

we might speculate on how it works simply on the basis of its similarity to things we do know about. This speculation has an honorable place in science, it is evident in Kepler's laws of planetary motion, Harvey's theory of the circulation of blood, and of course Crick and Watson's speculation about the double helix structure of DNA. The trouble with the clock method of inference with regard to language and thought is that we have no phenomena or experience which remotely resemble them. "What else is like thought? Indeed, we put language at the centre of very many comparisons; by talking of logical languages, the language of art, the language of gesture and so forth. These are illuminated by the comparison with language, not vice versa. So, it seems we forbid ourselves ~~to~~ from considering language and thought as anything other than a unique case. If it were not so, we would not be in the tangle we are in, for we could look at the relationship between thought and cake baking, thought and wood sawing and thought and whistling. We presume that the relationship between thought and language must be a special one while at the same time painting ourselves into a methodological corner by defining thought as unobservable. As a consequence, Fowler et al are forced to the expedience of argument by legislation in order to extricate themselves. As we shall see, the notion of a special relationship between thought and language only holds up if one allows an overly cognitive, overly logicist view of language activities to be put in place. There are no good grounds for allowing this to happen.

By allowing this vague identification of language and thought, Fowler et al almost manage to avoid a really difficult problem. This is the specification of just how and just in what ways language and thought are connected. A good way of seeing just why they do not actually avoid this difficulty is to

ask if some general scheme, not matter how fragmentary, can be discerned behind the analyses being offered. We would suggest that at the back of critical linguistics is the definition of language use as the assertion of propositions about states of affairs. Hence the relationship between language and thought is held to be some species of propositional logic. That is the logical grammar of thought ^{is isomorphic with} ~~matches~~ the grammar of language. Because a sentence such as 'The box is red' can be represented as ' $a = b$ ', and because the sentence 'The box is on the table' can be represented as ' $a R b$ ', then it is assumed that the formal features of logical languages are the same as the processes of thought. This is the reason why the Whorfian hypothesis is so important. It offers an account of the variation in classification and categorisation (what can be a colour, what can be on a table) and hence a grammatical account of ^{variation in} ~~thought~~. The two crucial elements can now be brought into joint play. If all language activities can be decomposed to propositions and propositional attitudes following 'semantic explication', ⁵¹ and if the clock mode of inference can be adopted and followed ^{by extending MTS} ~~with regard~~ to thought and language, then there is no reason to deny that the logical relations of thought are expressed in the logical relations of language. From there it is but a small step to saying that variation in ~~grammaticality~~ are variations in thought, and from there to language is ideology.

The identification of language activities with propositions and propositional attitudes is a peculiarly logicist attitude to adopt. It disregards the plain and obvious fact that we use language to do a great ,any other things other than issue propositions about states of affairs. It reduces the complexity of our use of language to a simplistic formula. At the same time it

overcognitivises language by treating it as a permanently mentalistic phenomenon. And yet we know from our own experiences that a great deal of our talk is "thoughtless", routine and non-cognitive. We do not expend cognitive skills nor evince cognitive attitudes very often. The over cognitivising, over logicising of language is a direct result of treating this one ~~sphate~~ of our lives as somehow extra special. In assuming that the relationship between thought and mental life is out of the ordinary, in a way that the relationship between whistling and thought, or humming and manual dexterity are not. (I always sing when I woodwork. Why should singing and sawing be less related- or the relationship between them less special- than speaking and thinking?) The object of this point is not to multiply mental phenomena^a but to deflate the claims that are made about language. As Wittgenstein put it, speaking is a part of our natural history,⁵² but is no more important a part than standing upright or having binocular vision. If any of our activities could be just as easily said to display the processes of our thought, and we think that you might as well say this for whistling, sawing, driving or musing as for speaking, then we have no grounds whatsoever for supposing that there is a special relationship between the grammar of thought and the grammar of language. Grammarians, semanticists and logicians might suppose that the ease with which propositions can be rendered into formal terms indicates the identity of logical grammars, and they might support this supposition by inventing logical conventions (rules) which show how to decompose propositions, but the demonstrations which they give are not so much drawn out of the cases they discuss as imposed upon them. They use the supposed structure of the one to find the presumed structure of the other. And at this point we return

our central question. What grounds do we have for the supposition that language and thought are structured? What grounds do we have for suggesting that they are similarly structured?

XIII

The sociology of knowledge begins with the fact of the social distribution of knowledge. What people know varies within and between societies. What is counted as knowledge (as opposed to belief, opinion, speculation and the like) is related to socially defined sets of arrangements. Linguistic relativism is but one explanatory thesis which tries to account for particular distributions and for the continuation of particular sets of arrangements. It is often used, then, alongside other explanatory theses to provide them with their distinctive sociology of knowledge edge. We encountered it being deployed with class interests in the explanations of the Strong Programme. We also found it bolstering the class ideology account that was offered by Critical Linguistics. In both cases, what people could be said to know was gleaned from the ways they spoke about the things that they knew. In other words, language was used as a key to knowledge. Linguistic relativism, then, is a thesis about the co-variation of language and knowledge, or in its more usual guises ^alanguage and thought. The way that linguistic relativism was introduced into the arguments of the Strong Programme and Critical Linguistics was by way of a simplifying move. Language was used to represent culture as a whole; it was treated as the key variable which might be used to achieve the social distribution of knowledge. The equation was quite straight forward. Differences ^{in knowledge were differences} in thought were differences in concepts were differences in

language. Clearly this equation can be applied at two levels at least. There are differences in what people know, and there are differences in the forms of knowledge. The topic of sociological interest must be the latter, for the former hardly stands in need of any kind of explanation. We know that lawyers are apt to know more about legal matters than most lay-persons, that car mechanics often know more about cars than ordinary drivers; and what is more, we have a perfectly good non-sociological explanation for this. They have been trained, are interested, or just plain have a knack for these things.

Be this as it may, linguistic relativism has often been interpreted as a thesis which makes just these ^{obvious} kinds of claims. In the discussion of Orwellian Linguistics, we found that it was being suggested that vocabulary reflects the predominance of certain concerns, and hence the range and subtlety of distinctions expressed by a vocabulary will reflect these concerns, and hence language and thought, language and concepts co-vary. Naturally enough this interpretation appears to have a great deal going for it. As we said, we know that there must be some truth in it. Of course mechanics can distinguish big ends from small ends, two stroke engines from four stroke ones; of course the Eskimo have more words for snow than we do, and of course a Trobriander can name the various stages in the building of a canoe. None of this ought to surprise us, or be of much sociological relevance. If this were what linguistic relativism wanted to argue then it would be truism, as well as harmless. But it is not. We are unlikely to be persuaded that vocabulary alone is responsible for, or an indicator of, differences in metaphysical theory. For, once we open that door in order to allow the Eskimo and the Trobriander to have alternative metaphysical theories, we have also got to

allow them for the mechanic, the lawyer, the botanist and the bricklayer as well. Clearly linguistic relativism would be absurd if it argued for this. What is at issue is not the number and range of names that the Eskimo, the mechanic or the botanist use, but the logical relationships that are held to obtain between the classes of objects to which the names refer. If, upon examination, 'It is snowing' turned out for the Eskimo to be a description of a psychological state of affairs akin to 'It is great to be alive', then perhaps we might conclude that the Eskimo have a different metaphysical theory to ourselves, a theory which allows meteorological conditions to be responsive to the emotions.

The second version of linguistic relativism is a thesis about the organisation of vocabulary and the organisation of thought. Grammar represents thought in some way, and hence grammar can be taken as a theory of reality. Stated baldly like this, such a thesis is opaque. What is meant by the organisation of thought? How might grammar represent it? When we encountered this claim earlier, our efforts to unravel it were hampered by the political objectives and cumbersome methods of analysis which it was explicated by. Rather than run the risk of falling foul of these once more, we will take an example from the disciplinary area, anthropological linguistics, wherein linguistic relativism originally had its home and where it has been most often deployed. The example is Dorothy Lee's and the mode of thought is that of the Wintu.⁵³

To begin with, we take the stem muk. On the basis of this stem we form the word mukeda, which means: "I turned the basket bottom up"; we form mukuhara, which means: "The turtle is moving along"; we form mukurumas, which means "automobile". Upon what conceivable principle can an automobile be put in the same category as a turtle and a basket?

(Lee, 1977. pp 153).

What indeed?

✓ We know, of course, that there is an answer.

There is such a principle, however, and it also operates when the Wintu calls the activity of laundering, to make foam continuously.....Basic to the classification is the Wintu view of himself as an outsider. He passes no judgement on essence, and where we would have a kinesthetic or participatory experience as the basis of naming, he names as an observer only, for the shape of the activity or object. The turtle and the automobile can thus naturally be grouped together with inverted baskets.

(Lee, op cit. pp 153 -4)

The obvious thing about this example is that despite its etymological elements, it is ^{not} really about Wintu vocabulary. Lee is drawing our attention to what she regards as a peculiar system of classification. The Wintu are held to organise objects such as automobiles, baskets and turtles differently to ourselves. And to do that, or so the inference runs, they must have a different theory of reality, a different metaphysics, to ourselves. Let us leave aside the general truth of the claim that the system is different to ours (do not we see a similarity between bath buns, hair buns and currant buns?) as well as the dubious implication that it is possible to nominate the classificatory principle used in a society, ⁵⁴ and ask simply what is this claim supposed to mean? Because the Wintu use a different classificatory system to ourselves, we are asked to infer that they 'see' the world differently. In contrast to the Wintu, we see things related in ordered lines. Our world is organised lineally.

When we see a line of trees, or a circle of stones, we assume the presence of a connecting line which is not actually visible. And we assume it metaphorically when we follow a line of thought, a course of action or the direction of an argument; when we bridge a gap in conversation, or speak of the span of life or of teaching a course, or lament our interrupted career.

(Lee, op cit. p 156.)

Other societies do not think in this linear way.

The Trobriander follows no line, at least none that I can see. "My head boils", says a Kula spell; and it goes on to enumerate the parts of the head as follows; nose, occiput, tongue, larynx, speech, mouth. Another spell casting a protective fog runs as follows: "I befog the hand, I befog the foot, I befog the head, I befog the shoulders...."

(Lee. op cit. p 156)

Although the conjecture that we classify in one way and other societies classify using one of a number of others remains a little mysterious, it is nonetheless clear that Dorothy Lee is putting forward some strong empirical claims on behalf of ourselves, the Wintu and the Trobrianders. Thought actually varies with language. If we turn this around a little, it yields an operational hypothesis; different ways of viewing the world are expressed in different classification systems which are themselves indicated by differences in grammar. Grammar and weltanschauung (a term which we have avoided with good reason up till now) are tied together. This is the version of linguistic relativism which is most often associated with the work of Benjamin Lee Whorf^{54a} who is credited with its original formulation. It is also the version which earlier the Critical Linguistics thought they were invoking, when in fact, as we saw, they actually utilised the relativity of vocabulary version which we dismissed as being of no interest.

