



Ethnomethodological Misreading of Aron Gurwitsch on the Phenomenal Field

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Editors' Abstract

During the 1992–1993 academic year, Harold Garfinkel (1917–2011) offered a graduate seminar on Ethnomethodology in the Sociology Department at the University of California, Los Angeles. One topic that was given extensive coverage in the seminar has not been discussed at much length in Garfinkel's published works to date: Aron Gurwitsch's treatment of Gestalt theory, and particularly the themes of "phenomenal field" and "praxeological description". The edited transcript of Garfinkel's seminar shows why he recommended that "for the serious initiatives of ethnomethodological investigations [...] Gurwitsch is a theorist we can't do without". Garfinkel's ethnomethodological "misreading" is not a *mistaken* reading, but is more a matter of taking Gurwitsch's phenomenological demonstrations of Gestalt contextures in phenomenal fields and transposing them for making detailed, concrete observations and descriptions of organizationally achieved social phenomena. Where Gurwitsch addresses the organization of perception as an autochthonous achievement, inherent to the stream and field of individual consciousness, Garfinkel extends and elaborates this field into the social world of enacted practices. The April 1993 seminar also is rich with brief asides and digressions in which Garfinkel comments about his use of Alfred Schutz, his attitude toward publishing, his relationship with Erving Goffman, and many other matters.

Keywords Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis · Phenomenology · Embodied action · Gestalt theory · Sociology of perception · Practice theory · Aron Gurwitsch · Harold Garfinkel

Harold Garfinkel (1917–2011)

Clemens Eisenmann and Michael Lynch are the editors of this article. See also the Editors' "Introduction to Harold Garfinkel's Ethnomethodological 'Misreading' of Aron Gurwitsch on the Phenomenal Field" in this issue.

✉ Harold Garfinkel

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GARFINKEL: I want to introduce you to the Gurwitsch article [“The Constancy Hypothesis and its Abandonment”]¹ because the notion of the phenomenal field, of phenomenal detail, of the coherence of detail, of the coherence of objects, all these critical slogans that are motivated, that are giving the point in their origins, are giving the material grounds for talking like that. That way of talking has what I’m calling these perspicuous settings,² these investigations as the thing to do, the things to do, the things that can be done, the things that can be learned, with which then, those slogans take on their character as descriptions. It’s only in that they finally have a descriptive sense to them—that is, they are readably descriptive, they’re useably descriptive—by which I mean, that they can be read instructionally at a worksite, with which to see there, over the course of following, I’ll call it, the praxeologized description, what the phenomenon is that’s thereby revealed. That is where and what kind of a phenomenon: What does a phenomenon consist of as—I’m going to call it—an *instructionably observable revealed phenomenon of practical action?* [...]³

I’m going to be talking about Aron Gurwitsch’s achievement, which we’ll refer to from now on as a transcendental phenomenological criticism of the Gestalt theory of form. That’s the entire slogan. In a word, here’s what the achievement consisted of. The Gestalt theory of form, as it was ‘found out’ and developed by Wolfgang Köhler and Max Wertheimer,⁴ proposed that the coherence of figures, of figurations, consisted of perceptual units, itemized units, given their coherence by an extrinsic principle. So, for example, the coherent perceptual items—that’s in their lingo—found by inspecting this room, would consist then of lines, walls, adjoining each other, arranged in a box-like fashion, a ceiling as a two-dimensional plane overhead, and so on. So, here is now a recitation of perceptual things, perceived lines, perceived walls, perceived joinings, perceived corners. And that they are then arguably, interpretably related, that is to say, they offer the coherence of the room, in its perceived detail, in and as perceived details, in that each of these is then available

¹ Gurwitsch (1964: 87–92). Garfinkel included in the supplementary material he distributed to students for the seminar, the whole Part II, Chapter 1, which later was published in Gurwitsch’s *Collected Works*, Vol III (Gurwitsch 2010: 85–148). The “constancy hypothesis” assumes a point-to-point correspondence between physical stimulations and sensations. Thus, when specific stimulations of sense-organs and the nervous system occur, they will—in a constant relation—give rise to corresponding elements in consciousness (see for an early critique: Smith 1929). Gurwitsch not only rejects this hypothesis, but also criticizes the underlying dualistic conception that treats a grouping of material elements as the ground for the “extrasensorial process” that produces higher-order perception and meaning. Simply put, he also rejects the idea that the same material arrangement of elements (a geometrical figure, a sequence of musical notes, a written word) and their stimuli are constant while the internal or sensory “productions” are perspectival and variable.

² See Garfinkel (2002: 199–202) on “Perspicuous settings: A family of terms”.

³ Garfinkel here digresses from his discussion of Gurwitsch, and addresses an exercise with inverting lenses that he had assigned for members of the seminar to perform in class. The exercise is described in Garfinkel (2002: 207–212), and involves wearing a device that inverts the visual field, and then attempting to perform activities such as writing on a blackboard or taking a folder from the file cabinet. He tells the seminar that he had an insufficient number of devices using prisms, and that they’ll need to use a less effective “cheap solution” using straps and shaving mirrors. Garfinkel returns to this topic later in the seminar.

⁴ See for the main proponents of Gestalt psychology the edited volume by Ellis (1938): *A Source Book of Gestalt Psychology* with foundational chapters by Köhler, Koffka, Wertheimer, and others.

as the appearance of a Euclidian box. You can say that what the Gestalts offered then was the appearance of the room. In order for us to have the room, we had to have then a Euclidian form, a Euclidian box, a Euclidian schema with which, then, the room had as its specifiable appearances, its specifiable perceptual things, this: an appearance of the room. I just finished a recitation of various appearances. The hyphenated thing, the-appearance-of-the-room, was cogent if one had the schema with which to relate these. So, you could have then the-appearance-of-the-room, or you could have the-room-in-its-appearance, or you could have the-approach-to-the-house, or you could have the-house-in-its-approaches. In any case, the big thing that was going on was this distinction between the perceptual appearances-of-the-object, and that these appearances were coherent in the fashion of the object being given as the grounds of that coherence, as the rights to claim the coherence and demonstrate that one then had a schema that had an extrinsic “principle.”

