

cases of incompleted Gestalt-contextures when, for example, a sentence or a melody is broken off before it is finished" (Gurwitsch 2010 [1964]:146). Incompleteness is, Gurwitsch says, "a phenomenal feature of experience. The fragment of the sentence or of the melody appears as incomplete; it is experienced as demanding conformable continuation" (Gurwitsch 2010 [1964]:146). When a wrong note is played or when a correct note is unduly prolonged, in turn, we experience "marredness":

> Marredness (…) is the experience of the present auditory datum as not fitting into the trend of the melody, as the melody has thus far developed. To account for marredness, one must allow for the part of the melody which precedes the critical note demanding to be continued in a specific manner at the place in question and for the fact that the actually resounding note does not satisfy those demands. Marredness thus is an experience of unfulfillment of the demands which, incidentally, grow more specific the closer the melody is to completion. We are thus again referred to the law of good continuation, continuation in conformity with the trend of the process thus far established (Gurwitsch 2010 [1964]:252-253).

Gurwitsch analyses the constituent components, the details, of a melody even further than on the level of tones. Among the determining components are "figural subfactors": one temporal subfactor pertaining to rhythm and two tonal subfactors referring to pitches and to intensity (Gurwitsch 2010 [1964]:74). These subfactors, for Gurwitsch, depend upon the properties of the notes and their mutual relations and can thus only be perceived relationally.

Thus, in music, we are dealing with a dynamic, ever-changing gestalt contexture that constitutes itself anew in each moment of our experience. As is the case with the dot examples, individual sense-data do not possess stable core meanings, but interact with their immediate context that they themselves produce. This context is sequential, and notes, or tones, are parts of melodies, or chords, which are wholes. If the context changes, the meaning of the individual sense-data changes as well.

In his early dissertation projects, on "the Jew as social object" Garfinkel (1948:2) planned to elucidate on the basis of Gurwitsch's philosophy "how a common world of objects of action becomes constituted, maintained, and changed." In some of his proposals, Garfinkel even uses Gurwitsch's musical metaphor itself to explain the design of his study. He intended to provide for "experimental conditions under which the same 'note' would be played in a different 'chord'" (Turowetz/Rawls 2021:10) so that "Jews" were constituted and experienced differently as objects of treatment.

Differences in the chords and notes played in Garfinkel's project are a result of different forms of treatment of the social object "Jew" in American society. These different forms of treatment are dependent upon whether the co-participants are Jewish themselves or not, i.e., whether they are members of a particular "culture of treatment" that is constitutive of their understanding of the situation. Here, an experience of marredness might occur as well: when the co-interactants play different notes and chords than expected and treat the social objects relevant for the situation in a different manner.

In conversational interaction, which has become the focus of ethnomethodological conversation analysis, the notes and chords played consist in verbal utterances and sequences. While some of the words used in these utterances might indeed carry some intrinsic core meaning, they are in this respect not unlike notes that possess

only relational meaning; the meanings of words, too, are dependent upon their immediate contexts, unfold incrementally in the course of a conversation, and constantly produce expectations as well as anticipations of expectations in regard to possible "nexts". Moreover, conversation analysis has particularly dealt (and still deals) with procedural dimensions of conversational interaction such as turn construction and transition as well as with the relational and highly indexical verbal material such as the *wells, ohs* and *sos* or the *uhms* and *mhms* of conversational interaction that are highly context-dependent and yet essential for the creation of a joint situational reality.

7. Methodological Consequences for Video-Based Interaction Research

Gurwitsch (2010 [1964]:251; original emphasis) emphasizes that, concerning its temporal configuration, it would be wrong to assume that a melody was "*being,* at every moment, *at a certain note"*. This would be as wrong as a description of motion in which the moving body is assumed "*to be,* at every moment, *at a certain position"* and, "on account of the dispositions left by the perceptions of its previous positions, to exhibit, at the position in question, a certain specific property, namely, velocity" (Gurwitsch 2010 [1964]:251-252; original emphasis). Instead, a moving body, for example, must be considered "as *passing through* its various positions", Gurwitsch says, and correspondingly, a melody has to be characterized "as *passing through* the notes of which it consists" (Gurwitsch 2010 [1964]:252, original emphases).

For the same theoretical reasons, Merleau-Ponty, in his text *Eye and Mind* (1964 [1961]) criticizes Jules-Etienne Marey's chronophotography as methodological tool to investigate movement (cf. Alloa 2013 for the discussion of Merleau-Ponty in this section). Merleau-Ponty says that when snapshots dissect living movements into individual positions,

> the instantaneous glimpses, the unstable attitudes, petrify the movement, as is shown by so many photographs in which an athlete-in-motion is forever frozen. We could not thaw him out by multiplying the glimpses. Marey's photographs, the cubists' analyses, Duchamp's *La Mariée* do not move; they give a Zenonian reverie on movement. We see a rigid body as if it were a piece of armor going through its motions; it is here and it is there, magically, but it does not *go* from here to there (Merleau-Ponty 1964 [1961]:185).

Marey's dissection of movement into individual stills suggests that the moving, living being takes up one discrete position after the other. What occurs in reality is that the gaze of the observer and the motion of the moving being merge in co-movement:

> The something in transit which we have recognized as necessary to the constitution of a change is to be defined only in terms of the particular manner of its 'passing'. For example, the bird which flies across my garden is, during the time that it is moving, merely a greyish power of flight and, generally speaking, we shall see that things are defined primarily in terms of their 'behaviour' and not in terms of their static 'properties'. It is not I who recognize, in each of the points and instants passed through, the same bird defined by explicit characteristics, it is the bird in flight which constitutes the unity of its movement, which changes its place, it is this flurry of

plumage still here, which is already there in a kind of ubiquity, like the comet with its tail (Merleau-Ponty 1962:275).