Two things ought to be said right at the start. Although the version just outlined is the one usually associated with Whorf, it is not precisely the doctrine which he sought to defend. Second, and this is much more difficult ~~without running the risk of being misunderstood~~ to express ~~adequately~~, although linguistic relativism in any of its versions is ~~going to be~~ untenable, nonetheless it is not an absurd theory. There is no reason to deny some of its claims, that classificatory systems use disparate principles, for instance, or that grammatical forms may, at times, reflect classificatory principles. What is wrong with linguistic relativism is the

general assertion that all languages express a specific theory of reality, and that it is possible to determine the metaphysical theory^{by} which a society is characterised simply by looking at their language. To see just what Whorf was arguing and why it is wrong, let us go right back to the begining.

If Dorothy Lee has got linguistic relativism approximately right, it is, as we suggested, a thesis about the links which could be made between modes of thought and forms of grammar. Grammar determines, shapes, follows from, is a product of a mode of thought. Which^{ever} way the effect is supposed to go, it is clear that we have a causal connection being mooted here. One of the characteristics of causal connections is that they are contingent. Another is that they are empirical. A proposition concerning a contingent, empirical causal connection between forms of thought and forms of grammar would be a putative hypothesis of some kind. Since it is contingent, it might be wrong; since it is empirical, we could look and see if it was. This is the usual sense that is given to Whorf's doctrine. Lee is not alone in interpreting in this way. As we say, Critical Linguistics does so as well.

But, if Whorf were to argue this in a serious fashion, he would have to face some formidable methodological difficulties. In order to 'look and see', that is test and validate the hypothesis, Whorf would have to accumulate instances of divergent classification systems. However, since we only have access to these through their use in language, we can only tell if a classification differs from another by using grammar as an indicator or metric. It is because they use words in sentences differently to us that we know they classify differently. But this would mean that the test of the hypothesis was predicated upon its presumed validity. If we were not to proceed in

this way, and instead of holding grammatical and classificatory differences constant and fixed, tried to reconcile them, then the problem would simply disappear. In the place of competing weltanschauung expressed in competing classificatory systems, we would have the task of working out adequate translations from one language to another. The possibility of commensurability would have replaced the presumption of incommensurability. It follows that if we wish to retain the proposition concerning a definite and identifiable connection between grammar and thought, we can only do so by sacrificing its status as a causal (ie contingent and empirical) hypothesis.

In a lengthy and brilliant consideration of Whorf's argument, John Cook ^{SS} points out that one way of doing this would be to turn the causal hypothesis into a metaphysical thesis. Instead of treating the connection between grammar and thought as a contingent matter, we can define it as an a priori identity. Language is a theory of reality; grammar is metaphysics. The upshot of making this transformation is not ~~just~~ ^{only} that the methodological difficulties we noticed just now are avoided. The whole investigative programme is redesigned. Since it no longer makes claims which might be taken to be empirically verifiable, then we no longer have to worry about how we might garner evidence which might support or refute it. Instead it can function as an axiom in a philosophical argument rather than a sociological conclusion which has to be derived from evidence.

Cook claims quite effectively, we think, that considerable support for this interpretation of linguistic relativism can be found in Whorf's writings themselves. In passage after passage we find him speaking of metaphysics being concealed in grammar, and how it is possible to read off the structure

of reality from the structure of grammar. From the tone of these remarks it would seem plausible to suppose that in making his proposal Whorf was not suggesting that there might be an inferential connection between thought and language, that one could use the one as evidence of the other. Far from it. Language was not to be tested to discover its metaphysics; one had only to look and see.

Cook finds additional support for the realignment of the Whorfian doctrine in the argument that is proffered for the formal completeness of all languages. No matter what their grammatical forms, since there can be no activities which are specific too or debarred from a language simply in virtue of grammar, every language must be considered to be formally equivalent. Hopi may have no tenses, but it is still possible for Hopi speakers to recall the past, plan for the future and ponder what might have been. Trobriand ^{of nouns} classification_L may not be lineal, but they can still give each other directions. The acceptance of the formal equivalence of all languages means that if grammar is metaphysics for Hopi, or Trobriand, or English then it must be so for all languages. If we grasp reality through the grammar of English, and appear to do so quite adequately, then every other language must ^{also} provide an adequate grasp of reality. Put in this way, Whorf's hypothesis is not a scientific hypothesis at all but a philosophical theory, a metaphysical thesis.

Cook's suggestion is that in this recast form we have Whorf's thesis in the shape that he intended it. It was, he says, originally proposed as a counter to other metaphysical theories in philosophy which, Whorf alleged, had thought that they had discovered the logical structure which reality

must have simply from the examination of the grammatical relations between concepts used in a narrow band of Indo-European languages. Whorf felt this to be a piece of indefensible arrogance. Once one was prepared to allow the formal equivalence of languages, then it was quite possible to imagine that people could organise thought differently and hence that reality could be structured differently.

Such languages, which do not paint the separate-object picture of the universe to the same degree as English and its sister tongues, point toward possible new types of logic and possible new cosmical pictures.

(Whorf. 1956, p251)

Once this move was made, as we will see in a moment, there will be no way of measuring reality outside of a metaphysical thesis and hence we have no grounds for presuming one must have paramountcy. The multiplicity of logics has to be tolerated along with the multiplicity of grammars. This is linguistic relativism.

The general view which Whorf was out to refute has several elements.

- (1) It contains a philosophical psychology in which the mind is populated by and processes ideas. These ideas precede language and are expressed in it. Each side of the dualism of language and thought is organised symmetrically. The grammar of thought is the grammar of language.⁵⁶
- (2) Ideas are shaped by the impressions which objects make upon the mind through our senses. The word classes which we use to group and distinguish ideas arise directly from the essential similarities of the objects, events and qualities they nominate. Hence part of the meaning of a word is given by the word class to which it belongs. Pylon is a noun and hence a pylon is a certain sort of thing; waste-away is a verb and hence a kind of ~~event~~ ^{action or event}.

- (3) Because the world of objects, events and qualities is the template from which word classes are derived, unless we are prepared to allow the cosmos to be infinitely plastic, every language ought to use the same classification system. Because metaphysical and scientific reflection has reached its highest point in those civilisations using the Indo-European languages, the metaphysics associated with those languages must best fit how the world 'really' is. The variations between this metaphysics and others which come to light as new languages are discovered can only be explained as the product of error or naivety (which, of course was the step which angered Whorf). When they develop science or philosophy they will come to see the world as we do.

It was this third element which Whorf thought to be groundless. He could see no justification for it at all. It was an expression of monumental ~~ethnocentrism~~^{eg}.

The way that Whorf chooses to counter this argument does not involve the jettisoning of either of its basic premises. He accepts the philosophic psychology and the theory of meaning but attempts to derive different conclusions from them. This involves him making two steps.

- (1) The assertion that all languages embody a metaphysics is correct. People who use different grammars do think differently. The items differ not just with regard to which classes they are put in but also because different relations may exist between the classes. Languages may differ ontologically.

In this step, Whorf assents to the suggestion that English and Hopi, for example, could have different metaphysical theories. Further, he is, by implication, accepting the proposition that European philosophical logic

has correctly diagnoses the metaphysics of Indo-European languages.

- (2) Since word classes are both linguistic devices and ontological categories, differences in their organisation must be differences in metaphysics. Since ~~there~~ is no way of getting outside a language to determine the truth value of a metaphysics, we cannot rank one metaphysical theory against another, as a complete theory of reality. However we can say that aspects of reality seem to be more sensitively captured by one language and its theory than by another. Apache, for example, verbalises nouns such as sun-set thereby displaying its processual character better than the English noun does.

This second step is the crucial one for it marks the break from what Whorf calls 'standard logic'.⁵⁷ The notions of word classes and word class meanings have been put right at the centre of his theory. Nouns are fixed as the names of things; verbs are fixed as the names of events; adjectives are the names of qualities. Words name entities in different classes. These classes with their fixed types of members are then used to discriminate between languages and metaphysical theories.

Because Whorf has taken over so much of the position which he wishes to reject, he has very little alternative but to give word classes this inflexible character. It is the only way that he can relativise metaphysics. Having accepted the definition of word classes as this appears to obtain for English, Whorf has to argue that where different relations appear to hold between these word classes in other languages, we can only infer that we are dealing with different metaphysical theories. Since there are no criteria for ranking between theories which are independent of all theories, we have to content ourselves with logical pluralism and a multiplicity of

metaphysical theories.

If, as is often supposed, this was all that could be said on the matter even though Whorf's argument might appear to be persuasive, we should be suspicious. It is by no means clear that word classes in English are as fixed as Whorf intimates. Radiator, ball and grass might well be nouns and the names of objects, but which entities do bravery, pleasure and heat nominate? Drying, crying and spying might be events of various kinds, but can we say the same of believing, existing and refering? We could try to save the theory, of course, by distinguishing abstract nouns from common ones, and active verbs from psychological ones, but what does this rescue work do to the notion of fixed, identifiable word class meanings?

However, once our suspicions have been aroused, there is more to say. How plausible is the primary characterisation of the relation between thought and language, particularly in respect of English. Does English embody a metaphysical theory?

The key, of course, is the suggestion that language by itself says something about the world. That words, on their own, have word class meanings. This is what must be meant by the claim that grammar is a theory of reality and that simply by using a language we are forced to assent to various propositions about reality. But what this does, of course, is to divorce language from language use. Language is taken as an abstract system of symbols over and apart from the variety of things which people do when they use these symbols. What this abstract system is a system of are propositions about reality. But to assert this, it is necessary to take one activity that can be accomplished in a language - the assertion of how something is - and to raise it to

paradigm status. Every other activity which involves language from philosophical speculation to the reciting of nursery rhymes must be treated as if it were a disguised attempt at issuing propositions. To convert other kinds of activities to propositions, we need to insert between propositions and those activities a transformational device known, in modern logic, as the propositional attitude.