Okay. That was the nifty thing that was going on in the theory of figuration, according to the founders of Gestalt psychology. They got then very much fancier than that. Now, Gurwitsch’s achievement was to provide for the appearance of the room as an endogenous—what he called an “autochthonous”—achievement. We’ll speak more about other properties, or what this was. But the idea was that the coherence of the object was endogenous to what he called its details, its functional significations, its perceptual units. It was found as the salience of the group of data; i.e., the coherence arose and was given in and as the stream of perception and was not needed in an exterior provision. It didn’t then enter the stream of perceiving in order to provide for what the coherence was, but the coherence was already given as the kind of thing the stream consisted of. Our question is, on Gurwitsch’s part, what in detail was he specifying? Why, on what grounds, and why is it that ethnomethodology took its earliest initiatives from, and goes back continually to, his texts, but re-specifies them and misreads his achievement? It’s not that we’re snotty, it’s that his achievement is restricted to paper and pencil drawings, and what ethnomethodology had to deal with was the demand in the studies of action, of practices, the demand for the coherence of achieved organizational or Durkheimian things.⁵ That introduced questions that could not be dealt with by the phenomenology of perceived stick figures. That’s a very large claim. In any case, the idea however is that Gurwitsch’s achievement needs to be in our hands with which to see, whether and why we should put it aside, why we need to remain indifferent to the achievement except under the circumstances when the achievement is cogent, i.e., when you’re dealing indeed with the display of docile figurations; docile meaning that the stuff seen on the presenting surface is not yet the object that we need to be committed to. So, the phenomenology of docile displays, the careful descriptive tasks of exhibiting the details of these displays, in any case of stick figures, is only a tremendously

⁵ Garfinkel is referring to Durkheim’s (1982 [1895]: 60) “first and most basic rule” of sociological method, which “is to consider social facts as things” (emphasis in original). As Garfinkel conceived of them, however, such “things” were to be understood as *accomplishments* in, of, and as concerted practical actions (see Garfinkel 2002).

powerful initiative, but doesn't take us where we want to go. Tonight, I want to tell you about Gurwitsch's achievement.

I think as an aside, I might remind you for your own notes, whether at some time it might come of interest, that for the serious initiatives of ethnomethodological investigations of what I'm calling radical phenomena of order, that Gurwitsch is a theorist we can't do without. From the beginning, pretty much from the time that I got here,⁶ or before that, but let's say, Gurwitsch's book, *The Field of Consciousness*, and of course his later writings, but *Field of Consciousness* was and it remains an indispensable text, whereas Schutz was abandoned sometime in the early, 60s.⁷

STUDENT⁸: I noticed in *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Garfinkel 1967) you referred to Schutz in a number of places. Was it after *Studies in Ethnomethodology* that Schutz was abandoned?

GARFINKEL: I'll tell you a secret about that. All studies in that book were completed almost ten years before the book was published. The article on rationality, for example, was completed in about 1951.⁹ I'm a very slow publisher. Years ago, when I started graduate work I was advised, "Well, the mills of the gods grind slowly and exceedingly fine". I took it to heart. It was a great teacher of mine.

STUDENT: [Talcott] Parsons?

GARFINKEL: No, Parsons used to write a quota of pages each day. Shortly after they were written they were publishable. He didn't publish at a fierce rate, but nevertheless he wasn't hanging around.

I had several good friends who were concerned that I wasn't going to be able to survive in the academy unless I published. In fact, one of them was [Erving] Goffman. Anyone who knew Goffman, when we would get together the first thing that would happen would be the go-around which would be, "What did he do to you?"—meaning, did you see him recently? Yes. What did he do to you. So it was that kind of a friendship. With that kind of a friendship, the thing he would do to me repeatedly would be to tell me, "Harold you're never going to make tenure. You're going to just rot. It'll happen to you that you'll simply get kicked out on your ass. They're not going to keep you around, you don't publish". So, he was instrumental, together with several others, in arranging with Prentice Hall to publish a collection [which became *Studies in Ethnomethodology*]. What they did was to go through some stuff, regardless of when it had been written, and they said, Okay, let's publish this. Included in

⁶ "Here" refers to UCLA, where Garfinkel started his career in the Sociology Department in 1954, almost 40 years prior to this lecture.

⁷ Garfinkel had relied heavily on Alfred Schutz's phenomenological sociology in many of his writings, including *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Garfinkel 1967), which is why the student who raises the question that follows is surprised to hear him say that he "abandoned" Schutz in the early 1960s.

⁸ The original typescript did not identify students by name. When more than one contributes to a particular exchange, they were numbered (e.g., STUDENT2) to differentiate them.

⁹ Garfinkel is referring to his essay, "The rational properties of scientific and common sense activities," which was published in 1960 in the journal, *Behavioral Science* (Garfinkel 1960). Apparently, from what he says here, he initially drafted it almost a decade earlier than that. The same title is used for Chapter 8 of *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (1967: 262–288), and relies heavily on Schutz (1943).

that stuff, there were other things too that were awful, was the Trust paper.¹⁰ The thing that Goffman could never understand, was why the Trust paper was not ethnomethodology. Right up to the time that *Studies in Ethnomethodology* absolutely went to press, he said you have to publish the Trust paper. Goffman was of the idea that the Trust paper was my high-water mark, that there wasn't anything going to happen after the Trust paper, in anything that I or any of the others were fussing with. In the end, when I tried to slow him down, I said but it has nothing to do with ethnomethodology it's just a really nice analytic essay, but it's constructed from beginning to end. That is to say, that anyone reading the Trust paper would recognize immediately that I was Parsons' local agent. I simply continued the lessons that I learned from my teacher. Goffman never understood just what I was insisting on. So, he had other things to denounce me for, like a certain obstinacy and all that stuff.

Okay. So much then for Schutz and Gurwitsch. There are several things you want to take from Gurwitsch's argument. First, the notion of what he calls the functional significations. Second, the relations of these functional significations that he speaks of as relationships of contexture.¹¹ Then their properties: the properties both of the functional significations and of their relations of contexture. I'll speak of these, of course. Then, he's concerned to specify, that is to make demonstrable, to be able to reveal as instructably observable phenomena, the produced coherence of perceived figures. With that as a continual task in hand, he specifies further what he speaks of as the salience of a group of data. Okay. It's for Gurwitsch that the significations—their relations of contexture, the properties of these, the salience of a group of data—specify the produced coherence, the demonstrable, the instructably observable produced coherence of perceived figures. Now, what ethno [ethnomethodology] adds, in addition to a certain misreading of these characteristics, or these characterizing ways of speaking of the coherence of objects, is the probativeness¹² of a group of data.