Thus, Merleau-Ponty criticizes conceptualizations of temporally organized, sequential events as frozen instant-like data and not as a process that continuously "keeps going". Furthermore, movements are bodily accomplishment that possess vectorial qualities: "The passage of one present to the next is not a thing which I conceive, nor do I see it as an onlooker, I effect it; I am already at the impending present as my gesture is already at its goal, I am myself time, a time which 'abides' and does not 'flow' or 'change'" (Merleau-Ponty 1962:421).

For Merleau-Ponty, a better representation of lived movement than photography is provided by painting or sculpture, where not a dissection of movement into individual positions occurs but, ideally, the compression of longer moments of movement into one condensed vectorial gestalt, of the temporal ubiquity of the moving body, is achieved (Merleau-Ponty 1964 [1961]:184). In his text, Merleau-Ponty mentions Rodin's sculptures as well as Giacometti's "walking man", as examples:

> The only successful instantaneous glimpses of movement are those which approach this paradoxical arrangement – when, for example, a walking man is taken at the moment when both his feet are touching the ground; for then we almost have the temporal ubiquity of the body which brings it about that the man *bestrides* space (Merleau-Ponty 1964 [1961]:185).

Thus, with Gurwitsch and Merleau-Ponty, the adequate analysis of the inescapable progressivity of movement and of the sequentiality of interaction would be one which preserves the fleetingness of the (subjective or objective) experience of movement, in particular, the impending trend of the movement invested in its presence. Current video-based ethnomethodological and ethnomethodologically inspired studies of social interaction deal with this theoretical problem in different ways and to different degrees: Some of them, at least in printed publications, dissect movements in individual stills, thus valuing the advantage of recreating the public visibility of the social higher than the disadvantage of neglecting the experiential, subjective dimension of its co-participants. For Merleau-Ponty's individualistic account of kinesthesia (movement experience) precisely misses the micro-responsiveness and artful coordination of movements in interaction that stills are able to render visible. Other studies meet the requirement of a methical orientation at the fleetingness of the movement experience at the expense of a fine-grained reconstruction of the public properties of incremental co-responsive interactional sequences.

Garfinkel's own notion of "the unavoidable temporal in-courseness of a doing" (2021:30) is consistent with Gurwitsch's and Merleau-Ponty's position in regard to the situation of the co-participants who find themselves involved in an inescapable pressure for action and confronted with the permanent "practical question *par excellence*: 'What to do next?'" (Garfinkel 1967a:12). However, Garfinkel was equally interested in the publicly observable dimension of social objects as interactionally produced and co-emergent, practical accomplishments of co-participants in a setting. Thus, from an ethnomethodological perspective, methodological solutions for dealing with the fleetingness of movements can vary situationally according to the researcher's goals and the specifications of the object of interest. In this respect, Garfinkel also introduces the notion of "probativeness of a group of data" as "endogenous smooth, uninterrupted, accountable sequence from beginning to end,

pointing to its terminal availability, and terminally available finally as an instructably observable sequence" (2021:31). In the quote cited initially, Garfinkel characterizes social objects – Durkheimian Things – as "accountable analytic units composed endogenously, in-and-as-of-their-lived-temporal-in-course sequentiality, in-vivo, local historicities" and as "'strings' of coherent contextural constituents of lived orderlinesses in practices of ordinary society" (Garfinkel 2007a:42). All these ever changing, endogenously composed analytic units are precisely not decomposable into individual frozen moments, since their "lived-temporal-in-course sequentiality" is one of their essential features.

8. What did Garfinkel do with Gurwitsch's theory?

Garfinkel and Livingston (2003:26) stress that in social life, "Gurwitschian contexturally coherent Things are massively prevalent, recurrent, each in coherent witnessed details that are seen but unnoticed, an elephant in the kitchen." Garfinkel also emphasizes that in the realm of the social, these contexturally coherent Things are way more complex than in the gestalt experiments that Gurwitsch drew on. In the realm of social objects, what phenomenology calls "intentionality" (Gurwitsch 1940), i.e. "the work of looking, searching, scanning" is not only an "attainment" achieved by non-egological consciousness (Garfinkel 1966b:23). Instead, the "produced coherence of organizational objects" (2021:30) is *interactionally* and *practically* "achieved". In his "Field of Consciousness", Gurwitsch talked about perceptual objects in the world, either stable visual objects or sequential auditory objects. Both forms are present in the external world, in relation to which the perceiving person acts as disengaged observer "from nowhere". Garfinkel, in contrast to Gurwitsch, was interested in social objects. The objects of sociology are constituted by ever changing "actions and practices" (2021:21). The most important characteristic of social objects is therefore that they are not only perceived, but also, and often simultaneously, produced, and, even more so, produced for being perceived. They are produced for being perceived not in a Goffmanian sense of self-presentation, impression management, and facework but in an ethnomethodological sense, which assumes the identity between practices of organizing everyday affairs and procedures that make these practices understandable and accountable (Garfinkel 1967a:1; also see below). Social objects are produced in interaction right from the start to be witnessable, observable-reportable, through practices and in an embodied, "incarnate" and "reflexive" manner (1967a:1). In their quality as being achieved or "produced" in interaction, phenomenal fields feature an "in-courseness" (Garfinkel 2021:30): Different from Gurwitsch's examples, "gestalt contextures" in the realm of the social, are necessarily dynamic, temporal, and unfolding, and therefore ever-evanescent, they can never be returned to (Garfinkel 2021:26-27). In other words: In contrast to the philosopher, the sociologist cannot act as "transcendental perceiver" of stable objects, even though some might act as if (Garfinkel 2021:27, 29).