Now, as a matter ^{for}~~of~~ logic, these transformational devices may yield very interesting findings about the conceptual hierarchy of sense concepts, colour concepts, psychological verbs and the like. But they can yield nothing of sociological interest because we will find it difficult to see in admonitions such as 'Don't talk with your mouthfull' or instructions like 'Unplug at mains before removing' any generalised assertion about the cosmos. It is because all of Whorf's examples are cases of propositions or descriptions that he finds it so easy to discover the metaphysical theory which underlies them. If he had broadened the diet of examples to activities other than assertion, proposing and describing, he would have found it much more difficult to sustain his metaphysical thesis as a sociological premise at all. It certainly would not hold for English, for as we have just seen, there are many language uses where it is difficult to see that the use of language implies any kind of metaphysics. We can only sustain that argument providing we decontextualise our linguistic items and convert them into propositions of various sorts. Logic may be free to do this; but as we have seen, adopting the same set of procedures in sociology can only lead to trite and specious results. (Vide Kress, Hodge and Fowler) Indeed the present state of affairs in the semantics of natural languages and pragmatics lends even greater weight to our disquiet.⁵¹

In the end, then, it boils down to this. Whorf's linguistic relativism is based upon the same mistake that we identified ~~lay~~ at the heart of the Strong Programme and Critical Linguistics. It has conflated sociology and philosophy. By holding word classes fixed across languages and by treating language as a system of metaphysical propositions, Whorf has no option but to treat social actors as engaged in philosophising when they use language to achieve the goals they set themselves. Further, he seems to suppose that what is of sociological interest when we answer the telephone, ask others to wash the car or get the washing in, is the logical relationships which can be said to obtain between objects, events and qualities. As we said in our earlier attempts to discuss the same mistake, it can only lead to a very narrow and partial view of ^{the plan of knowledge is} social life and hence a stunted sociology ^{of knowledge.} By raising propositions to the status he gives them, Whorf has predisposed himself to turn metaphysical theories into sociological descriptions. Once we deny that English has a metaphysical system embodied in it, we are free to reject the general thesis that all languages have a metaphysics, since all languages must be formally equivalent. At this point linguistic relativism collapses, for the problem of how to define and cope with the variety of metaphysical theories drops out altogether. They are no longer prominent as the underlying logic to the activities being performed. All that we are left with when we encounter people who speak differently to ourselves, and who might even think differently about some things, is the very important and practical task of managing effective translation and understanding.

With the demise of linguistic relativism goes the sociology which gains

credence from its invocation^{either} as an inductive hypothesis or as an analytic axiom. Without linguistic relativism, these forms of sociology have no cutting edge. Their claims about the social distribution of knowledge depend upon the assertion that theories of reality vary with cultural configuration because they are locked up in language. They start then from the premise that different social groups see the world differently because their concepts are differently organised, and this organisation is available in and through their language.

Unfortunately this does not mean that we have done with the sociology of knowledge, nor with the doctrines of cultural relativism and multiple realities. There is yet another version awaiting our attention, but one this time that does not depend on the philosophic thesis associated with linguistic relativism. Instead, it attempts to assimilate the methodological proposals of Alfred Schutz with the findings of standard sociology and is, of course, that associated with Thomas Luckmann and Peter Berger and their book The Social Construction of Reality. To borrow a phrase of Milton's "Thither full fraught with mischievous revenge", we hie.

XIII

One of the more immediately recognisable characteristics of the traditional sociology of knowledge has been a tendency to focus discussion of the ratiocinative capacities of members of cultural groups. By and large, when reference is made to empirical materials, those materials are made up of texts of one form or another; texts which are the products of intellectuals or those who move in ~~the~~ intellectual circles. Knowledge is defined as that which is possessed by intellectuals and cognoscenti¹. This tendency is most clearly on view in the work of Mannheim², who is primarily concerned with one strain of intellectual ideas, namely philosophy. It can also be seen in different guises in Lukacs discussion of fiction and Werner Stark's³ analysis of the essentially doctrinal nature of the distinction between ~~sects~~⁴, churches and universal religions. The problem with this textualism is that it makes it difficult just to see what could form the empirical object of a non-literary sociology of knowledge: that is, a sociology of knowledge that took up knowledge which was not articulated in text or text-like forms. How could other forms of social practice be made to inform the sociology of knowledge? It is much to the credit of Robert Merton and, latterly, the proponents of the Strong Programme that they have indicated what this might be like even though they do still place heavy reliance on texts of some sort.⁵ Their efforts have been directed to turning attention away from what might be thought of as purely cognitive matters (clusters of ideas and their ideological function) to more practical matters, namely the social and practical contexts and constraints surrounding forms of knowledge such as science. Naturally, we do not wish to endorse the claim that is often made on behalf of the Strong Programme, that it heralds a complet renovation of the sociology of knowledge. That is simply not true. As we said earlier, it is traditional sociology of knowledge in novel settings and with slightly (though not by much) stricter standards.

In returning to an emphasis on cognitive aspects of knowledge, Berger and Luckmann have much in common with Mannheim, Lukacs and Durkheim. They have an archetypally Mannheimian vagueness which makes the empirical application of their - I hesitate to call them analyses - discussions extremely difficult to develop. In fact, this vagueness may well be the reason why no really clear-cut empirical applications of their work has been forthcoming. What there has been is yet more re-iteration of the theory (eg Berger on religion),⁶¹ demonstration of the amenability of the theory to stretch in any direction whatever (Berger and Kellner on the nature of marriage),⁶² a re-naming of old and hackneyed sociological concepts and categories in Berger and Luckmann terminology (Turner on industrial sub-cultures),⁶³ and one or two attempts to ground the theory in actual cases which quickly jettison the overarching theoretical framework which Berger and Luckmann sought to provide (Taylor Burkhardt on the police).⁶⁴ It is these last which are the most successful in sociological terms, and as we shall see, there are good reasons for this.

The first and most pressing difficulty faced in discussion of Berger and Luckmann is this essential vagueness. What exactly are they after? What ought to be the topic of the sociology of knowledge as far as they are concerned? They tell us, quite glibly, that it ought to be "everything that passes for knowledge in a society" but that is of little help. What will be counted as 'passing for knowledge'? Are myths knowledge? Are tables of numbers? Are instructions for opening orange juice packets? We said that traditional sociology of knowledge was really interested in the frameworks of knowledge formulated and possessed by intellectuals, Berger and Luckmann extend that by saying they are interested in the frameworks of knowledge which we all have. But their concern is not with how the body of knowledge functions, in the sense of what its unanticipated consequences might be, but with the much more tenuous question of how our bodies of knowledge come to have the matter of fact status that they do have. We know that $12 \times 12 = 144$; that the Blue Whale is an endangered species; and that you can cure malaria by taking quinine. But

it is not what we know that is of primary interest for Berger and Luckmann, but the certainty of what we know. What are the grounds for us being so certain? And, since they are sociologists, the answer they give is one couched in the terms of social organisation. Our certainty is socially organised. Knowledge - or what passes for knowledge - is a socially determined thing. We want to lay a marker down here which we will pick up later on. It is simply this. Put in these terms, Berger and Luckmann are offering a sociological epistemology. It cannot simply be that these items of knowledge are true which guarantees our certainty in them, for we could envisage contexts in which we would not know that they were true, or context^{3/}~~in~~ which they would be true even though we did not know them. There is no necessary relationship between knowledge and truth. So, if it is not truth that determines what is knowledge - a philosophical argument - it must be social context of some kind or other - ^asociological argument. We have seen this strategy before in the attempt by Mannheim to unpick the epistemology of Mill and 'the logicians'.

A bit more substance can be given to this definition of knowledge and the topic of investigation if we refer to a couple of examples. We do not offer the opinion that $12 \times 12 = 144$ when we make the calculation. We do not make a claim that the Blue Whale is an endangered species - whereas we might make such a claim about the pygmy shrew or the red kite. It is a matter of fact that $12 \times 12 = 144$. It is a matter of fact that the Blue Whale ^{could be} ~~is~~ about to be made extinct. Nothing hypothetical is involved here. These are not opinions. For us these matters of fact are not open to doubt; we do not even have to entertain the possibility of doubt, that things could be otherwise. The truth of the propositions is not a matter, therefore, of interpretation for us; we do not think there is room for interpretation here. This is simply how we know things are. ^{6?} You see the difficulty with formulation? The focus has become so broad that nearly all clarity has been lost. What Berger and Luckmann want is a sociological answer to the question 'How do we know that things are the way they are?'. They propose that the sociological answer ^W~~will~~ be an elaborate version of 'Because we come to see things that way'. And it is this which forms

the proper topic of the sociology of knowledge for Berger and Luckmann. How to we come to see the 'reality' of the world in the way we do? How is 'reality' socially constructed?

There is a point to notice here which is often glossed over or misunderstood. It concerns the supposed relativism of Berger and Luckmann's theory. That knowledge is socially constructed is a necessary inference which is made from the following two propositions. First, what is known about the world differs from society to society. Second, it cannot be that it is the world that changes. Physical nature of the universe is not mutable simply by changing from one culture to another. It is precisely because Berger and Luckmann want to avoid one sort of (ravening) relativism that they are forced to adopt a sort of social determination of cognition, simply to be able to cope with the fact of the social distribution of the contents of what is known. An example might help. The Azande (again) say that there are witches who can act against individuals thus and so. We say there are not. It cannot be that in the Southern Sudan the nature of the physical and mental world changes so that what is impossible in England is possible here as a physical ^{matter of} fact. If this were to be allowed, why can't we also allow us to say that a man can jump 18 feet in the air in Ragonia or fly ² to the moon unaided in Australia. So if we are committed to the universality of physical laws (put it that way just as a manner of speaking) as one of the things we know about the world, we cannot allow relativism of this sort to get a toe-hold. But we do want to have relativism of some sort, so all that we have left open to us is cognitive or conceptual relativism - we see it this way, they see it that way, - which is what Berger and Luckmann adopt.

A summary of their position on the ~~the~~ socially determined nature of knowledge is given in a paper on the sociology of religion.⁶¹ This is, of itself an important point to note. It marks a complete break with older forms of the sociology of knowledge which tended to view religion as akin to superstition and to ask 'How can people believe this stuff?'. Berger and Luckmann move religion to the centre of the stage as an exemplary form of knowledge considered as the construction of symbolic universes. The reintroducing of the theodicy

of religion is, ^{is also} in itself, a resuscitation of the sociologising of Weber and Durkheim and a break from the ecclesiastical and institutional approach to the sociology of religion as this had developed in the USA and GB.⁶⁷ In this paper they say that knowledge

is an edifice of semantic fields, categories and norms which structures the subjective perceptions of reality into a 'meaningful', cohesive and 'objective' universe. This universe, 'reality-as-seen' in a culture, is taken for granted in any particular society or collectivity. For the members of a society or collectivity, it constitutes the 'natural' way of interpreting, remembering and communicating experience. In this sense, it is internal to the individual, as his way of experiencing the world. At the same time, it is external to him as that universe in which he and his fellow men exist and act.

(Robertson. p 66)

It is the process by which the external and constraining reality of a symbolic universe is internalised and continuously legitimated which is, for Berger and Luckmann, 'the social construction of reality'. Mediated by this process both of the elements in the dichotomies of internality/externality, subjectivity/objectivity and reconciled and synthesised. These dichotomies are held to summarise the classical conceptions of social life to be found within sociology and sociological theorising. In what follows, we shall indicate that we are deeply puzzled by these dichotomies. We would not contest that much of sociology does see it self ranging on one side or another of them. However, for us, their very use is problematic. In the end, it is our view that the use of these dichotomies vitiates Berger and Luckmann's argument - and by extension, has much the same effect on traditional sociology. But before we move on to matters of contention and difference, what exactly does this process of dialectic and synthesis consist in? How exactly according to Berger and Luckmann does the external reality of society become the internal reality of the social actor; and how can the former be said to be a product of the latter?