Gurwitsch speaks about the salience of a group of data. We'll speak about that, I'll specify these in a minute. Ethno adds the probativeness of a group of data. A group of data means a collection of appearances. The notion of group later was given, not by Gurwitsch but by one of his dedicated authors, a man named Patrick

¹⁰ Garfinkel included in the materials he distributed to the students in the seminar a copy of the "Trust paper" (Garfinkel 1963), and a three-page note about that paper in which he said that the "article is a case of formal analysis" which "uses Games-with-rules in the manner of generic representational theorizing to model conditions of stable activities in daily life". He adds in the handout (as he also says here) that he "did not include the article in *Studies in Ethnomethodology* because it is not an ethnomethodological study." He characterized it as an instance of "formal analysis," but added that "various uses can be made of it to teach ethnomethodology with the point of furthering the interests of professional sociology". In a footnote, he added that he uses "professional sociology as a stand-in for the worldwide social science movement".

¹¹ Gurwitsch (1964: 105–116) discusses and visually demonstrates what he means by "gestalt contexture," and "functional significance". Briefly, he states that "[t]he functional significance of each constituent derives from the total structure of the Gestalt" (1964: 115).

¹² Garfinkel returns to the topic later in the seminar. A sense what he means by probativeness is "that an issue can get settled. Straightforward cases of probativeness are found in the natural sciences, in physics, for example" (Garfinkel 2002: 172).

Heelan,¹³ a mathematical interpretation as a mathematical group. Gurwitsch however refused that, at least as far as I know, pretty much to the end of his life. In any case, that can't make a difference. Probableness is added by the ethno investigations, and the produced coherence of objects is also added, and is in great contrast to the transcendental phenomenological treatment and the thing that ethno adds is referred to as this: that the produced coherence of objects is specifically adequate. That's a work requirement as well as a finding. Wherever you hear me speak of "specify" or "specifiable," read instead, "instructably observable".

For the time being, that has to read like an empty glossary. So, don't be alarmed if it sounds like a recitation of empty terms. The point of our exercise, the point of our reviewing how Gurwitsch came upon these recommendations, as well as the point of the inverting lenses and of course other investigations, and the heart of my misery, is that these specifics of the produced coherence of objects must be, I'm sorry to say, in some serious part, merely talked about. We'll look for a miracle.

Okay. I'm going to introduce you then to Gurwitsch's article, and tell you how to read it so that these specifics that I've just finished listing—if you need a name for these specifics, call them the specifics originating with Gurwitsch, initiated by Gurwitsch, made available by reason of Gurwitsch's criticism of the Gestalt theory of form, that these are the specifics of the produced coherence of perceived objects. The general name for the whole thing would be: phenomenal field. But until you take that notion into its specifics, then you'll be trying to make head or tail of Merleau-Ponty on the phenomenal field.¹⁴ Merleau-Ponty does not motivate his claims with actual researches. He does it entirely by rereading the texts of others. That makes one hell of a lot of difference, where the disciplines collected under the rubric of the analytic arts and sciences of practical action, professional sociology being one of these, that their insistence is on the observation, the observability of organizational objects. The Durkheimian things have their champions, have their technical specifications, in the profession which insists that all claims about organizational objects must be available to the observability of those things. So, in the arts and sciences of practical action, social sciences for example, but by no means are they restricted to the academic disciplines, or to the disciplines that are covered by the term "social science".

The idea is that that insistence is consequential beyond belief.

Now, let me tell you about Gurwitsch's achievement. He introduces the notion of functional significations with a deceptively simple diagram;¹⁵ you can call it that. He asks, for this display, how can it be distinguished, or what is it that distinguishes it as a pair of dots, when, alternatively, it can be examined as a display of two dots. Then of course, you could add to it, eyes behind the blackboard staring out at the seminar. And once you catch on to the objects that these can be provided for as

¹³ Patrick Heelan was an Irish physicist and philosopher of modern physics. Garfinkel does not specifically cite a particular article or book of his, but Heelan (1983) takes a phenomenological approach to space and space perception that is quite different from how Garfinkel addresses those phenomena.

¹⁴ The students were assigned to read Merleau-Ponty (1962: 52–63).

¹⁵ Garfinkel is referring to figures in Gurwitsch (1964: 106).

the appearances of, then there's no end. Okay. Now the problem is, the trick, the thing you need to keep your head on your shoulders about, is that you not locate the objects you can find, of which this is an appearance of the object, in heads. What you want to do is to find the object where you can see and be expected to find it in an arrangement of appearances. So, you can't do it if you want to look at brains, but there's nothing in your head but brains. You don't want to go looking for an engram to find out what this looks like. Instead, you want to go to the board and see what's happening with these dots, if that's what you're going to settle for. Gurwitsch said: Well, if you say they're two dots, then you can explicate the appearance of two dots in that, counting them, by putting numerals one and two, can be arranged—can be displayed—in such a fashion that that numbering will remain invariant to indefinite changes of—transformations of—the group. They're given as a group in that they're enumeratedly *one* and *two*; i.e., they're here, like this, like that, and it turns out that how they appear is as well, provided for in this, they're enumerated and thereby it's not that you have a scheme, it's that you have a way of making them visible, or making them observable, or making them instructably so that there are two dots.

Okay. Now he said: Here's an alternative, an alternative object. We'll address the left-hand member of a pair, and that would mean one thing that's instructably observably so. Let me just do that.

[Garfinkel inscribes two dots on the blackboard.]

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Instead of writing it all out, each time we find something, we'll mark it. Here's a first. We find the left-hand member of a pair, talking descriptively. Relative to the left-hand member of the pair, there's a right-hand member of the pair. The right-hand member is to the right of the left-hand member. The left-hand member is to the left of the right-hand member. An interval separates the left-hand member from the right-hand member. To the left of the left-hand member, the background continues indefinitely to the left. To the right of the right-hand member, the background continues indefinitely to the right. We can make that plainer by employing a construction. The construction does not alter the pair. [Garfinkel draws a line through the two dots, connecting them and extending to the right and left of the pair.] What we see by drawing a line through that is that we can extend the line indefinitely to the right. We don't have all the time in the world, so let me just stop with that, we can add more.