8.1. Durkheim's Aphorism

Being concerned with social objects, Garfinkel re-interprets Durkheim's famous dictum that, as sociologists, "our fundamental principle [is] the objective reality of social facts" (Durkheim 1938:lvii). It is the production and "producedness" or "achievedness "of social objects as social facts that Garfinkel is interested in and that he intends to clarify, drawing on Gurwitsch.

As sociologists, in contrast to Gurwitsch, however, he says, "what we needed to have is not only the detail in the generality of the phenomenon found in actual lived service lines and traffic jams as well as in pictured figures. What we needed to have as sociologists and anthropologists and social analysts, who needed to be concerned with every imaginable sort of orderliness in and as of accountably produced social facts of familiar society, were the gestalt properties of social facts" (Garfinkel 2007b:18). So, ethnomethodology is particularly concerned with the "gestalt properties of social facts" which are ongoingly and procedurally achieved by members in time. Instead of stable perceptual objects, ethnomethodology, says Garfinkel (2007b:28), studies how members of any collectivity "competently organize their daily work activities in real time and in detail" (Burns 2000:10, quoted in Garfinkel 2007b:28). It investigates how they are "progressively and developingly coming upon the phenomenon via the work in, as, and of the unmediated, immediately and directly observed phenomenal field details of producing it" (Garfinkel 1996:10 n.11, quoted in Burns 2000:10, quoted in Garfinkel 2007b:28). This, says Garfinkel, is "the successful ethnomethodological leap from the coherence of line drawings to the coherence of social facts" (Garfinkel 2007b:28).

On this basis, Garfinkel takes up Durkheim's dictum, which he calls an "aphorism": "The objective reality of social facts is sociology's fundamental principle" (Garfinkel 2002:65). For Garfinkel, it is clear that this is not (only) a methodological principle, but actually the object of research of sociology, its fundamental phenomenon. Thus, he re-formulates: "The objective reality of social facts is sociology's fundamental *phenomenon*" (Garfinkel 2002:66; original emphasis). The enigma of the social consists in the hidden machinery (or transformative miracle) of ordinary society that social objects that – as we have seen – are actually *produced* by the parties in a setting are *experienced* by them as external, objective reality. This machinery (or miracle) can be explained by Gurwitsch's non-egological conception of consciousness along with Heidegger's "being-in-the-world" and Merleau-Ponty's "préjugé du monde" that Garfinkel equally refers to in his work (e.g., 1967a:182; Garfinkel 1966a, 1966b). For the machinery (miracle) to work, there must be "steps whereby the society hides from its members its activities of organization and thus leads them to see its features as determinate and independent objects" (Garfinkel 1967a:182), and ethnomethodology is precisely interested in those. In fact, any "practical accomplishment consists in the work whereby a setting, in the same ways that it consists of a recognized and familiar organization of activities, masks from members' relevant notice members' practical ordering practices, and thereby leads the members to see a setting's features, which include a setting's accounts, 'as determinate and independent objects'" (Garfinkel 1967a: 288).

8.2. Mutual Constitution of Details and Context

The machinery (miracle) of ordinary society that social objects are produced "from within", but experienced as external by members is rooted in the mutual constitution between the details of a social object and their context. With Gurwitsch, context is viewed by Garfinkel as a "locally occasioned, instructably achieved, repeatedly and collaboratively achieved and achievable local phenomenon" (2002:129). Actions and utterances give sense to the context and obtain sense from it, in exactly the same way that a part of a gestalt (e.g., the left-hand member of a pair of dots) obtains its sense (as a left-hand member) by its perceived relationship to the other members of the figure (e.g., right-hand member) while giving those other members their sense through their relation to them as thematic field and context. Garfinkel again transfers this perspective to the constitutive properties of social actions, practices, and events. As he says, "particulars in procedures (…) furnish to members perspicuous exhibits of vaguely known 'settings'" (Garfinkel/Sacks 1970:360). The concept of "setting", they say (1970:360, n. 29), is borrowed from remarks made by Hubert Dreyfus in 1968. At this time, Dreyfus worked on his book *What Computers Can't Do: The Limits of Artificial Intelligence* (1972), where he affirmatively quotes Katz and Fodor's post-Chomskyan theory of semantics (1972:128-130), in which the concept of "setting" is defined congenially to ethnomethodology: "The setting of an occurrence of a sentence is (..) the written or spoken discourse of which the occurrence is a part" (Katz/Fodor 1964:490).

This mutually constitutive relationship between details (utterances, themes) and context (setting, thematic field) is also the reason why Garfinkel formulates in his "identity theorem" that, in regard to social objects, "phenomena of order are identical with procedures for their endogenous production and accountability" (Garfinkel 2002:72). Or, in an earlier version that uses the concept of accountability that we will come to in a moment, "organized everyday affairs are identical with members' procedures for making those settings 'account-able'" (Garfinkel 1967a:1).