The steps which are followed in The Social Construction of Reality might be summarised in the following way.

- (1) Consciousness is intentional. We perceive objects by an act of apprehension. We do not perceive merely by reacting to stimuli. An object in a field of vision is not just a bundle of 'sense data' but a box for holding pens, a cup for drinking from. On 5 th November, children burn an effigy not simply a collection of rags and paper. We encounter the given world, then, as a world populated with objects which are imbued with meaning. However, simply because these meanings are the meanings which we give, does not mean that they are random or idiosyncratic. Meanings are organised into clusters or frameworks which make up shared symbolic universes. Such symbolic universes provide ways in which we define and organised the world in~~e~~ which we live. They form in toto, cosmologies, weltanschauungen. They provide us with criteria for distinguishing what is real and unreal; what can be an object and what an event; what things are and what they can be.

Two things are worth noticing en passant. First, a clear perspectivalism is built in to this way of talking. Frameworks and universes are ways of seeing, ways of relating. By that very fact, they provide the possibility of competing, alternative perspectives which are equally plausible. Second, this is not a sociological premise which is being laid down but a metaphysical one. Berger and Luckmann are being prescriptive about the nature of perception and social life. In so doing they are making the same initial move as Whorf and the Critical Linguists.

- (2) The organisation and distribution of meaning in society is not monolithic. No single symbolic universe holds complete sway over all situations, events and persons. Many differing ones are available and may, on occasion vie with one another. So^{me} of these aim for a greater inclusivity than others, and so may end up making larger metaphysical claims than others. Movement between frames of meaning may be difficult to accomplish in the case of the most inclusive (vide the case of the Azande and ourselves) but may be relatively straightforward in more exclusive cases. We have very little difficulty in re-assuring our children that events which they

are frightened of are 'only a film' or 'only a dream'. The degree of difficulty we may experience understanding Zen Buddhism or Quantum Mechanics is not simply derived from an unfamiliarity with the concepts and language. It also has a great deal to do with the fact that we at least order our experiences in ways that do not map onto those of Zen or Quantum Mechanics. Part of what is involved in becoming a fully socialised, competent member of a community is the learning of which frameworks can be varied and which are to count as foundational. Frameworks, then, provide fields of meaning and types of objects. When considered from the point of view of explaining sociological theories of organisation, the institutions in which we work are not 'the same' as when considered as environments for facilitating research, effective teaching and collegiality. As an object of sociological scrutiny, these institutions are experienced differently ^{from} ~~than~~ as ~~abstract~~ places to work. In like manner, the Executive who is the embodiment of capitalist values is not the same person as the friend who comes to dinner. The frameworks of teaching, sociologising, working, and ordinary friendship are distinctive (but not wholly unrelated) and are structured by very different relevances.

Each framework can be considered to be a bounded, finite field or province of meaning. Movement between frameworks involves traversing these boundaries. To take the familiar, if not hackneyed case. The table on which this typewriter sits differs when we regard it as a solid object on which to place things rather than a location of whirling protons, electrons and nuclei. Under the latter rubric, the table is a field of force and not solid in any recognisable sense at all. Under each different rubric, the reality of the table differs. What the physicists treats as real when doing physics need not be recognisably real to the ordinary person. The possibility of multiple finite provinces of meaning creates the possibility of multiple realities and is a direct corollary of the perspectivalism noticed earlier. It is built in to the way in which the problem has been set out.

- (3) In our daily lives, one finite province of meaning is given paramount status. This is the world to which we as ordinary social actors always return. While giving commonsense this paramount place, we locate it alongside the finite provinces of meaning associated with science, dreaming, fiction and so forth, and more importantly ~~are~~ able to mark these off from one another.
- (4) The boundary of commonsense is marked by an assumption of intersubjectivity. The social world in which we find ourselves is shared with other subjective actors. This intersubjectivity is girded by an assumption of the reciprocity of perspectives. Others in the world of daily life can move between finite provinces of meaning just as we do, and furthermore the provinces which they moved between are shared ones. Alongside the assumptions of intersubjectivity and the reciprocity of perspectives is a more primordial assumption, that of the givenness of the world when viewed under the natural attitude. The adoption of the natural attitude of commonsense involves giving up the possibility of raising doubts about the reality of the world around us. Under the natural attitude what is ~~given~~^{real} and what exists are given^{and} not investigable. This suspension of doubt (the epoché of daily life) is what makes ordinary social life possible.
- (5) The knowledge provided within the finite province of meaning which characterises ordinary life is organised with regard to practicalities. It is practical knowledge shaped by practical relevances, goals and motives. It is organised and available in many different forms, as recipes, bodies of propositions, clusters of traditions and practices which are either 'at hand' or 'within restorable reach' in books, manuals, or from those with experience.
- The complex of knowledge, motivations, goals and relevances is what constitutes subjectivity.

- (6) Under the natural attitude of daily life, the 'facts of life' are made available to us as objectified for us in the routine and sedimented character of practical activities. The institutionalisation of a practice gives it a character which means that we encounter it as an externality existing separately from us as individuals with a reality which is independent of our subjective experience of it. Because our lives are social, the roles, goals, motives and activities of others are real. The clusters of norms, values, symbols and knowledge which pattern these activities are equally real and independent of us and make up symbolic universes which are legitimated by the performance of the activities which they pattern. Because they constitute what is the reality of social life for us, they are internalised and unquestioned. Hence their use and unquestioned nature are mutually self-supportive.

It is important to note here, that what is being offered is a transcendental argument not a genetic explanation. Berger and Luckmann are concerned with what makes social life as we know it ~~to be~~ possible not with how it occurs in the ontogenesis of the social individual. We will need to keep this transcendental character in the forefront of our discussion, because at several crucial points it is blurred and even disregarded by Berger and Luckmann's own discussion.

- (7) The lines by which the polarity of the objectivication and internalisation of these symbolic universes is explored are those of traditional sociology. The particular figure who is invoked at this point is Durkheim. Through routinisation and symbolisation, what is external becomes internal. Social practices constantly affirm and re-affirm the external, factual constraining nature of social life itself. Each time we encounter an instance, it is encountered as an instance of the general case.

- (8) The process of externalisation and internalisation, objectivity and subjectivity, is one of alienation. That which is a human product, the consequence of subjectivity, becomes an external, objective, constraining reality. Hence, alienation is crucial to and, indeed, definitive of symbolic universes and hence to the formation of the social construction of reality.

What is offered in Berger and Luckmann's account, then, is a theoretical treatment of what is seen as the dialectic of social life. The perceiving, autonomous acting individual subject internalises social reality. Hence social life is shaped and constrained by the possibilities that such a conception of what is real, expectable, possible, logical and permissible makes available. This dialectic is brought out by the deployment of the concepts of alienation, objectification and legitimation. The dialectic is an overcoming of the apparent paradox or contradiction. In setting out their account in this way, Berger and Luckman take the sociology of knowledge to the centre of a complete and unified social theory. In fact, the sociology of knowledge becomes social theory.

Even in the summarised form that we have presented here, there can be little doubt that Berger and Luckmann's theory is an ambitious one which merits very serious scrutiny. Unfortunately, one of the initial difficulties encountered in giving it such scrutiny is that it is a theory and hence very difficult to discuss on its own terms without resorting to abstraction piled upon abstraction. While, for us at least, one of the criteria for assessing a theory is the sort of studies which it makes it possible to carry out, we will have to defer such assessment until later because not only are there so few such studies but the prime difficulties we have with the theory are to be found in Berger and Luckmann's own abstract formulation of it. We will take up cases but only after discussing Berger and Luckmann themselves.

The major problems which we think beset Berger and Luckmann's theory can be listed as follows. First the conception of sociological theorising is overly prescriptive. Second, the duality inherent in their definition of the problem to be solved is problematic. Third, at several points there appears to be a substitution of ontological solutions for methodological problems. Fourth, the viability of the synthesising and generalising of these sociological theories is not argued to. In addition, we cannot see how one could specify and investigate a domain of social life within Berger and Luckmann's generalised schema. However, since that is a monumental, and in our view finally mortal difficulty, we have reserved it for a separate section.

In a comment which we have cited before, Robert Nozick has more than a sly dig at the tendency of philosophers and theorists in general, to underplay the degree of artificiality in the theories and philosophies which they construct.⁷⁰ Such artificiality while lending the construction the appearance of logicity, exhaustiveness, systematicity and so on, can in fact make it almost wholly useless. The theory becomes testimony to conceptual facility and very little else. In their willingness to mistake facility for worthiness, philosophers are rivalled and even surpassed by sociologists. Time and again, sociologists have been subjected to announcements that the tasks of sociological theory have been completed, that a final, complete conceptual scheme is now available which reconciles all of the divergencies and possibilities currently on offer within the discipline. The scheme, or so it is claimed, lays bare the whole of social life; ~~The~~ way forward for sociology has been mapped out. The Social Construction of Reality was designed to be just such a scheme. It aspired to synthesise once and for all the warring factions in sociology. Here is a statement of intent to that effect.

The authors of this article, in co-operation with several colleagues in sociology and philosophy, are currently engaged in the preparation of a systematic treatise in the sociology of knowledge that will seek to integrate what is now known as the sociology of knowledge with three other streams of sociological thought hitherto largely

left outside this discipline.- the phenomenological analysis of the lifeworld (especially in the opus of Alfred Schutz), the Durkheimian approaches to the sociology of knowledge and those of American social psychology as derived from the work of G.H. Mead.

(Robertson. p 69 fn 8)

As it turned out, the synthesis was to contain one more theoretical element, the contribution made by 'the early Marx'. The one other classic figure seemingly left out is, actually present in the guise of a ghost at the theoretical feast. Weber's contribution has already been incorporated with the inclusion of the sociology of ~~knowledge~~ religion in the sociology of knowledge. In the final product, the compendium is summarised like this:

We can best describe the path along which we set out by reference to two of the most famous and influential 'marching orders' for sociology. One was given by Durkheim in The Rules of Sociological Method and the other by Weber in Wirtschaft and Gesellschaft. Durkheim tells us: 'The first and most fundamental rule is: Consider social facts as things.' And Weber observes: 'Both for sociology in the present meaning and for history, the object of cognition is the subjective meaning-complex of action'. These two statements are not contradictory. Society does indeed possess an objective factivity. And society is indeed built up by activity that expresses subjective meaning.

(SCR p 30(emphasis in original).

