



## Social Construction of Reality

Key thinkers: Peter Berger, Thomas Luckmann,  
Alfred Schütz

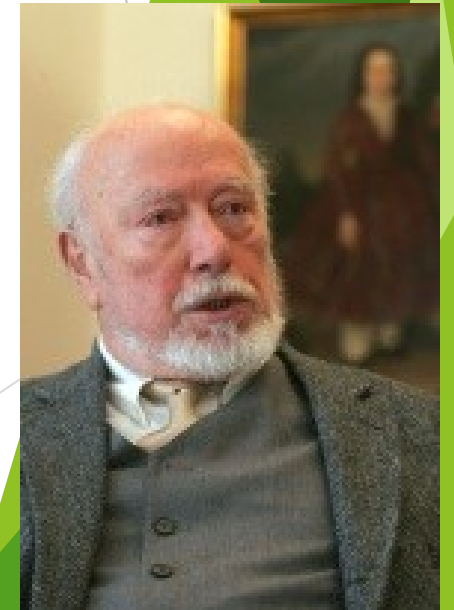
Lecturer: Olivera Tesnohlidkova

[o.tesnohlidkova@mail.muni.cz](mailto:o.tesnohlidkova@mail.muni.cz)

Office hours: contact via e-mail beforehand

# *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966)

- ▶ Inspiration: Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Schutz (etc.)
- ▶ Marx: dialectical structure
- ▶ Durkheim: **social facts** are something external to humans (e.g., language, religion) and coercive
- ▶ Weber: the social is a creation of subjective meanings
- ▶ Weber + Durkheim = social reality as both objective and subjective
  - ▶ SCR - How so? How do social facts come into existence?
    - ▶ “How is it possible that subjective meanings become objective facticities?” (*SCR*, p. 30)



# Phenomenology

- ▶ Husserl - father of phenomenology
  - ▶ Interested in epistemological questions of knowledge -
  - ▶ How do we know (reality) and what do we know (as reality)?
  - ▶ Reality is a creation of our mental processes, but we adopt a “natural attitude”
  
- ▶ Alfred Schütz
  - ▶ What we perceive as reality is not just a creation of individuals, but of social groups
  - ▶ Social groups create “lifeworlds” (Lebenswelt)
  - ▶ Key aspects of “lifeworld”: intersubjectivity, typification, sense of social order, bracketing



# Sociology of knowledge and “reality”

- ▶ Berger and Luckmann are developing a sociology of knowledge
  - ▶ SoK must concern itself with everything that passes for ‘knowledge’ in society
    - ▶ SoK must concern itself with what people “know” as “reality” (→ common sense knowledge)
- ▶ Reality exists independent of our mind, we can’t escape it; it is:
  - ▶ Intersubjective - it is constructed through interactions with others
  - ▶ Grounded in ‘here’ and ‘now’ - everyday life is structured temporally and spatially
  - ▶ Ordered through “typifications” which come into existence through social interactions
    - ▶ Social structure is the sum total of “typifications” and the recurrent patterns of interaction established through them

# Dialectical process of social construction of reality

- ▶ **Habitualization** - behavior becomes routinized and patterned -----  
→routinized/patterned behavior shapes our experiences and interactions with the social world
- ▶ Society is a human product
  - ▶ **Externalization** - creation of cultural products (e.g., values, belief, material objects...) through social interaction; these products become external to their creators
- ▶ Society is objective reality
  - ▶ **Objectivation** - patterned behaviours receive legitimacy
- ▶ Man is a social product
  - ▶ **Internalization** - we are socialized into this “reality”, we are thought to behave in this patterned way of living in the world

# Legitimation

- ▶ Institutional world needs legitimation
- ▶ Effective institutionalization → less coercion
- ▶ Legitimation is built and expressed through language.

# Society as subjective reality

- ▶ Internalization of reality involves primary and secondary socialization
- ▶ Primary socialization of a child - identity development, move from internalizing concrete roles to generalized roles
  - ▶ Individual becomes a member of society
- ▶ Secondary socialization - learning behavior specific to particular social situations/roles and the norms and values they carry (e.g., school, workplace, peer groups)

# Mind mapping

- ▶ Create groups
- ▶ Choose a concept, idea, thought we take for granted (e.g. law, evil, marriage...)
- ▶ Map out how it is socially constructed (trace down its constructedness)



# EATING MEAT

- THE RIGHT WAY (CORRECT NUTRITION)
- BODILY NEEDS
- SOCIAL JUSTIFICATION
  - FOOD CHAIN
  - MORAL CATEGORIZATION
- COW / BEEF & TYPIFICATION
- SOC. CONFLICT
- SUSTAINABILITY
- ILLUSION = TASTY MEAL
- NOT MIS-TREATED ANIMAL

- CULTURAL DIF.
- SOCIAL/ECONOMIC ETC. MOTIVES

# MARRIAGE

- INTRODUCED AT YOUNG AGE
- PARENTS' EXPERIENCE & SOCIETY
- LEGAL STATUS
- MAN & WOMAN?
- SUPPORTING ROLE
- BONDING
- SOULMATES

# AGE

- BORN WITH
- THOUGHT PATTERN (CANDLES)
- SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS
- QUALITY
- MEASURED (HUMAN-MADE TIME FRAMES)
- DIF. CALENDAR
- UNIVERSAL CATEGORY
- GENERATIONS

# SIN

UNNATURAL

RELIGION (GOD)

# HETEROSEXUALITY

- MEDIA (FILM, BOOKS, ADS)
- SEX
- GENDER ROLES
- HISTORY & SOC. NORMS
- FAMILY

# EVIL

- IMMORAL

- BAD / GOOD

APPROVED OF / SELFLESS

CODE OF CONDUCT