Garfinkel's "identity theorem" reformulates, and elaborates, Gurwitsch's theme-thematic field relation. Gurwitsch views "the object as the correlate of a group of acts corresponding to it" and considers "that group of acts as the equivalent of consciousness of the object" (Gurwitsch 2009 [1937]:309-10). Garfinkel locates this principle of equivalence not between object and acts of consciousness but between social order and everyday social actions.

8.3. Indexical Particulars of Gestalt Contextures

The mutual relationship between social action and social order is *indexical*, similar to the relationship of functional significance between the "indexical particulars" (Garfinkel 1965) of a gestalt contexture. In the realm of the social, constituents of action and practice as themes index possible contexts as their thematic fields, and these latter index actions and practices as their typical details. Furthermore, since gestalt contextures operate in time, they index possible, expectable nexts. What happens in this process of indexicality, says Garfinkel (1966a:13-14; 1967a:182), can be understood drawing on the concept of appresentation established in phenomenological philosophy. By appresentation, present elements of gestalt contextures make absent elements co-present:

> For example, when I perceive an object, such as a house from the front, the back is involved in this perception not merely as a possible perception which I judge could be produced if I walked around the house, nor as a necessary implication of the concept 'house.' Instead, the back is experienced as actually co-present – concealed but suggested by the appearance of the front. Philosophers of ordinary language such as Gilbert Ryle have made a similar point by noting that under ordinary conditions we do not say that we see the front of a house but say that we see a house from the front. Both Merleau-Ponty and the Oxford philosophers would go on from such considerations to suggest there is something wrong with the traditional view that we experience 'sense data' – isolated units of experience, which must then be organized by the mind (Dreyfus/Dreyfus 1964:xi).

Thus, themes appresent thematic fields as their contexts, thematic fields appresent themes as their typical details. And, since gestalt contextures operate in time, they appresent possible, expectable nexts.

It is in this theoretical context that Garfinkel reinterprets what Mannheim has called the "documentary method of interpretation" with Gurwitsch as a members' practice by which social order (resp. structures) and social action are mutually constituted and mutually indexical in a theme-thematic-field relation:

> The [documentary] method consists of treating an actual appearance as 'the document of,' as 'pointing to,' as 'standing on behalf of' a presupposed underlying pattern. Not only is the underlying pattern derived from its individual documentary evidences, but the individual documentary evidences, in their turn, are interpreted on the basis of 'what is known' about the underlying pattern. Each is used to elaborate the other (Garfinkel 1967a:78).

Ethnomethodological research has by now analyzed a great number of possible appresentational and indexical gestalt contextures in social life. Not only have indexicalities obtaining between gestalt details and gestalt contextures been investigated; the sequential relations between pair members in regard to expectable nexts resulting from firsts was also studied. A powerful example for research on appresented and functionally indexed nexts, or next pair members, within the gestalt contexture of a social object is the "adjacency pair" of Conversation Analysis.

In his characterization of the adjacency pair, Schegloff (2007:13) says, that "the components of an adjacency pair are pair-type related; that is, not every second pair part can properly follow any first pair part." Only when both pair members adopt a "functional significance" in relation to one another the pair is actually established as pair – and only then a felicitous gestalt contexture for good continuation is realized. Adjacency pair organization, as Schegloff (2007:16; original emphasis) says, is a "powerful *prospective* operation": A first pair part "projects a prospective relevance", making relevant "a limited set of possible second pair parts, and thereby sets some of the terms by which a next turn will be understood" (Schegloff 2007:16).

The components of adjacency pairs, says Schegloff (2007:13-14), are typologized into first and second pair parts (what Gurwitsch calls "themes" and Garfinkel calls "details" or "indexical particulars") that relate to the pair types which they compose (what Gurwitsch calls "thematic field" and Garfinkel calls "context"). Examples for adjacency pairs provided by Schegloff (2007:14) are: "greeting–greeting ("Hello," "Hi"), question–answer ("Do you know what time it is?", "Four o'clock"),

offer–accept/decline ("Would you like a cup of coffee?", "No, thanks," if it is declined)." "Nextness" (Schegloff 2007:14) along with "conditional relevance" (Schegloff 1968:1085) is produced by the expectability of an adequate second pair part after a first pair part was provided. When a first pair part has been provided and a second pair part is being withheld, however, it becomes "noticeably absent" (Sacks 1992:293-94). The lack of "good continuation" entails considerable social consequences such as possible conflicts and reconfigurations of social relations. Furthermore, the "relationship of adjacency or 'nextness' between turns is central to the ways in which talk-in-interaction is organized and understood. Next turns are understood by co-participants to display their speaker's understanding of the just-prior turn and to embody an action responsive to the just-prior turn so understood (unless the turn has been marked as addressing something other than just-prior turn)" (Schegloff 2007:15). Thus, the procedural organization of intersubjectivity here becomes dependent upon the practical, sequential organization of gestalt contextures by parties in a setting.

The similarities of the conversation analytic adjacency pair theorem with Gurwitsch's gestalt phenomenology and Garfinkel's elaboration of the same are obvious.