What we have, then, is a summary of the divergencies and differences which comprise modern sociology cast in the polarity represented by the archetypes of Durkheim and Weber. What follows from this summation is the enlargement of the conceptual apparatus enabling the impasse to be dialectically overcome and the duality synthesised.

It is not our intention here to argue that the production of yet more schemes and syntheses was precisely what sociology did not need when SCR was published and manifestly does not need to-day. While we have considerable sympathy with this view and with the claim that what sociology could do with is a fully worked out grounded theory (in fact, no less a personage as the late Erving Goffman has entertained if not promulgated the idea that sociology would not lose much if it traded what it has produced so far for a few really good conceptual distinctions and a cold beer²¹) we will not take issue with Berger and Luckmann's synthesising motives. Nor will we claim that it is the scope

of the synthesis which is the trouble and that what is needed is a reduction in generality to what Merton called 'theories of the middle range'. While both of the objections may very well have considerable force, they do not go to the heart of the matter. This is Berger and Luckmann's conception of the role which theory is to be allowed to take in sociological reasoning. It will be our contention that the view which Berger and Luckmann can be seen to hold, while a popular one in sociology, is wholly inappropriate. Since this is the vital difference between us, it would be as well to spell out what is involved as clearly as possible.

Given the comments just cited, it does not appear unfair to say that Berger and Luckmann envisage their theory to be a totalising scheme of concepts. In general, such schemes are held together by the presence, either explicit or implicit, of an organisational logic which provides the thematic unity and relevances for inclusion and exclusion, ^{as well as} the ordering and relations between the various concepts involved. If the concepts are drawn from across the whole range of sociology, the resulting kaleidoscope is a summary of the discipline. Further, if there is felt to be some sort of symmetry or correspondence between social life and sociological theory, then the summary of the discipline can stand as (some kind of) summary of social life. It is not necessary to claim a one for one isomorphism between the theoretical summary and social life, nor are we suggesting that Berger and Luckmann do make such a claim, only that some features of social life are represented in the theory. The concepts capture analytically some features of social reality. The broader the base from which concepts are drawn, it would seem to follow, the more features of social reality will be represented. The conceptual framework of SCR is put together by drawing upon the theories of Mead, Schutz, Durkheim, Marx, Weber and Hegel. Each of the theorists have grasped something of the nature of social life. If we put them all together, the resulting picture will be necessarily an improvement upon any one of them.

Quite apart from the implications of importing this correspondence notion of theorising into the consideration of theorists such as Schutz, one thing stands out quite clearly in the line that Berger and Luckmann take. The point of ironing out the divergencies and differences is to present the discipline as a unified whole. Or, put the other way round, it is to find it to be a unity despite appearances to the contrary. However, laudable though such an ambition might be, it is largely a pedagogical one. By presenting sociology as a unified whole, much of the awkwardness and difficult to grasp nature of seemingly unrelated and ^{remote} ~~wildly overvalued~~ theories and concepts can be properly appreciated ^{and} sensibly located. Such syntheses allow us to make surveys of the discipline. But surveying is only of limited, and ~~we~~ as we say pedagogic value. It does enable one to get a generalised feeling for the shape of the discipline and some knowledge of 'roughly' where everything fits in. It is by no means clear that simply because we can arrive at a survey of this sort, the discipline is enhanced thereby. Indeed, it may even be retarded because of the misplaced hope that once the correct expository synthesis has been formulated, rapid development and progress on all fronts will be facilitated.

Some will see in our remarks so far a kind of sociological nihilism. They will draw the conclusion that we are advocating the degeneration of the discipline into mindless empiricism by suggesting that sociology should stop trying to say how social life really is. But, in fact, to think this would be to miss the point entirely. What we are advocating is a stance of metaphysical indifference. That is to say, we are suggesting that for sociology, questions of how things are might be better treated methodologically rather than ontologically. Instead of shaping investigations and theories to reveal how life really is, an ontological pursuit, more progress might be made if we were to adopt a stance that accepts that what social life is is given by and constituted for us in the practical and theoretical relevances we bring to making studies. In physics, for example, it has become standard to define light as either a wave or a beam depending on the investigative techniques being used and the features of the

properties of light being investigated. For the physicist, light is sometimes a wave and sometimes a beam. In doing this, physicists do not suppose either that light hops about from one form to another, nor that they need a more general concept of light - the 'beve' concept - which captures how light really is. For them to think that would be a form of the reproductive fallacy.^{??} It is enough for them to say that in their investigations they treat it as either the one or the other. To suggest that light must be a wave, or a beam or something else is to make an ontological commitment. How could we know how it was without treating it as a wave or a beam etc.? What physicists are mostly interested in are the properties of physical things ~~like~~ like light, and not with building up ontologies. Although there are physical things, chemical things and so forth, science per se does not have an ontology at all. Perhaps the same might be said of sociology. We do not have access to how social life is except through our studies of it. That is a familiar enough truism. But, by extension of the analogy drawn with the case of light, if we define social life now as an objective facticity and now as a subjective ~~reality~~ human product then should not the first task be to see exactly what we can find out about social life by treating it in these ways, rather than looking for a new definition that amalgamates the two and tells us how social life must be 'really'? Do we know how we should conceive and study social life as an objective phenomenon? Do we have a body of substantive findings on the subjective character of society? It would seem not, if we are to take Goffman's sentiments as any kind of indicator. And he, of course, is not alone. We all know that what sociology has compiled up until now is a few exemplary studies and a handful of leading ideas. To say this is not to be dismissive; it is simply to try to get the achievements of the discipline into perspective, and, of course, to indicate the nature of the difficulties yet to be overcome. Put in these terms, there would seem to be very little point in trying to conceive theories which provide exhaustive, all-embracing pictures since such theories are designed to blur distinctions, underplay differences and disregard incompatibilities. In fact, it could be argued that the practise of investigative sociology is likely to

be hindered by the attribution of a paragon status to synthesising theory, rather than the appreciation of its true value undergraduate classroom and the introductory text.

The suggestion is, then, that synthesis and unification may not be in the discipline's long run or short run interests. It could actually prevent that which it was designed to achieve, namely investigative progress. But, even if this pessimism were not to be founded, nonetheless in ~~this instance~~ this instance, the goal is an inappropriate one. The duality which the synthesis is designed to overcome is a spurious one.

To substantiate this claim, it will be necessary to move away from the consideration of the specifics of Berger and Luckmann's theory for a few moments. This is necessary so that we can put together some considerations which we can then apply to SCR. Let us start by animadverting, not for the first time, to an example of Gilbert Ryle's.⁷³

In most of the newsagent shops in Manchester, one can buy a monthly magazine called Cheshire Life. This magazine carries articles, reports and advertisements of interest to a particular sort (or even ^{stratum}) of people, those interested in country pursuits like hunting and point-to-point racing and the doings of a vague collection of persons known as "the county set". No-one supposes, least of all those who buy Cheshire Life that the magazine is anything approaching a representative reflection of all that goes on in the county of Cheshire. Tarporley is far more likely to be mentioned than Timperley, and clay pigeon shooting than pigeon racing. The people who buy Cheshire Life know that it contains what they are interested in. Nor would anyone suppose that those people who appear in the articles do only what the articles record about them, that they only hunt, shoot and fish, attend May Balls and own large houses. Cheshire Life does not aspire to be an encyclopaedic account of everyone who lives in Cheshire, nor even of those to whom it is addressed. Just as in Ryle's original example where it was held to be a nonsense to talk of a poultryman's world

separate from an accountant's world or a dressmaker's world, so it would be nonsense to say that there is a Cheshire life that is distinct from a Manchester life or a Lancashire life. We can, of course, speak of Cheshire Life in the way the magazine does, but that does not commit us to cutting up social worlds in any way. Cheshire life is not a category of existence.

Precisely the same could be said of Berger and Luckmann's duality of an internal and external social life. These are not two opposing and contrasting types of life, nor yet two distinct and segregated facets of one life. Talk about an internal and external social life only makes sense in the context of ways of making features of social activities visible and investigable. Subjectivity and objectivity are not characteristics or properties, but methods of treating activities for the purposes of investigation. The dualism only gains credence because it trades upon something that all of us are well aware of, the possibility of differences in perceptions and experiences and the fact of intersubjectivity, while at the same time hiding both of these behind a veil of incrutability. Because the possibilities are never contrasted with the ~~im~~possibilities, intersubjectivity remains a mystery which can only be resolved by conceptual ~~presupposition~~ ^{presupposition}. What we up against here is the mistaken ^{belief} ~~assumption~~ that different descriptions of the same thing ~~is the same~~ give us ~~different~~ descriptions of different things. Alan White has some cautionary comments on matters such as this.

(J)ust as the man who is a father, husband and uncle is several kinds of man, not several men, so I shall argue, a shooting which is a killing, a piece of insubordination and a crime is several kinds of act, not several acts. And just as a father, an uncle or a husband is a man with certain relatives, not a man plus his relatives, so a killing, a piece of insubordination or a crime may be an act of shooting with certain relations not a shooting plus its relations.

(White p2).

The essential point that White is reminding us of is the very obvious fact that theoretically inclined sociologists sometimes forget, namely what something is described as depends upon what kind of object it is as well as for whom we are describing it and why. Descriptive categories are not just loose around

the place to be applied willy-nilly.

Thus a man can be a natural or a stepson, but an author cannot be a natural or a step-author, while an author can be a plagiarising or a joint-author but a son cannot be a plagiarising or a joint-son, though the same man can be ~~xxxx~~ both a step-son and a joint author.

(White ibid)

The care that White is cautioning us to exercise is noticeable by its absence from Berger and Luckmann's theory. There categories and concepts drawn from what appear to be incompatible theories and methodologies are set side by side without any hint of concern. What would such a concern be like? In the space we have available and given the aim of this discussion we have time only to give a very broad review,

To begin with, what is social life? Is it the sort of thing (is it any sort of thing?) that could be internal or external, subjective or objective? And what of reality? Can that be subjective and objective? Can it be multiple? How should we talk of social facts and society? Should we consider social facts as things or (cf p⁹⁶ above) or stipulate that "society exists as both a subjective and objective reality"(SCR p 149)? When faced with a battery of question like this, it might be as well to divide them up and take then piece by piece.

One way that we might employ the notion of social life could be in contradistinction to those of natural life, mental life and so forth. Used in this way, the concept might classify not a sphere of activity but types of activities. If we were to talk of our social, mental and natural lives this would not mean that we ~~live~~ were leading many lives but rather like Walter Mitty, the one we do lead could be viewed as rather complex. That is to say, we could characterise our ^{life} ~~xxxx~~ in different ways. The differences between the ways of characterising the activities we engage in would bring some to the fore and push others to the background, and it is by no means assured that the same activities would emerge in the same part of the stage in all cases. We could, for example, feel justified in holding a person responsible for publishing his ideas in an article, but it is by no means clear that we would be right to hold

him responsible for thinking the thoughts in the first place. Certainly, no one is to be held responsible for the activities of the autonomic nervous system. Talking about some person's social life similarly picks out types of relationships as significant and sketches in the sort of consequences we might expect people performing those activities to take into account. When we talk about ourselves and our friends and colleagues as getting older, going grey, giving up smoking, saving for a winter holiday, having a breakdown or a divorce, we are not talking about different lives - mental, social and natural - that they live, but different things that they do and that happen to them in the only life they have.