Now we'll propose that for each one of these things, Gurwitsch refers to them as functional significations. The thing to notice about functional significations, a fancy word, is that you can use the word "detail" as well. I prefer to speak of detail. But the thing that you'll want to know about the functional significations is that these, what should we call them, details are not reducible to this: Here's a white chalk mark on the board, and we'll say of the white chalk mark that it's a sign or a mark to which we give an interpretation. We assign a significance to it, and we find that as soon as we do that, we lose the coherence of the enumerated details, and of the possibility of using the way we came upon that exhibition to extend this description indefinitely with respect to the inexhaustible detail that it offers. We can say, what

we do with our description is to make it available in an instructed reading. When we do this, you saw me describe in this fashion, here's a list. To read it instructionally means, we'll go about examining, we'll do this, and see how we can now go about elucidating this display as a pair of dots.

Alright. What Gurwitsch proposed then was that the coherence of our display, meaning the coherence of this explication, the coherence of these witnessable or revealed details of the figure was tied entirely to the way of coming upon the more there is to it. We would find it here in and as the worked over revealed details of the display. So, I wouldn't have gone to the trouble, let's say, to say, "see how my brain is working despite the fact that I'm on the verge of a headache". It has nothing to do with that, and nothing to do with a theory of signs. I didn't advise you that these are the first terms, for example, having a sense with which then they refer to the senses used and stand in correspondence to an object that these are its corresponding features of. No, we didn't go to that. What we did instead was to go to the display.

Gurwitsch called these things enumerated here, functional significations. [...] ¹⁶ You see that the right-hand member is the right-hand member of a pair. What we're speaking of is, then, the right and left-hand members of a pair, and an interval that separates the members of the pair. What we're finding then is that this incredible thing called "of-the-pair" is what Gurwitsch calls a relationship of contexture. Not context, because the term context is itself such a vernacular term, that you might be invited to, when you use context, to go searching for a definition of context. No. He's using a well-known blocking device. We'll use a strange term like contextures so that you have to look to the way you come, in any particular case, to the described details. In the description, in the care with which the descriptions are come upon and brought out, and made available for the inspectable looking. Okay. They're given. Not in God's eyes. They're given. You want to see a pair? Here, let's examine this at the worksite.

You have then, what should we call them, the details, the interval, the interval to the right, to the left, the thing that separates them, and so on and so on, and in all this you have of-a-pair. He calls that obstinate recurrence of their bearing on each other, the seeable recurrence of their affinity of their bearing. You can use any term that suits you, since just in any actual case, you need to go back to the figure. You need to be at work with the figure. Even when you remember the figure, you're finally answerable for the adequacy, or the descriptive adequacy, to the figure to which you can always return.

It turned out to be a matter where ethno parted company with Gurwitsch, despite the beauty of his achievement. For him, you could always return to the figure under the doctrine of the so-called ideality of meaning. The thing meant was in the fashion of its meaning, the ideality of its meaning was thereby assuredly self-same. The thing you would turn to over and over again, independently of the phenomenal appearance, was the object as meant, i.e., the object respecified, reduced according to the phenomenological reduction. It wasn't turned into talk, it was turned into the object ideally available to analytically perceiving consciousness. Question: what in

¹⁶ The first side of the audiotape cassette ended here, and a gap occurred before side two began.

the world was a transcendental perceiver? Ethnomethodology, very early adopted, first, a skepticism. Not on its own. There were other authors, like Hubert Dreyfus,¹⁷ who withheld credence about the transcendental perceiver, the transcendental perceiving ego. The transcendental perceptor is the way one phenomenologist, Louis Kattsoff,¹⁸ spoke of it. There was a skepticism. For the time being we'll simply mark that skepticism this way: What in the world is a transcendental perceiver? How in the world does the work of a transcendental perceiver work? What would be its worksite? Where in the world would you go to see just how it is done? I don't think that's a gross version of empirical, since ethno very quickly came up with the policy that any and every topic in the intellectual history was to be respecified, was eligible for respecification as the workings of, and to be found in the great recurrences of, immortal ordinary society. That's where you would go. You'd go to find yourself at work in the practical action of daily life. Well, that's a strange way to do analytic philosophy, but it's not a strange way to do sociology, I find, although I'm about to let it go at that.

Okay. Now we have two of these specifics: functional significations and relations of contexture. I'm going now to review, on Gurwitsch's part, what I'm going to call their properties. In Gurwitsch's investigations, they have the following properties. First, that they're phenomenal details. Either using those square brackets, not consistently, but the idea is, at least for the time being, we're going to talk about phenomenal details as the appearances in specifics. You can also say that they're appearances without requiring, without the benefit of, categorical helpmates. You don't need a theory of categories to recognize phenomenal appearances. You do need other things, but the work of description, just in any actual case, it can be carried out without theorizing. That is to say, without theorizing the details by categorical specification. That does not mean, then, that the great transcendental categories,

¹⁷ Dreyfus studied philosophy at Harvard from 1947, where Garfinkel was a PhD student in the Department of Social Relations from 1946 until 1952. Dreyfus received there an M.A. in 1952 and a Ph.D. in 1964 before going to University of California, Berkeley. "The long interval between Dreyfus' advancement to candidacy and his final degree was punctuated by a series of research fellowships in Europe—at Freiburg, Louvain, and the ENS in Paris—during which he met such figures as Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty. [...] He returned to the States with what was then the unconventional idea of writing a dissertation on transcendental and existential phenomenology" (Kelly 2017). Dreyfus is well known for his works on Artificial Intelligence and Heidegger, starting with "Alchemy and Artificial Intelligence" (Dreyfus 1965), a paper Garfinkel was familiar with and which was initially prepared for a talk at the RAND Corporation in August 1964.

¹⁸ Louis Osgood Kattsoff (1908–1978) taught at the University of North Carolina, while Garfinkel was pursuing his Master's Degree in Sociology there in the early 1940s. Kattsoff (1940) published an article on Husserl and the philosophy of science in the Farber collection (1940) with which Garfinkel was familiar: "The relation of science to philosophy in light of Husserl's thought" (1940 pp. 203–218). In this article Kattsoff aims at "placing the essence of science before that which grasps essences (which we shall later call 'eidetic perceptor')" (1940: 208). He summarizes: "We arrived at the essence of science through the intuition of science as it is exemplified or aimed at in specific instances. We do not intuit this essence through sensory media but rather through some intellectual factor which may be called the 'eidetic perceptor.' The eidetic perceptor is to the essence what the sensory perceptors are to sense qualities and the mental perceptors are to reflections. It is that by means of which the essence is grasped. Eidetic perception is a process which functions only after reflective perception is transcended" (1940: 214).

space, time, and so on, are useless. It's only that just in any actual case, they're not to be imported into the stream of perception, into the stream of work. Not that that's a sin, but what that does is to replicate the world. It gets you two objects you're looking at, when in fact you're only inspecting one.