A second example of the ethnomethodological application of the idea of a gestalt contexture of social objects is Membership Categorization Analysis. Harvey Sacks (1972) has developed this approach on the example of a child's utterance saying "The baby cried. The mommy picked it up." The fact that we commonly understand this utterance as "the baby cried, *therefore its* mommy picked it up" is based upon an "apparatus" (or a machinery, or the miracle of ordinary society, see above and below) that secures "that any activities, which members do in such a way as to be recognizable as such to members, are done, and done recognizably" (1972:332). One element of this apparatus is the "membership categorization device" that refers to the finding that membership categories belong to collections that provide rules for how to apply and hear them. Baby and mommy are items of a collection that can be characterized as "core family" or "parent-child". Now, individual roles within this collection are relational, adopting, as Gurwitsch would say, a "functional significance" towards one another. If we think of "baby", the way to "mommy" or "daddy" is short, the first pair member "baby" evoking the second pair member "mommy" or "daddy" (within a thematic field of "core family"). This is what Sacks calls a "standardized relational pair". In particular, an absence becomes relevant in these terms, contradicting the "gestalt closure": When the "baby" cries and no one picks it up, then where are its "mommy" and "daddy"?

Therefore, not only "standardized relational pairs" are relevant for our understanding of the utterance, but also typical activities that we relate to the relevant categories. These are called "category bound activities" by Sacks. "Crying" and "picking up" are typical activities of the membership categories "baby" and "mommy" respectively. In Gurwitsch's terms, we can see how social roles and categories imply (or appresent) activities as their thematic fields, and activities imply (appresent) social roles and categories as theirs, so that the categories themselves need not always be actually used. In other words, one pair member makes the other relevant, because they possess a "positional index" and a "functional significance" in relation to one another. Interestingly, the appresentation does not need to be related to actor categories as its themes, it can also refer to actions or practices. Thus,

Gurwitsch's pairs of dots (or notes in melodies) can, when transferred to the realm of the social, be applied to the whole spectrum of social objects possible: utterances, practices, actions, roles, persons, and others.

In fact, Garfinkel himself, in his *Studies in Ethnomethodology* and elsewhere, has also explored a broad range of studies and examples of how themes (details) appresent other themes (details) sequentially or appresent possible thematic fields (contexts) of ever fading clarity that make them understandable inferentially. For example, he showed how professional activities in the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center and the Center itself as a social organization mutually elaborated one another as a theme-thematic field contexture (1967a:chapter 1; 1967b). He demonstrated that, and how, the work of jurors and the imaginations these jurors had of what it meant to be, and act in the "fashion" of, a good juror mutually co-constitute one another (1967a:chapter 4). Garfinkel also revealed how the implicitly assumed binary gender structure makes occurrences of doings and sayings explainable, and how these doings and sayings can be manipulated in order to suggest a particular gender structure (1967a: chapter 5). He explored how practices of coding by sociology students presuppose common sense knowledge of social structure, while social structure is then, as a result, presented as having been "discovered" by these very procedures (1967a:chapter 7). As early as in the 1950s, Garfinkel became interested in "commonsense knowledge of social structure" as an example for the mutual relationship between, and the mechanisms of co-constitution of, social action and social order (Garfinkel 1959; Garfinkel 1967a:chapter 3). Traditionally, Garfinkel used the example of queuing to demonstrate how queuing activities produce the phenomenon that they assume to be part of (2002:chapter 8; Garfinkel/Livingston 2003). This list could easily be extended. Garfinkel's general interest was how members of gestalt contextures produce these contextures as collectivities (e.g., society), while the latter endow the former with meaning in the here-and-now of the temporally situated gestalt contexture.

What is common to all these topics is that a social object is constituted by appresenting through the visible an invisible phenomenon, possibly in fading clarity, that makes it reportable, supplements, complements or contextualizes it, or that consists in an expectable next, thus, again, working out "the practical question *par excellence:* 'What to do next?'" (Garfinkel 1967a:12). Garfinkel (1965) was thus interested in "organized activities as methods for making an invisible world observable", being aware that, "in the conduct of his everyday affairs in order for the person to treat rationally the [visible] one-tenth of this situation that, like an iceberg appears above the water, he must be able to treat the [invisible] nine-tenths that lies below as an unquestioned and, perhaps even more interestingly, as an unquestionable background of matters that are demonstrably relevant to his calculation, but which appear without even being noticed" (Garfinkel 1967a:173).

8.4. "From Within" and "From Without"

The fact that gestalt contextures and their details configure themselves constantly anew through processes of good continuation and closure implies methodologically, as Garfinkel (2002:279) says, that the coherence of figural contextures escapes any attempt of formal description 'from without'. The organizational details

of phenomenal fields inescapably include indexical particularities and even expressions that achieve their sense only within a specific here-and-now. Following a suggestion of Gurwitsch (Garfinkel in Hill/Crittenden 1968:206-207), Garfinkel therefore suggests to make use of the "naturally accountable orderliness" and the "mundane character of accounts" that are constitutive parts of the indexicality of actions, as members render their production of social facts witnessable and instructably observable to each other (Garfinkel/Livingston 2003). Therefore, persons in the management of their ordinary affairs, first, treat accounts as being of the same order of activity as the order of properties that the account reports, and, secondly, make use of the reflexive features of accounts to accomplish or to recognize the features of those affairs as organized matters. Since they are public from the start, accounts embedded in activities can be ethnographically observed and described, representing the perspective 'from within'.

Accounts, just as glosses or descriptions, are genuine parts of a setting. In Gurwitsch's terms: Part of the themes that range within thematic fields are verbalizations, reports, or stories about the themes and thematic fields. They are not produced from the outside but are, as verbal activities, intrinsic and constituent practices to accomplish the settings they gloss, describe, and account. Therefore, ethnomethodology is interested in all kinds of "this-worldly settings wherein order productive parties so collaborate as to exhibit 'just what a social fact is that makes it accountably just that' – the exhibited order of service in supermarkets, the concerted freeway slowing together", etc. (Garfinkel 2002:250).