Social life, then, is a way of characterising activities. But can such activities be subjective or objective? We can certainly see that someone might act for personal reasons or might interpret an action in an idiosyncratic way, but that could make his reasons or interpretations subjective, not the activity. But, wouldn't that mean that his activity of interpreting, say, was subjective? Under what circumstances might an interpretation be subjective? A prime example of such a case would be that of certain sorts of judgements. We might say that a judgement is subjective if it concerns a matter on which there are no agreed criteria, or about which there can be no agreed criteria, or if such criteria as there are are not followed. We are prepared to allow that ^{the} preferences for beer and sandwiches for lunch over salmon mousse and champagne is a matter of subjective taste, where no criteria can be universalised. We could also say that opinions concerning realism in art or the morality of free love are equally personal and subjective. However, we would hardly conclude that a Judge giving due weight to the evidence laid before the court, the arguments put forward by the lawyers for both the prosecution and the defence, and the law on the matter in question was making a subjective judgement. Following procedures of this kind is just what we mean by objective decisions. Should we then say that someone perceiving or interpreting an event or object does so as a matter of subjective or objective judgement? This might appear to be tricky on two counts.

First there is the revisability issue. Because we know that we can change our minds about things, that what we thought was a snark could turn out to be a boojum, might lead ^{us} to suppose that it was a matter of subjectivity. On the other hand not everything ~~is~~ ^{that} (is a snark) that could be a boojum. Not everything is taken to be revisable. As we pointed out in the setting out of Berger and Luckmann's thesis, somethings are just given to us. The second aspect which makes the whole issue even trickier is that there is no good reason to suppose that perceiving, seeing and other activities of the same ilk involve judgements of any kind. We do not decide to see an apple as an apple, for a friend as a friend, even though we might find that ~~what~~ ^{the person} we thought was a friend really was not. The dichotomy of objectivity and subjectivity is ambivalent here. Either it is so powerful that everything is a matter of judgements, in which case all of social life is subjective, or it is limited to a restricted range of uses. The point we wish to make ~~here~~ is not just the obvious one that if all activities are subjective then that says nothing about them at all, but the more important suggestion, here at least, that we have just as strong grounds for saying that all social life is objective. The criteria ~~for~~ judging which the subjective actor uses, are not of his own invention. Since we live in an intersubjective world, they are shared with others. The universality of such criteria learned through socialisation would make them objective. The interpreter sees things just as anyone else in society would. We have come to an impasse. If we allow subjectivity free rein, then we have no reason not to give similar licence to objectivity. And then we are in the pickle of having all our social life as objective and subjective at the same time. This is the point that Berger and Luckmann reach. However, faced with this situation, rather than seeing that it is the result of the collapse of the distinction, they feel that what is necessary is the resolution of the dualism. This they propose is available through the dialectic of the subjective and the objective, namely the alienation of symbolic universes. However, isn't there more ground for saying that the impasse arose because of

the insistence in forcing all characterisations of activities into the straight-jacket of just one, namely that of making judgements? We do not need a dialectical solution if we do not have the problem of establishing relationships between wholly dissimilar activities. Treating the recognition of a friend in a crowd at a station as a matter of making a judgement is the same mistake as thinking that someone can be a step-author. It displays what Ryle would call a category mistake.²⁴

What of social reality? Is this single or multiple or merely variegated? To think that social life might be a sort of thing which could be counted, is to make the mistake which White points to, namely the taking of different descriptions to be descriptions of different things. This is a first point. However it is closely related to a second and equally important one, namely that social reality is not the name of a collection of things at all, let alone the objects which are real and which make up the world. Reality is not a sum of real things but what we take real things to have. Again we should pay attention to how we use these concepts. Austin has pointed out that real and reality do a lot of work in contrasts.²⁵ We talk of real beer, real diamonds and a real mystery by way of contrasting these things with synthetic beer, fake diamonds and an apparent mystery. The mistake that has been made, and here we are echoing the comments we made about Whorf earlier,^{is} that nouns necessarily name things, even abstract collective nouns. Just as we were able, just now to suggest that the notion of objective and subjective social life was a product of the assimilation of everything under the umbrella rubric of judgements, so we now want to say that talking about objective and subjective reality makes these matters of judgement as well. And yet when we talk about the reality of our feelings of despair at ever being understood by our colleagues, about our apprehension at the thought of a future cataclysm in our lives, the reality of the despair or apprehension is hardly a matter of judgement at all. We do not choose to be in despair or apprehensive; we do not lead Sartrean lives. It is not, then, that we have different sorts of reality, objective and subjective available to us but that

we have different ways of characterising the things we do.

The roots of this objective/subjective misclassification lie very deep. The present instance of it owes much of its credence to the prevalence of a psychological metaphor which has become part of our conventional wisdom. This metaphor draws a parallel between internal mental and personal life and external bodily and social life, and the internal mechanisms and external manifestations of a clock. Laudan claims that as a mode of reasoning this clock analogy owes its origins to Kepler and Descartes. The line of thinking goes like this. Because we have access to the visual operations of the hands, the movements of the pendulum and because we know what clockwork is like from other contexts we can infer a mechanism that connects the pendulum to the hands and which brings about the latter's movement. Even if we never take a clock apart, we know in principle how it must work. Using the analogy, we can infer that if there are external manifestations there must be internal mechanisms. Externality gives us internality as the other part of the dualism. All we have to do is infer or 'invent' the requisite mechanisms. Given we have some activities which are external we must have some which are internal - the activities of the mechanisms. So, if Durkheim, Weber and Marx agree that from the point of view of each one of us, social life is found to be a constraining, external reality, that it is an external reality, then Berger and Luckmann, following the natural course of the analogy have only to look around to find a matching set of activities which can be internal to each and everyone of us. These they find in the subjective judgements discussed above ~~and~~ *and the social philosophy of Schutz.* in the social psychology of Mead. If external social reality is social life in society, internal social ~~life~~ reality is the social life of the mind. The public/private, objective/subjective dichotomy is, as they say, up and running.

NB. This para wants editing and rewriting in the light of the Kell, Hodge + Fowler discussion above.

It is important to notice what has happened. A locational metaphor has been used to distribute activities into spheres. The result is that we are presented with two types of social life. However, as we saw earlier, this description is deeply misleading. Social life does not consist in one or many spheres of action, it is not carried out in different places, but is simply a way of describing some of the things which we do. Calling some activities social means putting them into certain relations and not into others. Instead of talking of the internal and the external as places where the subjective and objective facts of social life are to be found, we might be better advised to see them as ways of organising phenomena, methods by which actors achieve the facticity of subjective judgements and objective reality. This would be to take a particular sociological interest in the distinction and could be begun simply by asking how the difference between an objective fact and a subjective judgement could be made visible in our studies. Some of the comments which Stan Raffel makes in the opening chapter of Matters of Fact 76 are indicative of how this might be done.

The recommendation which is being made, then, is that taken as a sociological topic (rather than simply built-in without reflection) the dualism can be made visible only in certain sorts of ways. To ^{modify} ~~paraphrase~~ Freud: where Ontology was, there shall methodology be. Instead of specifying how social life must be organised, why not ask how we can investigate what can be matters of fact and how these are constituted for and by us in our social activities?

The root argument we have been presenting in the past few pages is that the acceptability of conjoining theories such as those delineated as the bases of Berger and Luckmann's synthesis has to depend on the acceptability of the dualities on which they are ~~based~~^{grounded}. From what we have said so far, it ought to be clear that we feel that the images on which both of the dualities used in this instance are based, namely perceptual judgement and locational distribution are fundamentally misleading when they are over-extended or applied too rigidly to the description of social life. Quite apart from this line, there is the further question concerning the appropriateness of cementing together the clusters of theories which stand for the different sides of the dualism - Marx and Durkheim v Mead and Schutz in this way. This is not, of course, the same worry as that which we mentioned earlier. It is not whether there is any point to stressing the similarities^{ti} between theories rather than their differences but the more exegetical matter of whether each of the theorists mentioned is treated justly when handled in this way. Can we assume that this collection is reconcilable without a great deal of quite fundamental argument about their basic presuppositions? To think of social life as a dualistic whole - within a sort of sociological Manicheism, perhaps - is not of itself convincing grounds for saying that sociology must reproduce the dualism, nor proof that such a sociology is possible. Can it really simply be a case of allocating theorists into the dimensions of the dilemma? Part of what we are arguing here is that, as a pedagogical device, most if not all teachers have found it necessary to contrive a theoretical unity in order to be able to pull together for the benefit of students a cluster of widely divergent theorists and theoretical themes. We have talked of them as 'responses' to the problems of industrialisation and capitalism, as 'struggles' over method, as 'formulations' of the scientific nature of the discipline, and so forth. But such contrived unities are not discovered ones. We have found elements enough in the thinkers under discussion for us to be able to make the unification stand up long enough for teaching purposes. We would not want to extend the unity beyond the classroom. Berger and Luckmann want to

take such a pedagogic device and construct, perhaps reconstruct would be better, sociology in its terms. To indicate just what a scale of misrepresentation may be involved here, let us sketch out some of the things that Berger and Luckmann really ought to address themselves to before they can claim that there is a unity on the subjective side which could, itself, be unified with the objective. Do Mead and Schutz fit together 'just like that'?

(Insert here a summary of the relevant passages from 'Rescuing Schutz from the Role Theorists')

Here are some comments on the subject of the differences between two of the sorts of theorising we have in hand at the moment. They are taken from the recently published correspondence of Talcott Parsons and Alfred Schutz. Schutz is identified as one of those who can represent the 'internalist' camp; Parsons is almost the quintessential externalist. This is what Schutz has to say about Parsons' analytic strategy in The ~~xxxxxxx~~ Structure of Social Action.

... ~~XXXX~~ you have to go a few steps further in radicalising your theory in order to arrive at a more general concept which on the one hand, permits an application to problems actually beyond the reach of your theory and, on the other hand, to a more consistent formulation of your basic ideas....

(Grathoff 1978 p 105)

Note the phrases "an application to problems actually beyond the reach of your theory" and " a more consistent formulation of your ideas". Even after 40 years, Parsons was still baffled by such a suggestion but nonetheless convinced that the taking of the "few steps further" were both unnecessary and incompatible with his methodology.