So, the first thing then that Gurwitsch has as the property of these functional significations is that they're phenomenal details. Second, they specify what he called a substantive content. They have a content. They're not formalized. *Details?* They're *details!* So what did that mean? I'm sounding kind of strident. Well, look, we're speaking of *this* as the left-hand member of a pair. What's the point in forgetting that? We speak of an interval that seeably separates it, and inspectably separates it—an interval is found to separate the two. Then that's a content. How else do you want to speak of it? I could speak of it as a content. Gurwitsch speaks of it as a content. He speaks of it from time to time as a substantive content. The thing that's being insisted on is—[Aaron] Cicourel used to say, "well, aren't things what they appear to be?" That's another bit of lingo. What we need to emphasize, what we need to be reassured about, with each other, is that this doesn't look like a left-hand member. It's *witnessably* a left-hand member. When something is made to *look* like a left-hand member, it looks different. Here we have, on the board a display, a figure available to the evening's topic. But, suppose I had said, now what I want to do is to introduce a figure where this just looks like a pair of dots. And I do that, then will we not then wait to see, well, how does it change in the appearances. The ethno would insist, if it's not going to be changed in what it looks like, then you have kind of an arbitrary way to stick a name on it, to provide for its description. So, we'll wait to hear, well alright, then, what's the import of saying, no, this is a pair of dots, but *this* is a simulacrum.

In the article by Wieder and me,¹⁹ we pay a lot of attention to an exercise called, summoning phones. If you get a chance, and if you can bear it, do that exercise. I would urge that you do the exercise. I will not require it, because I think that would be too much. That would be pedantry of the worst sort. But, if you want to get hold of the thing, then, that's going on here, then the summoning phones exercise zeroes in on the coherence of these objects, so that the phone hearably summoning you and hearably no one else, and hearably anyone knows it, is one object. A phone that's hearably summoning someone else and hearably not you, and hearably everyone knows it, is a second object. A simulation of a phone hearably summoning you is a third object. What you're being asked to do in that exercise, is take your tape recorder and get five episodes of each of these distinguishable objects. Some are straightforward, and some you have simulations for. We'll get back to the summoning phones in time.

So, this second thing is that they specify what I'm calling substantive content. The third is that they're irreducible. That is to say, in their coherence, they can't be reduced without losing the object, or losing the phenomenon, or changing the phenomenon. I don't really like 'changing the phenomenon,' because it gets very sticky, and you have to get to finely specifying: What is this thing that's being promised in

¹⁹ Garfinkel is referring to an assigned reading for students in the seminar: Garfinkel and Wieder (1992).

changing or transformation? You can get really preoccupied by talking a lingo of change and not being able to deliver the goods. But, if you introduce a reduction procedure, if, for example, you provide that we're going to respecify a pair of dots with a procedure that turns the display into a board display using chalk, and the physical properties of chalk on a contrasting background. If you now respecify it you lose what Gurwitsch offered as the coherence of the pair of dots.

STUDENT: This sounds like it's against Goffman's primary frame and keys of frames.

GARFINKEL: Don't get me into that. Yes, of course. It's not that it's against; it's that Goffman is into a different enterprise. He's into an analytic enterprise in which he's explicating; he's finding objects in the world already provided for with an apparatus that he brings to his investigation from entirely outside the occasions in which those objects have been produced by the members. So, for him, the members are not a source. Their ordinary work was handled, was managed, it was dealt with, by the arts and the privileges of what I'm going to call the transcendental sociologist. The privileges are these: that the first thing you can do with a certain design by the transcendental analyst is to find good reasons for paying no further attention to embodied action. Bodies are simply the greatest nuisances in the world. How can you provide for the consistency and coherence and comparability, the great requirements of evidence? I.e., Goffman was in love with the rule governed character of ordinary action with which to satisfy the achieved requirement, in the social sciences, of specifying ordinary society as rule governed action. Well, for that, he made great use of a theory of signs, of symbols, but bodies were simply a pain in the neck, and so were the local historicities of action a pain in the neck. So, you get these inventions on top of inventions, until finally you're engaged in very educated data, and very educated lingo. When I say finally, I mean there's still another way the worldliness of ordinary activities can be found to work. It's not the only way in the world. That is, the arts of analytic inquiry. I'm not putting down it's achievements. We'll find out later, if there's time, indeed, that these achievements are pointless to dispute. The question is not whether we can come upon their achievements, but what the two technologies have to do with each other. How are they related as themselves worldly stuff?

Okay. So, here it is that they say they can't be reduced without losing the phenomenon; if one is to say, reduce it by introducing a theory of the physical properties of parameters of the display. You can do it biologically, you can do it by preferring a theory of signs and symbols. There are endless ways of inventing readers, of inventing perceivers, of inventing cognizers, even of machine-like cognizers. And what we want to do then is to carry out our investigations while remaining indifferent to reduction procedures. It's not that we would never use a reduction procedure. You can use a dream, as far as that's concerned. You can use the most insane version of the workings of the world, since, as Wittgenstein urged, you go where the mushrooms are growing, as long as it remains interesting. This project of specifying the work of the produced appearances of ordinary organizational things, then of course you'll use a reduction procedure. What you don't want is for the reduction procedure to take over your data. You don't want to have to remain faithful to the reduction procedure if you're going to have to lose the salience of the group of data.

If you have to move away from the endogenous achievement of that coherence, then it's like introducing an absurdity into your work. Of course, you can do it, but why would you want to? It's not that you want truth's way, and you're just the purest souls in all the world, it's that it's an enterprise that Gurwitsch has opened up, with which to examine the produced coherence of organizational arrangements, organizational objects. Then, if you use a reduction procedure, it's a different enterprise. You wouldn't want to be caught with a charge of inconsistency. *Of course* you're going to be inconsistent. If you ever do any actual work, that's what you're going to have to live with. So it's not that you'll be inconsistent, it's that you'd be changing the direction and the aims of your work. You'll want to know then, or you'll want to be answerable to the question: *of course* you can reduce the coherence of that achievement to the workings of engrams, to the microbiobiochemical workings, say of brain configurations. Now tell me, why would you want to do that? I'm not saying, "Dopey, why do you want to do that?" That's not the question. The question is, for reasons, why would you want to do it, since you're courting this: the absurdity of the workings addressed to explicating that achieved coherence as worldly work.