However, accounts do not necessarily have to be realized verbally. Rather, as intrinsic components of each setting as a gestalt contexture, they are carried along in each situation as a potential. The reason for this is that these situations as endogenously achieved situations appear as external, objective, natural situations that could, if necessary, easily be reported, talked about, analyzed, and represented (cf. Garfinkel 1967a:33, 34). This is why Garfinkel (2002:175-177) calls their type of accountability "natural accountability" as opposed to "classical accountability", which is effective in, e.g., professional activities that have to prove their professionalism or methodological rigor towards an institution or public.

Naturally accountable, say Garfinkel and Livingston, means "*made ethnomethodologically recognizable in Aron Gurwitsch's (1964) autochthonous gestalt organization details*" (2003:27; original emphasis); it relates to the gestalt contexture of social objects as endogenously achieved through details. These details – in and as of social, Durkheimian things – can alternatively be called: "phenomenal field properties"; "oriented objects" [objects that are in concert embodiedly "oriented to"]; "social facts displayed in proper temporal orders of details" and else (Garfinkel/Livingston 2003:27).

The important point is thus that verbal activities including accounts, glosses, or descriptions are intrinsic and constituent parts of the social objects that they describe, gloss, and account (for). They do not originate "from without", as by an external observer from nowhere, but "from within" the setting they describe, gloss, and account (for). Each detail of a gestalt contexture simultaneously "embodies" (or "incarnates") and "reflects" the gestalt contexture as a whole. Garfinkel thus also speaks of the "'reflexive', or 'incarnate' character of accounting practices and accounts" (1967a:1). "Reflexivity", as a central ethnomethodological theorem, denotes this fact that accounts and accounting practices are always part of what they

account – verbally or practically. They are themselves "events in and whereby they also make those events, say, recognizable, rationally accountable" (Garfinkel 1966b:24). Therefore, the "reflexivity of descriptions is a collecting gloss for the innumerable ways in which descriptions can be part of what they describe: the reflexivity of questions is a collecting gloss for the innumerable ways in which questions can be part of what they question. And so on for stories, quantities, lists, instructions, maps, photographs and the rest" (Garfinkel cited in Czyzewski 1994: 163). Accounts constitute the settings that they are part of, thus reflecting them as familiar sceneries.

Garfinkel's notion of accountability possibly draws on an insight based on research on brain injuries by Kurt Goldstein that Gurwitsch (who had worked with him in the 1920s) was reflecting upon during the time they regularly met in Cambridge (see Gurwitsch 2010 [1949]). The insight was that in the autochthonous constitution of objects in non-egological consciousness of healthy persons, practice, knowledge, and speech are intrinsically interrelated, while the ability to verbalize, communicate, or typify perceptions is lost after some kinds of brain injuries (what is called "aphasia", "agnosia", and "apraxia"). Goldstein understood these symptoms as a loss of the ability to adopt an "abstract" or "categorial" attitude and as a limitation of the patients' abilities to an exclusively "concrete" attitude. In healthy persons both attitudes are principally united. Like brain-injured patients, healthy persons

> perceive actual data and facts, but in addition to their actuality these data and facts are conceived as *potential examples or exemplars* of a broader context, as potentially referring to a nonperceptual order and to possibilities beyond the actual experience – in short, *as varieties of an invariant* (Schütz 1950:383; original emphases).

Therefore, any theoretically or methodologically established separation of the two attitudes, as it is sometimes required for the "scientific" (or "sociological") attitude (which Garfinkel addressed in-depth in his dissertation), would be artificial. In regard to the perception of the above-mentioned Necker cube, Rubin's vase, or rabbit-duck picture, for example, the thought of a principal unity of both attitudes entails that, as healthy persons, we are able to not only perceive, but also verbalize, typify, and communicate their sense, shape, and details such as, e.g., the sides, edges and corners of the cube being in front or in the back resp. up or down, or the picture depicting a rabbit or a duck of such and such type, or the shape of the noses and chins of the two faces facing each other or of the foot of the vase and so on. When transferred to social objects, as done by Garfinkel, the practical constitution as well as the reception of gestalt contextures in social action can equally be viewed as intrinsically accountable, since meaningful wholes are coherently constituted through their details. Due to the intrinsic unity of the constitutive details and the verbalization and typification, they possess what Garfinkel has called a "haecceity" that would be destroyed if the gestalt coherence would be divided into descriptive and (practically) constitutive elements, as science sometimes aspires to do. Therefore, an intrinsic and inevitable part of any gestalt contexture is its accountability and glossability: its analyzability, detectability, countability, recordability, comparability, picturability, representability, reportability, and tell-a-story-about-ability, in short, its accountability (Garfinkel 1967:33-34). As a sociological endeavor, Garfinkel thought in the 1960s of a possible systematization of these verbalizations,

glossabilities, and accountabilities as socially differentiated "vocabularies", "grammars" and "rhetorics of motives" in reference to Mills (1940) and Burke (1945, 1950) (cf., e.g., Rawls 2002:10-14; Rawls/Turowetz 2019:37 as well as Garfinkel/ Sacks 1970).

Accounts co-constitute the settings that they are part of, thus reflecting them as familiar sceneries. This is also true for what Garfinkel called Lebenswelt pair, that consist of instructions and instructed actions as parts of some settings (2021:32-33; 2007a). For one, Lebenswelt pairs are an important part of the endogenous instructability and observability of social phenomena (Garfinkel 1993:49). As any social object, they unfold and change in time. Secondly, however, Lebenswelt pairs demonstrate particularly well the principal unity of practices and verbalizations in the sense of above: when separated, instructions and instructed action produce troubles when they have to be re-translated into one another. The reason for this is that the endogenous instructability and observability of social phenomena is essentially a haecceitic gestalt coherence perceived "from within", and any separation of account and practice creates troubles of mutual application.