..the rational understanding of human action, including especially the subjective states of ~~xxxxxxx~~ minds of actors, requires the combination of what Kant called sense data with categorisation, which is to my mind ultimately a cultural entity. It seems to me that Schutz, on the other hand, takes the view that the subjective state of the actor is accessible to immediate experience through what Husserl called "phenomenological reduction" without the necessity of such "experience" being organised in terms of any kind of "conceptual scheme....

(Grathoff 1978 p 116)

Now the point is not whether Parsons and Schutz are right about each other here, whether Parsons is correct in suggesting that it does in the end depend upon his epistemology of 'analytic realism' being incompatible with Schutz's use of the phenomenological epoché, or whether Schutz was correct to say that the next proper step which would go beyond Parsons' theory, would be the consideration of the entire scheme of concepts in the light of subjective experience. It is that both of them are convinced that there is a radical disjuncture between the sets of premises. Husserl would claim to go beyond Kant. Again whether such a claim is justified is not of relevance just now. In marking the difference in these methodological ways, both Schutz and Parsons bring out a very important contrast which is blurred in Berger and Luckmann's discussion, namely the difference that different philosophical attitudes can make to the problem which Kant poses ^{as} ~~in~~ the tension between reality and appearance.

Let us stay with this for a while, since it will enable several themes in this discussion to be packed together. Kant was engaged in wrestling with the empiricist philosophy of David Hume. Hume, as with most British philosophers of his time and after, espoused what is now designated 'naïve realism'. Direct access to the world of objects was achieved in a non-mediated way through the sensitivity of our 'sense organs' to 'sense data'. In wrestling with this philosophy, Kant proposes the transcendental separation of appearance and reality. Reality is only approached through concepts which organise it. Hence it is noumenal. The separation of appearance and reality is where most sociology (including that of G.H. Mead) begins. As Berger puts it elsewhere "It can be said that the first wisdom of sociology is this - things are not what they seem". The task is to find a method for transcending experience and appearance to grasp reality. This is done in Kant's view by the development of a priori categories. Such categories are laid upon the world. Husserl, starting with a different philosophical problem, that of Descartes, dispenses with the distinction

* This is not quite right. Locke espouses ^{loose} empiricism: Hume rejects it ^{wants a strict empiricism} and throws the possibility of 'reasoned' knowledge out of the window. ~~He~~ Kant wants to re-institute it without Locke's empiricism.

All we can mean by reality is reality-as-experienced. If we only have access to reality through our experiences, then it makes no sense to speak in terms of the reality/appearance duality. For Husserl what is at issue is not what reality is like but the constitution of appearances. Phenomenology is a philosophical method designed to do this. At the centre of much of what is now standard sociology is an epistemological principle, the viability of the distinction between appearance and reality, which Husserl sought to deny. It may very well be the case, as Schutz thought, that it is possible to transcend this distinction and provide the grounding of some general concept in the experience of the subject, but to do this will, as Schutz quite clearly saw, take a great deal of effort. It cannot be done simply by juxtaposing the two sides of the master dichotomy subjective/objective and assuming, *voilà*, that it had been done, that somehow the subjective had become the objective, for to do that is to take just the route that Parsons and others like him take, a route made possible by the invocation of an ontology of subjective and objective objects.

The conclusion that we want to draw out is that in conjoining standard sociology with Schutz, Berger and Luckmann neutralise Schutz' methodological choices simply because, in effect, they set aside what is at issue between Schutz and the rest of sociology, namely what is to be the proper object of study. For Parsons, for example, what was to be studied was the set of relationships conceived to hold between the objects to which the scheme of categories referred. The object of study was the systematic reproduction of a system of social relations through the activities of social actors. Hence the fulcrum of his theory of social action is the rational character of action, a character that is defined and schematised in instrumental/expressive, external/internal dichotomies. For Schutz, the object of investigation was the constitution of subjectivity and intersubjectivity by social actors, and hence the 'real' and 'rational' character of the system of action is treated as the outcome of what social actors do. Where Schutz

wishes to reflect upon the constitutive nature of the reality of social systems of action, Parsons has to presuppose this reality, as does any sociologist who wishes to incorporate and synthesise wholesale the classical approaches to sociological theorising. Hence we should not be surprised to find Berger and Luckmann avowing

Society exists as both subjective and objective reality

(S. C. R. p 149)

whereas Schutz sought to transcend subjectivity and objectivity as characterisations of social relationships by asking how the reality of the here and now of a particular finite province of meaning is defined and reproduced intersubjectively. As a matter of investigative priority, the reality of social life is suspended so that its constituted nature can be reflected upon.

It is, of course, the case that Berger and Luckmann, as does Parsons, deploy very much the same range of concepts as Schutz. Both groups talk of objectivity, subjectivity, actors and action, the importance of motivation and the rational character of action, but the mode of use of these concepts is widely different. We could say that Parsons together with Berger and Luckmann have entirely different theoretical projects ^{from} ~~to~~ Schutz, and hence without a great deal of preliminary argument and exposition, it simply will not do to amalgamate them merely on the grounds they look similar and ought to go together. It is not sufficient to pull out of the theoretical hat a collection of higher order concepts culled from Hegel and used by him to address the appearance/reality problem and assume that they will do the trick.

The attraction of 'the middle way' in theorising is beguiling. It is often accompanied by the siren song of the 'evident' merit of all sides and the need to form theoretical compromises to overcome partiality and draw closer and closer to 'how things are'. However, we ought to remember the fates of those lured by such siren songs; we would not want to see sociology shipwrecked for no good reason. As we have tried to show, the net result of compromise simply for the sake of compromise is likely to be the undercutting

of the distinctiveness of particular sets of departure points as these are set out in theories. And, to change the image, the upshot of that could well be colonisation rather than reconciliation.

XIV

The notion that reality may be socially constructed has proved extremely popular in much recent sociology, particularly when used as the organising conception behind empirical studies of sub-cultures or sub-groups. Tied as it is to companion concepts such as 'multiple realities' and 'world views', it provided the departure point for numerous studies of the world view of managers, the reality of deviance, the construction of sexual identity, the formation of theoretical knowledge in science and much much more. However, in many of these attempts to ~~flash~~^{run} out, so to speak, Berger and Luckmann's initial proposal, the body of 'findings' and 'empirical instances' turns out to be disappointing. It is relatively rare for care to be taken to attend to the detail of such cases and their contexts. Instead, generalised treatments are handed out; treatments in which the account that is offered of the phenomenon under scrutiny is just as programmatic and vague as Berger and Luckmann's original formulation. Obviously this is not true of all of the cases. Indeed, we will be looking at one notable exception. But it is true of most. The example that we will be discussing at some length is H. Taylor Buckner's examination of reality transformations in the legal process. But before we get on to that, we feel it only fair that we should give some substance to our rather dismissive comments about the empirical applications of the Berger and Luckmann theory. As our text we will take Berger and Kellner's famous paper Marriage and the Construction of Reality.⁷⁸

The view that Berger and ~~Luckmann~~ Kellner offer us of marriage is that it is a 'nomos-building instrumentality' (p 27). In line with the general

theory of universe construction and maintenance which we have outlined, this definition of marriage is explicated by description of the role that marriage has in the objectification and legitimation of particular definitions of self in the face of increasing dehumanisation and alienation in modern society.

Public institutions now confront the individual as an immensely powerful and alien world, incomprehensible in its inner workings, anonymous in its human character.

(p 31)

Reacting against this, the individual leans more and more heavily upon his private spheres of action.

It is here that the individual will seek power, intelligibility, and, literally, a name.- the apparent power to fashion a world, however lilliputian, that will reflect his own being; a world that seemingly having been shaped by himself and thus unlike those other worlds that insist on shaping him, is translucently intelligible to him (or so he thinks); a world in which, consequently, he is somebody.- perhaps even within its charmed circle, a lord and master.

(p 32)

Marriage has become one of the central nodes for the organisation of relationships in this private sphere. Its importance has increased as the range of interconnections between family life and other aspects of social life have shrunk.

In our terms, the family and within it the marital relationship were part and parcel of a considerably larger area of conversation. In our contemporary society, by contrast, each family constitutes its own segregated sub-world, with its own controls and its own closed conversation.

(p 33)

It may be that we are particularly insensitive or protected in some way from exposure to the forces which Berger and Kellner see wreaking this

existential nightmare in the modern world, but try as we might, we cannot find in our experience of marriage and family life, work relationships and ~~life in general~~ ^{either} ~~se on~~, nor can we say that we discern in sociology any substantive evidence whatsoever for the pessimistic ~~framework~~ ^{Vision} within which Berger and Kellner place their discussion of the family. It is true that Berger and Kellner do say that people do not recognise this increasing delimitation of their freedom of action and their increasing reliance on the private spheres of life. But all that that suggests to us is that Berger and Kellner have adopted a theory of social change, ~~a theory~~ ^{interpretation} which tells them that things are getting worse, ~~a theory~~ ^{and} which will enable them to talk about family life in the ~~exaggerated way~~ ^{potential for, previous times} that they do. We could just as easily adopt a ~~view~~ ^{view} ~~theory~~ which says things are, for most of us, pretty much the same as they always were. We could cite 'evidence' from historical and anthropological studies to show that ordinary life doesn't change all that much in its essentials, no matter what society is being talked about. A living has got to be earned, the kids have got to be fed, and a roof has got to be kept over our heads. And, if these things can be done, then it might also be possible to extract a little fun out of life occasionally. The point we are making, of course, is that one could dispute Berger and Kellner's vision, that it is a theory, and that it should not be masquerading as if it was the universally agreed ~~sociological~~ ^{and unarguable} consensus on how things are.

Having provided us with this gloomy, angst-ridden, Kierkegaardian summary of recent social history, Berger and Kellner outline an ideal-type analysis of the nature of modern marriage. The gloss that they give us is as follows.

1. Frequently marriage partners are drawn from similar backgrounds and hence share common stocks of knowledge about and expectations of marriage.
2. Once marriage has been entered into, both partners tend to project the relationship as the central one in both of their futures. Other relationships are redistributed in importance accordingly. For Berger and Kellner, this redistribution is a "nomic rupture" which is healed by the initiation of a new nomic process.
3. An illustration of this process of nomic rupture and initiation is given through a discussion of the familiar phenomenon of the weakening of the husband's male friendship bonds after marriage. Old friends are gradually replaced in importance by new 'family' friends. In discussions between the spouses and elsewhere, this process is objectivated by explanations that hint at 'friends disappearing', 'people changing' and the like. In their usual style, Berger and Kellner call this "conversational liquidation".
4. The net result is that

Marriage posits a new reality. The individual's relationship with this new reality, however, is dialectical - he acts upon it, in collusion with the marriage partner, and it acts back upon both him and the partner, welding together their reality.

(p 37.)

an outcome which is functionally necessary for the continuation of our present society.