Okay. Another property then is that they're irreducible. The coherence is irreducible. The pair of dots, say, is irreducible. Now, another property is what Gurwitsch spoke of as the *autochthonous* coherence of the figure. Autochthonous means two things: one thing provided by Gurwitsch; a second provided by the ethno studies of the work of the natural sciences. *Saliency* of a group of data means that the affinity of the functional significations, the affinity of details, the coherence of details, arises endogenously in the stream of analysis, in the stream of perception, in the stream of work. It is not imported into that stream. For that stream, we're not talking about it in an educated way, we're talking instead of *in vivo*, *in-courseness*, and so on. Those of you who like to speak of "the streamings of this and that" need to be a little cautious. The stream of consciousness is a wide-ranging favorite. "Process" is another wide-ranging favorite. My advice by way of researching the matters that you'll be dealing with, is that you think of the unavoidable temporal *in-courseness* of a doing, of what you're doing. I'm not urging on you, nor is Gurwitsch urging anywhere, the thing that in some quarters is spoken of as the moment-by-moment details. If you want to lose your life, try theorizing around that proposal sometime. We're not talking about a version, say, of a clock. Think of it for the while as a straightforward unavoidable irremediable temporality of work just in any actual case. Working, if you like that. If you want to go to your car, you need to get up from your chair and go to your car. There's a certain kind of familiarity to the hopeless stepwise achievement of that journey. You can try crawling, which is another way to get there. Another way you can get there is to imagine you're going to get there by dreaming it. And in each case then, the idea of the saliency of the group of data speaks of that endogenous revealing, uncovering, arising: the endogenous arising of the affinity of detail. The thing that's really wild about the notion of saliency is that it resists talk about it. So, if you're in fact to come to terms with it, then you need to land in the midst of projects. One hell of a good way to do it is in fact to learn something you don't know how to do yet, like go to the store, buy a kid's toy, dump the stuff out on the table, preferably with a kid nearby who wants you to get it done, and do it. Then there will be no mysteries about the endogenous arising in the stream of the work, of

the coherence of the object. You put together that airplane, you didn't put the pilot in until after you had the two halves of the fuselage cemented, and your kid is screaming, holy hell, it's not the airplane that he wants. Where's the pilot! Then you understand, the coherence of the airplane arose in a course of work that the child detects and points out to you is a gross mistake, and so on.

Okay. That's for the salience. We'll be returning very frequently to that salience. Now I'll add another property. That is what I call the probativeness of a group of data. By the probativeness is meant the endogenous, smooth, uninterrupted, accountable sequence from beginning to end, pointing to its terminal availability, and terminally available finally as an instructably observable sequence. So, we have the notion of the unavoidable sequentiality as the smooth, uninterrupted, accountable sequentiality from beginning to end, and that it's instructably observable. That's what disengages, that's what arises. And we call that, probativeness.

The probativeness comes from some work that we did in the discovering work in the natural sciences, where we chose it in order to emphasize this: that the steps, the revealed endogenous coherence of the object as steps, is pointless to dispute. Don't take that ontologically. Take it descriptively and for the time being as suggestive, not ontologically definitive. No, no, no! But ask instead, well, where does the great cogency of analytic representations, diagrammatic representations, for example, of the stepwise achievements of projects come from? It can't come from the diagram, because you'd have to say: if you can diagram it, once you get it on paper, that's it. That's being careless. So, here's what the probativeness is meant to emphasize, even to exaggerate: that an issue gets settled; meaning, in the natural sciences, you can have a dispute that can go on for years. Then somebody does a research, after which the dispute is said to be settled, meaning you can't carry it on in the former terms of the dispute. That's something that happens with great density in the bibliographies of the natural sciences, but so far as I've been able to find out, probativeness doesn't happen in the social sciences. Because you don't have disputes that go on for years, after which somebody does a research, and then that dispute is understood to be settled, meaning you can't carry it on any longer. Well, we wanted probativeness to speak to this of that endogenous stream, that there emerges the available stepwise achievement of the matter, of the coherence of the matter. That emerged stepwise coherence is available in endless diagrammatic and discursive provisions. No matter how you exploit the diagrammatic, the photogrammatic, the filmic, the discursive, the narrative, the storyable character of the achievement, the achievement escapes. Then the question is, well, just in any actual case, in and as of the worksite specifics, what does the probativeness for what it consists of look like? That's what ethno wants to insist that we zero in on. Not to the exclusion of other properties, but that it not be forgotten. That it not be forgotten, for example, by the sheer popularity, the sheer hegemony, of sequential representations of ordinary action. I'm not saying that those representations are false, I'm saying they're merely absurd. They are used and carried on for the achievement of ordinary objects while losing the very phenomenon that the technical care is used to demonstrate. With the very care with which the technical demonstration is done, the phenomenon is lost.

Well, you're just hearing me talk about that. You need to be a little careful. Hold it in abeyance for a while. Say, "okay, Garfinkel is insistent that formal analytic

treatments of probativeness lose the phenomenon”. Question: where in the world would we go, what investigations would we undertake, what are the perspicuous settings in which that probativeness is specifically the phenomenon we want to examine? The reason why ethnomethodology, at least in the last ten years, has zeroed in on the so-called discovery work of the natural sciences is because there the probativeness is a practical achievement, no questions about it. Which is to say, it doesn’t respond to diagrammatic representations which are then used, say, in the ways of discursive elaboration of sequence, but you must, as of the worksite, with just this equipment, with just this gang of you, get the phenomenon out of these instruments again. It must be instructably observable, and it must be done in what we frequently refer to as, in satisfaction of unforgivingly strict sequences. Computing science is very interesting, because its sequences are in fact dramatically unforgiving. I have a quarrel with Mike Lynch who thinks that I’m making too much of unforgiving sequences in the other natural sciences, like chemistry for example. It’s a nice quarrel. It’s really worth it. It’s very instructive to have a quarrel like that going.²⁰

OK. So that’s the salience and the probativeness of those properties. Now I want to give you one more property, and then we’ll have to call it off. That the achieved coherence is instructably observable and adequately described, then, means that the descriptions can be formulated as what we’re going to call either pairs or *Lebenswelt* pairs. So to say that a phenomenon is instructably observable means that the description can be read to provide for two segments. One, a collection of instructions, and second, the way of working, the way of following which, turns those instructions into a precise description of the pair of the two, not of the object. [...].²¹