The expression of "from within" figures prominently in ethnomethodology, often marked with inverted commas or italicized. For example, Garfinkel says that ethnomethodological studies are

> directed to the tasks of learning how members' actual, ordinary activities consist of methods to make practical actions, practical circumstances, common sense knowledge of social structures, and practical sociological reasoning analyzeable; and of discovering the formal properties of commonplace, practical common sense actions, 'from within' actual settings, as ongoing accomplishments of those settings (Garfinkel 1967a:1-2).

"From within-ness" is temporal: Courses of action both as process and product are "known *from within* this development" by the co-participants (Garfinkel 1967a:40; original emphasis). Thus, "over the temporal course of their actual engagements, and 'knowing' the society only from within, members produce stable, accountable practical activities, *i.e.,* social structures of everyday activities" (Garfinkel 1967a: 185). This is true for laypersons as well as for sociologists, whose "discovery of common culture consists of the discovery *from within* the society" (Garfinkel 1967a:76-77; original emphasis).

The expression "from within" establishes several references, one being to Durkheim's principle that "social facts are to be treated as things" (Durkheim 1938:xliii), which means, for him, "from the outside" (Durkheim 1938:xliv), for a "thing differs from an idea in the same way as that which we know from without differs from that which we know from within" (Durkheim 1938:xliii). Durkheim thus distinguishes between society as objective reality experienced "from within" through membership and as a thing observable "from without" by sociologists. Ethnomethodology, in contrast, claims that Durkheim's sui generis order of society as a "thing" is, inescapably, experienced as objective reality "from within" that order – even by sociologists. There are simply no means to discover, to *know with*, culture and society from without, that is, from the outside of "thematic" or "phenomenal fields". For Gurwitsch, as soon as someone tries to thematize a theme *from without*, the thematization unavoidably becomes part of the thematic field and co-constitutes, and is co-constituted by, the gestalt contexture.

For, to paraphrase Gurwitsch, "from within-ness" has methodological consequences. He advocates a purely descriptive attitude towards perception, focusing on exactly what is given in perceptual experience, and precisely how. In this process, "no extra-phenomenal reality may be admitted as basis or presupposition of the descriptive analysis, nor may it be permitted to intervene 'from without' in such an analysis" (2010 [1955]:117). To do justice to the objects of experience, as they are "unified in themselves and from within" (2010 [1964]:210) and as they possess their endogenous indexicality, external elements should be included only when the object itself "actually points and refers beyond itself" (2010 [1955]:117).

The only reference that Garfinkel (e.g., 1966a:13) directly makes in this context, however, is to the Dreyfuses' introduction to Merleau-Ponty's *Sense and Non-Sense* (1964). In this text, Merleau-Ponty – referring to Gurwitsch whose lectures he had attended in the late 1930s in Paris (Embree 1981) – claims, they (Dreyfus/Dreyfus 1964:x-xi) say:

> that we discover meanings by responding to solicitations already in our experience. Thus we are not the absolute source of meaning. We do not give ready-made sense to our experience from a transcendental position outside the world as in Husserl, but rather we make sense out of our experience from within it. (…) Merleau-Ponty following Heidegger, calls the activity of organizing the world by responding to it from within 'being-in-the-world' or 'ex-istence'.

Thus, as Merleau-Ponty continues in their summary, "whatever appears suggests in its very appearance something more which does not appear, which is concealed. For this reason the figure can be said to have meaning since (…) it refers beyond what is immediately given" (Dreyfus/Dreyfus 1964:xi).

Merleau-Ponty, according to the Dreyfuses (1964:xiii), concludes that:

> since it is from within the world that we perceive, our experience is always perspectival, i.e., incomplete. For although we can be practically certain for example that we see a house, there is always more to the object than we can ever perceive. The reference of the figure [read with Gurwitsch: theme] which leads us into the ground [read: thematic field] may always be misleading, and upon further investigation we may discover aspects of the object which bring about a re-organization of our experience so that we see the object in a different way or even see a different object [think of autochthonous configuration of phenomena]. True, we do not often notice this feature of experience; and when we do, we discount it as a change in our perception of the object rather than a change in the object itself. The object, we assume, is completely determinate and independent of our investigation of it. This is an inevitable prejudice, according to Merleau-Ponty. The basic task of phenomenology is to overcome this '*préjugé du monde*' by describing the way experience *develops*, uncovering the steps by which perception hides its activity of organization and thus leads us to see the object as an independent entity.

Garfinkel (1967a:182; cf. 1966b:23-24) directly refers to the Dreyfuses' rendering of Merleau-Ponty's expression 'préjugé du monde' – which is a direct translation of Husserl's student Eugen Fink's expression *Weltbefangenheit* (cf. Bruzina 2002) – concerning the assumed objectivity of the world. In reality, the putative objectivity of social facts consists "of a serious, situated, and prevailing accomplishment (..) produced in concert with others by activities whose prevailing and ordinary success itself subjected their product to Merleau-Ponty's 'prejuge du monde'" (1967a:

182). The concept "from within" played an immense role in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, with which Garfinkel was highly familiar, and cannot be explored here in sufficient detail (but see Dastur 1993). With the idea of a consistent epistemology "from within", Merleau-Ponty and Garfinkel also followed Heidegger's concept of "being-in-the-world" (*Dasein*), which was directed against Husserl's methodological proposal of transcendental reduction. Heidegger held that no transcendental reduction is possible, and that we can only study the structure of our own consciousness (Husserl) or of being (Heidegger) "from inside", i.e. "by becoming aware that we are in the midst of it" (Follesdal 1979:371). In Heidegger, this awareness is not brought about by mental exercise, but by, e.g., "some familiar tool's breaking down, or by our facing death" (Follesdal 1979:372). Garfinkel (2002:chapter 4), instead, used his well-known breaching experiments and tutorials.