Barred from expanding himself into the area occupied by (other) major institutions, (the individual) is given plenty of leeway to discover himself in his marriage and his family, and in view of the difficulty of this undertaking a number of auxiliary agencies stand ready to assist him (such as counselling, psychotherapeutic and religious agencies). The marital adventure can be relied upon to absorb a large amount of energy that might otherwise be expended more dangerously.

(p 42).

One immediate response to this analysis of modern marriage might be to point to its extremely partial nature. It is a description of one version of marriage within a particular stratum of a certain sort of society. However, this would not be much of an objection because Berger and Kellner are careful to indicate throughout their account that what is on offer is an ideal-typical analysis of what they think is demonstrated by sociological evidence to be the most likely pattern of marriage and family life in industrialising and industrialised societies. As the conventional wisdom has it, the privatised nuclear family 'fits' industrial society. We do not want to debate the acceptability of this wisdom. We will not controversialise the 'facts about the family'. Rather we want to notice that whatever the facts about the family might ~~might~~ be, Berger and Kellner do not give us a sociological analysis of them but a sociological commentary upon them. We are subjected to a sermon on the human condition, a sermon in which 'private troubles' and 'public issues' are conjoined.⁷⁹ What we do not get is any weighing of the sociological evidence, and argument from premises to conclusions using this evidence. The evidence in 'The Social Construction of Marriage' has little more than parable status - or to be even more unkind, it consists in no more than just-so anecdotes. Let us be quite clear what we are saying here. The 'data' which is referred to in footnotes and references ~~is~~^{are}, of course, bona fide sociological findings. That we do not dispute. But, what we cannot see in Berger and Kellner's 'analysis' is how this 'evidence' bears upon the case which they are making out. We are given not specific data on 'conversational liquidation', no specific examples of 'reality transformation', no worked through evidence of 'nomos construction'. These impressive sounding terms do no more than convey the impression of deep thought to what ~~is~~^{are}, in fact, social rather than sociological commonplaces.

We need to say a bit more about this. The question which Berger and Luckmann set themselves is something like this: Why is marriage and family life like this, to-day?. This 'why' is sociologically ambiguous in ~~many~~ ways. It could be taken to mean 'What has produced this form of marriage and family system?' which after all a fairly standard line in sociological analysis. Or it could be taken

as meaning 'What is the significance of marriage and family life to-day?', which is a question of a wholly different sort. It is, we would contend, a certain sort of metaphysical question, prompted by the conviction that modern society is becoming more and more spiritually barren. The human condition (whatever that is) requires marriage to be a nomos building, reality transforming institution. Sociological evidence on what family life is like shows this to be so.

What puzzles us about all this is the presumption that the sociological evidence is both addressed to and unequivocal about what family life is like. Does sociology tell us what family life is like for us as ordinary social actors living our ordinary lives? There are lots of studies of family life, of course, but what do they tell us about family life as a mundane fact of ordinary life? What we have are studies of the family as a network of social relations, the family as an element in the productive process, family organisation and social change, etc etc but not very much about family life as that is encountered by each and everyone of us in our daily lives. It could be retorted, perhaps, that we don't need sociology to tell us about this: we know what it is like. And so we do; but do we know what it is like as a sociological object of study? Berger and Kellner avoid facing this problem simply by stipulating in advance just what family life must be like (and in so doing opting for one form of theorising of social life of earlier).¹⁰ The family is a functional unit which engages in nomos building. How do they know this? Quite simple. They define social institutions as nomos building for those that are involved in them. This has one clear implication. Instead of following the tenor of Schutz's advice to Parsons and taking the one more radical step which would switch attention to the experience of marriage through the examination of cases, Berger and Kellner use the notion of a social construction of reality as a programmatic device for issuing general proclamations of a gloomy sort. The only trouble is that such programmatic devices are two-a-penny in sociology, and the only usable criterion that we can think of for ranking them would be sociological

fruitfulness or insight - apart, that is, from personal preference. What kinds of studies are engendered and what can we say on the basis of such studies? On either of these criteria, Berger and Kellner's use of the social construction thesis is lamentable. We learn nothing about family life as a sociological phenomenon, and can only reproduce commonplaces.

In practice, then, it seems that the social construction of reality is really a procedure whereby sociologists can feel a licence to engage in *windy* speculative social philosophising. If that is what it is felt sociology ought to be about, the great existential questions, what does life mean?, where is society going?, then fine. Except that we would have to demur. It certainly is not the case that sociology can only be like that, or that sociological theorising has to be put to this end. It may be Berger and Kellner's preference, but it is not ours. And in the absence of some pretty strong arguments, we are going to remain unconvinced; we cannot see that sociology should leave off careful examination and observation for windy moralising.

But, perhaps things don't have to be this way. Could it not be that Berger and Kellner is just an eccentric interpretation of the thesis? Well, not all of the attempts to encash the synthesis have been as febrile as the one just looked at, but they are not all that convincing either. In fact, as we shall see with H. Taylor Buckner's discussion of reality construction in legal process, when we get down to real cases and real data, the dialectical synthesis disappears from view.

Buckner begins.....

Berger and Kellner's. H. Taylor Buckner's examination of reality construction in the legal process at least attempts to deal with actual cases and with real-life examples, even if, in the end, it too is faulted by an over anxious need to rush to generalisation, and a consequent stretching of the scope of the empirical examples cited.

Buckner begins by observing that legal processes are peculiar. What will count as the 'facts of the case' for lawyers and other legal process (actors in the) is constituted differently from what the ordinary man may take to be the facts of the matter. Legal relevances rule some things in and others out. Buckner's interest is in how everyday reality is transformed into legal reality.

Let us take things ^{one at a time} slowly. We start with the observation that any action provides 'problematic possibilities' for the observer. These problematic possibilities are resolved by sets of available relevances. The burglar is engaged in his burglary as an instrumental act - a means to an amount of money. The policeman sees the act somewhat differently, as a felony, another in the list of things he has to deal with, an expression of amorality or whatever. Obviously the policeman can understand the burglar's point of view and vice versa, but he does not hold it. For Buckner, it is the policeman's task to get his definition of how things are accepted, and hence the purely understandable, instrumental earning-a-living definition of the burglar rejected. This is not, then, a matter of reality at all, but as David Melling pointed out, factuality.⁹ What the policeman does is to constitute the facts in police-relevant ways, ways, that is, that are designed to ensure that the facts as the policeman presents them are overwhelmingly taken as

definitive.

The methods that Buckner notices are recipient-designed for the 'reasonable man called upon to make legal judgements'. What has to be done is ^{to} ensure that the reasonable man has no reasonable doubts about what was 'in fact' happening. (Donald Westlake begins one of his Dortmunder novels with an example of just how a good lawyer can ^{show} doubts in the reasonable man's mind. Is a man with a carton in his hands seen by the police to be emerging from a doorway 'really' backing into it?). Buckner suggests that several elements have to be present in this methodical construction of the facts of the matter. First, the policeman has to specify the reasonable grounds that he has for noticing the defendant. The defendant's actions have to be made 'observationally visible'. In doing this the policeman transforms policing-relevant observation categories into ordinary-observations. Thus a policeman in a park late at night is patrolling. He can expect to find drunks and others ^{because he's looking for them.} The account of someone's being a drunk has to contain recognisable 'drunk-relevant features', staggering, bottles in pockets, vomit, alcohol ^{on} breath etc. The policeman may know that someone is a drunk, but he has to show that the drunkenness was visible. Second, the grounds for noticing have to be matched to the requirements of the penal code. This is done by ad hocing a symmetry between the requirements of the law and the observed features of the encounter. The defendant was 'obviously' incapable of looking after himself, 'likely' to commit a breach of the peace and so on. The obviousness and likelihood being substantiated by reference to just what this defendant did this time. The third feature is that the account being given should match one for one with all of the grounds given

he is there to look out for people like that

for the action taken. The grounds should all be on display and all be matched to the penal code. One line of legal defence can be that the individual was being harrassed, unduly and unnecessarily shadowed by the police etc. The defendant has to offer himself up for arrest, so to speak, not be selected out and pursued.

The policeman is trained to produce an account which, if it has these features, will satisfy the reasonable man that this is the correct account of the facts. ^{The Poltremian's} ~~His~~ training is not just in how to write and give reports but in what to observe for inclusion in them. The policeman's attitude is not that of the ordinary citizen at all. His methodical observation and presentation will in most cases ensure that his actions are seen as the proper course to have taken and hence judgements made in his favour.

Now, while Buckner's account of 'transformations of reality' is vastly more satisfying than Berger and Kellner's simply because it is tied to actual cases and actual practices, nonetheless, at several crucial points it, too, engages in 'empirical glossing'. As we have just said, the object of the policeman's routine-police work is, in this case, the preservation and presentation of 'the facts of the matter'. Unfortunately, we are given only anecdotal evidence of the methodical procedures that are used. How is an initial arrest made? How are particulars recorded? How is the charge-sheet written up? How is the evidence given? How are 'the facts' as talked through in each case made to relate to each other? Buckner insists that there is a retrospective/prospective character to the in-filling of detail but we are given no indication of how this is done. This might surface in two distinct ways. First of all, what Buckner is describing is a practical instance of

and this arrest
was a reasonable
action.

'the documentary method of interpretation' which, as we saw right at the outset of this discussion, was for Mannheim the key methodological requirement in the sociology of knowledge. How does the process of documentary reconstruction get carried out in this case, in all of its stages? This could only be examined by the careful consideration of the 'documents' concerned, the notes, the charge-sheet, the typescript of the court proceedings. The point of course would not be to find the policeman to be manufacturing crimes but to see just how in just these cases that 'fact' of crime was constituted. How was the legally-relevant-definition of crime satisfied in all its essential particulars? The second way in which the 'working up the evidence' could be addressed is through the practical conformity with 'giving evidence as usual'. Buckner is largely concerned with the outcome, the accomplishment of 'this was a crime', and fails to notice that the normal features of evidence giving are designed for those who give evidence and for those who hear it, ^{as Kant they} to result in that accomplishment. Policemen read their statements, can call up their trained observations and so on. Again, this is not a basis for suggesting that the legal procedure is biased, fixed, unjust. It is to say that as a sociological phenomenon crime is what the legal process produces via the methodical procedures such as those of 'working up the evidence' and 'giving evidence as usual'.

What we are saying, then, is that while Buckner often talks about these phenomena in an elliptical way, he does not examine them in a systematic way. Were he to have done so, we feel that it is certain that he would have come to see the processes not as ones of 'reality transformation' but of 'fact production'. This may not sound like much of a difference, but

~~124~~ 125.

we would argue that it marks a crucial change of interest and a crucial change of emphasis. By dealing with the actual organisation of actual cases, Buckner has gone part way to engaging in a sociology of knowledge, that is how courts, jurors, judges and policemen come to know that a crime has been committed by this 'criminal', and part way to releasing himself from the tendentious, overblown and sterile conception of the sociology of knowledge promulgated by Berger and Luckmann.