[...] the lingo [of instructions] is its own mixture of descriptive stuff and straight out instructions. Now, we’ll speak of, let’s try a recipe for oatmeal. I’m great with a recipe for oatmeal. There would then be the coherence of the object, instructably, observably prepared oatmeal. OK. Then that recipe could be read to provide for two segments of a pair. One would be the recipe as a collection of instructions, and then a second segment, the work of following which turns that first segment into a precise description of the pair; of the first segment and the work of following it. That’s the object. And “adequately described” then collects conditions of the worksite achievement of an object for which a pair makes the object instructably observable. Well, we’re going to do an exercise with occasion maps, in which that high-flown talk will finally be put aside, and you’ll then find yourself, say, in the midst of a way-finding journey, doing the work of a way-finding journey by following a map. And with that, all these tremendously lovely objects like, mistakes, errors, followability, complete description, jokes, landmarks, origin of the journey, terminus of the journey, then will be found as the endogenous achievements of following the map as a

²⁰ The “quarrel” that Garfinkel mentions here had to do with Garfinkel’s emphasis on “unforgivably strict sequences” in laboratory work. Lynch (1985) argued on the basis of his observations of laboratory work in neurobiology that there is considerable variation in the way even well-established techniques are performed from one practitioner to another, and from one circumstance to another. Less than optimal results are not necessarily discarded, and repairs often can be made to salvage “usable” results for analytical purposes if not for public presentation. Also see Jordan and Lynch (1992).

²¹ The recording ends abruptly here, and resumes in mid-sentence in the following paragraph.

detail of the work of the way-finding journey. That's an ethno problem, it's an ethno phenomenon.²²

That's for the pair; well, the world is wild with pairs. You'll soon see that for ethno, any description can be misread, can be reread, to provide for as an instructably achievable object, that is, the object described. In the sciences, both the natural and the social sciences, the stock and trade, the pride of profession, is to be able to read descriptive accounts praxeologically, i.e., to reread descriptions, to misread descriptions so that they're read as instructed actions. That raises then the question of another contrasting pair, the *Lebenswelt* pair.²³ And the *Lebenswelt* pair, then, are those pairs where the first segment, the collection of instructions, must be discovered, they're only discoverable. They can't be stipulated, they can't be imagined, but they're only discoverably the case.

Eric Livingston's thesis on the work of proving Gödel's theorem, had as its achievement, that Gödel's theorem which consisted of a schedule of 37 theorems and their accompanied proof accounts, was in the work of proving, the first segment of a *Lebenswelt* pair.²⁴ He found and specified as the work, in the work, of mathematical proving, proving the existence of *Lebenswelt* pairs. Those instructions are to be found in mathematical treatises. They're first segments. Euclid's elements is a treatise that consists of the first segments of the objects that it provides for as instructably provable, that is to say, as precisely describable objects in Euclidean Geometry. Well, then they have certain properties, but we won't get into them now.

Now what we've done, is we've gone through the Gurwitschian functional significations, and I've introduced as well, ethno extensions, revisions of sorts. I'm going to use the term *phenomenal field* to speak of organizational objects specified as the produced coherence of objects in phenomenal details. The problem is always to provide for the achieved produced coherence of organizational objects. The catalog of ethnomethodological investigations is a catalog of what I'm calling *perspicuous settings*, or organizational objects, or cases, or tutorial problems.

Well, now I've had you going for almost two hours. I would like to take about a ten- or fifteen-minute break, and if you're up to it, then in that last hour I'll give you your shaving mirrors and some warnings and some straps and some wry advice about what you might use them for. I hope then that that will bring together both the promise and the misery of trying to use awful make-shift, make-do devices to get at the Gurwitschian properties of ordinary tasks. The big achievement of ordinary tasks is the embodiedly achieved aptness and efficacy of the most ordinary jobs in the world, like: going to the board and writing your name, for example, or finding a book on the shelf, or scanning the file case for just the file you're looking for, and so on.

²² Numerous ethnomethodological studies have examined the work of following directions and occasion maps (sketch maps prepared for the occasion of a particular journey), for example: Psathas (1979); Garfinkel (2002: 197–218); Liberman (2013).

²³ See Garfinkel (2002: 187–190) for a "synoptic account" of *Lebenswelt* pairs.

²⁴ Garfinkel is referring to Livingston (1986).

Fig. 1 Roger Price's "doodle":
"Two corpuscles who loved in
vein"



[Garfinkel proposes a ten-minute break in the seminar, and after the break a student refers to the inverting lens exercise with the proxy mirror instrument that Garfinkel mentioned at the start of the seminar. The recording ends, and resumes in the midst of a student comment.]

STUDENT: [...] it was easier than I thought it would be.

GARFINKEL: That's the damn trouble with the mirrors. It's just a lousy instrument. [...] Maybe I'm doing the wrong thing by even giving it to you, because I might produce a lot of prejudiced parties. All this big play comes down to a mirror that shows nothing.

STUDENT: Well, that would be a phenomenon in itself.

GARFINKEL: No. It looks like it could be a way out, but it's not.

STUDENT 2: When you were talking about the dots. Do you remember a character named Roger Price? (Fig. 1)²⁵

GARFINKEL: Yes.

STUDENT 2: He was an editor. He said, so what is that? It's two corpuscles who loved in vein. He played on that humor, and had these things going for ages, doing all these things in which the pattern was different.

GARFINKEL: Yes. See, the difference between addressing the produced coherence of these figures as a matter of pattern finding, like looking at the clouds—"Do you see anything in the clouds? Sure." There's pattern finding on the one hand. At least there's a contrasting way of providing for that intractable endogenous achievement, as compared with something that we're trying to do here, which is to make these achievements of the great recurrences of practical action problematic. We want to provide that they're problematic as to what kind of work is involved that makes them up.

²⁵ Roger Price was an author and humorist who published series of books such as *Mad Libs* and *Doodles*.

[Further exchange with student omitted here, tape ends, and resumes below.]

Here's a page of typing that Stacy Burns did—this, as part of a demonstration. We were repeating Sudnow's demonstration.²⁶ That thing that I discussed last week, when I said *in vivo* has two constituents. One is the followability, the recognizability, of a line of typing, the work of typing, what I'm calling, thoughtful words and other things. You can think of that as "making sense," although I'm very uneasy with that way of talking. Now you can see what's available in this document, or what you find in the document is that the Gurwitschian details are partially and misleadingly available. What you find you're doing if you read through this [typed line] is that you'll be imagining what she must have been doing, which is to say, you introduce the interpreted significance of this residue record. It's the record afterwards, when you pull the thing out of the typewriter, and now you have a residue account of what otherwise was the witnessable work of typing thoughtful things.