9. Conclusion

In the quote presented at the beginning of this text, Garfinkel spoke of "organizational Things produced in their details", of his goal to "describe Durkheimian Things by addressing their neglected (figural) (contextural) (configurational) characteristics". He stated that, to analyze them, one needs to consider that "Durkheim's Things are (deep gestalten) (patterns)", consisting of "accountable analytic units composed endogenously, in-and-as-of-their-lived-temporal-in-course sequentiality, in-vivo, local historicities" and that they encompass "'strings' of coherent contextural constituents of lived orderlinesses in practices."

As opaque as these expressions might have appeared at the outset, we have seen that by reference to Gurwitsch, they can be clarified. We have seen that the properties of social objects as ethnomethodology conceptualizes them can be grounded in Gurwitsch's gestalt phenomenology: They are produced and achieved, they occur in time, are ever-changing and ongoingly accomplished, they are constituted by the elements themselves. They are practical insofar as they are accomplished in practical circumstances and with practical purposes. And they are indexical, reflexive, incarnate, and accountable.

Sequentiality from this perspective refers to the ever-changing gestalt contextures with which co-participants constitute social objects in and as a setting. The social objects appear external to the co-participants, but are produced by those to whom they appear as such themselves through their activities of being part of them. These gestalt contextures, of which both co-participants and observers are part, are produced and accomplished in time, i.e. in an incremental, step-by-step, and moment-by-moment process: Past contextures provide the environment, or context, for succeeding ones. This includes possible conditional relevancies as in adjacency pairs when a first part makes a next expectable. Gestalt contextures consist of the elements of which they are constituted without anything added as framing device or "contextualization cue" (Gumperz 1992). The individual elements of a gestalt contexture possess a functional significance for one another and thus an intrinsic indexicality *and*, at the same time, accountability, since accounts are themselves genuine parts of the contexture, if not always realized. Temporally, the incrementally emergent gestalt contextures are constantly driven forward by the ever-changing here-and-now of ever-singular practical circumstances (haecceity) as experienced by those who experience and, at the same time, constitute them. Ideally, this

character of the social has to be methodologically respected when doing sociological research, either by re-creating the moment-by-moment co-responsivity of the co-participants through stills or by focusing on their subjective experiencing of the fleetingness of ever-changing haecceitic singularities.

We have also seen that the ethnomethodological idea that in the social world, actions are materially accomplished and at the same time rendered recognizable through the production of those phenomenal field properties that members judge as characteristic of them and that they are able to perceive as coherences, is to a great extent inspired by Gurwitsch's transcendental gestalt phenomenology, though Garfinkel has turned it mundane, adapting it to the realm of the social. This orientation to Gurwitsch entails that the empirical individual (*ego*) becomes irrelevant. Furthermore, when applied to the realm of the social instead of perception, it involves that consciousness becomes inconsequential, a point that Garfinkel has made time and again. Instead, practices constituting order achieve their sense endogenously through a kind of pre-reflective sociality that can be called "culture". When, as Garfinkel and Sacks (1970) have shown, the mastery of natural language is essential to any sense-making, meaning cannot arise from a pre-constituted subject. Thus, Garfinkel also uses Gurwitsch's theory to grasp the relationship between the interpretations and actions of individuals and their membership in a culture.

Moreover, we have also seen, however, that Gurwitsch is not the only salient reference for an understanding of these expressions. Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger and Dreyfus, whom we could only touch upon *en passant*, are no less important. Other authors of paramount importance, such as Parsons or Wittgenstein, could not be considered here at all. As I see it, however, Garfinkel has not, as he himself frequently claimed, *misread* Gurwitsch (on Garfinkel's "misreading" see Lynch 2004). Instead, he had read Gurwitsch's writings in a profound and detailed fashion, producing in his lectures exegeses that are well-founded and philosophically advanced.

Let me close with a statement that Garfinkel made in relation to Merleau-Ponty's concept of the "invisible" (1968), but that could equally be connected to Gurwitsch's idea of ongoing reconfigurations of recognizable gestalt contextures that index realities beyond themselves:

> I mean to be talking about something awesome and beautiful, which is what I take it that Merleau-Ponty spoke of as the familiar miracles of ordinary society. And here we are coming upon a familiar miracle. Obviously it's a miracle, a miracle being: Well, yeah, it happens like that. Don't ask me, I don't know. Nobody knows, it just happens like that. It's that kind of appreciation of the givenness of it (Garfinkel 2002:206).

The "miracle of ordinary society", grounded in the endogenous self-organization of any perceptual object, that social objects, ranging prominently among them, are, while *produced* by the parties as part of the setting, are *experienced* by them as external objective reality. For this miracle to work society must hide from its members the steps of organization whereby the seemingly determinate and independent objects are constituted. Ethnomethodology is interested in these self-invisibilizing qualities of the steps of producing social objects.

## 10.	References

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