Well, the phenomenal field, then, is already incorporated in the witnessed matter that we we're now left with. We can be assured that at the time she was doing it, I mean just in any actual case, that she was talking about a pause, she was also exhibiting the pause she was talking about, that this was happening in various witnessable ways in their details all the way through this produced text, and that all of it was witnessably so with no mystery attached to it. Then afterwards, we're doing detective work, and the things that were otherwise witnessable and given in their first-hand coherence of developing detail, are only now available as the "sense" of that, meaning, well, if we do the detective work, we're then into the extensive, what shall we call it, discursive elaboration of hieroglyphics. They're really not hieroglyphics, are they. Nevertheless, think of it like this, that there are some occasions of work in the world when you must be in the direct presence of the course of that developing field, the in-courseness of it, because otherwise you lose the phenomenon that you're after. That's not what you want. What you want in fact is to be in the direct presence of the in-courseness. Well, in the history of the social sciences, let alone many of the philosophic disciplines, *in vivo*, *in actu*, lived, living, streaming, are the beginning of terminological, discursive provisions for what we're providing for here as the specifics of *in vivo*.

STUDENT: Doesn't writing about something inherently lose the *in vivo* quality of it simply [...]?

GARFINKEL: Well, I'm not sure that it does. It depends on what the writing consists of, at least that's my hunch. What you'll find in the Bjelic and Lynch article is that here the writing is complete.²⁷ If you read the text with the prism, then the

²⁶ Stacy Burns' demonstration consisted in a video recording of a text she was in the course of typing with an electric typewriter, along with her running commentary on what and how she was typing. The exercise demonstrated the difference between the course of typing, with its pauses, mistakes, corrections, and so forth, and the coherence and order of the typed "residue document". The reference is to a similar demonstration by Sudnow (1979).

²⁷ Garfinkel is referring to an article by Bjelic and Lynch (1992) that includes a series of figures adapted from Goethe's (1970 [1840]) argument against the Newtonian theory of colors. To appreciate the argument Goethe makes, readers need to examine a sequence of black-and-white figures by peering through a prism that reveals color fringes at the edges of the figures. Garfinkel included the text in the assigned readings distributed to students in the seminar.

text itself, the work of reading, exhibits the phenomenon that the text describes. So that's already a phenomenon. In fact, we speak of it as the praxeological validity of instructed action. It's present in the way of reading the Bjelic and Lynch article. It's a nifty achievement of that article. We talk about the *work* of reading the article *exhibits* the phenomenon that the text describes. Well, there are other occasions, other worldly things where a comparable, not an interchangeable, not the same, but *comparable*—there's something now to compare it with—where again, the work of reading exhibits the phenomenon the text describes. For example, Barbara Herrnstein Smith talks about reading a poem aloud, and she says then of a poem that's read aloud, that the poem then doesn't correspond to the poem that's being read, but that it exhibits the poem that's being read, which is to say that the lines are conventional instructions for exhibiting the poem that reading it shows.²⁸ So you have to read it aloud to see what the devil, what in the world she's ever talking about. It's no mystery then that you can have it any day of the week, with either yourself or a small company reading a play. If you read it to yourself, then you'll miss the phenomenon. As soon as you get into using the scenario, then you're into a comparable thing.

Well, I'm convinced that the study of publications and their worksite followability in the labs of the natural sciences, as you find for example, let's say, in a course in undergraduate chemistry, with its lab manuals, if you take them into the lab, let alone, that you hang around a lab, say a lab where discovering work is going on. The natural sciences are just endless goldmines of just exactly that kind of work, where their texts and their talk are these instructions, these texts that are done and read; where the work of attending them, of following them, exhibits the phenomenon. It reveals, it shows, you're coming to the presence of the phenomenon that reading thereby makes available as the text can be used to describe it. The text can be used to describe it has nothing to do any longer with correspondence to the phenomenon. You can distract your inquiry by thinking that the text stands in some kind of adequate correspondence to the phenomenon that it describes. But the achievement in the labs is no, they're not propositional correspondence. These birds couldn't be less interested in propositional structures and that whole correspondence procedure, but they're absolutely, without relief, they're insistent upon instructed actions.

STUDENT 3: Isn't walking and driving the same kind of thing?

GARFINKEL: What I want to do is introduce the relevance of texts. Not of any old texts, but texts that, in their reading, they are praxeologized. The work of reading is the work of finding, as of the followability of the text that it provides for an instructed action, an action in and as of the course of it being accountably this: "start here, next do this, do that after that, followed by, use this piece of equipment, by the end of such and such, here's what you'll have." I find that to be, just an incredibly beautiful *gist* of practical action, and offers up, my God, what in the world, what of the workings of the world, do instructions and their followability, their completeness, their consistency, their sufficiency, what kind of gorgeous provisions are

²⁸ Garfinkel does not cite a particular source from Barbara Herrnstein Smith's extensive writings on poetry and many other subjects. One pertinent source is an early article by Smith (1975, especially pp. 785ff.).

these as the workings, in situ of an accountable achievement of the phenomenon; say, “making the phenomenon available” again. The thing that’s really nice about the social sciences, is that, with their emphasis on it, they’ve been roasted to a fare-thee-well for their preoccupation with methods, but think of that preoccupation as a kind of ubiquitous concern for the instructable—that is, the instructably observable—character of the work. Which is to say, issues of adequacy have to do with instructably observable phenomena. They want to get in again for its demonstrable, its revealable character. The question is, alright then, as the day’s work, what does it consist of? Not only the day’s work, the most *ordinary* achievement, what does it consist of? I think you’ll find that if you ask these birds, they can’t tell you. Oh yeah, they tell you, they get dignified very fast. They’re perfectly willing to cite the canon. Hell, we all know the canon. Within the first two weeks of graduate school we learn the canon, so that can’t be what the enterprise is about. Of course, if it were, you could all demand your degrees. What’s this insane insistence that you do a research of your very own?

Well, here we are at an excursion again. I’m going to take Bob’s advice. He advised me at the break: Don’t distribute these mirrors. Didn’t you?

STUDENT: No.

GARFINKEL: Sure, you did.

STUDENT: You inferred that, from what I said.

GARFINKEL: What he did was he gave me fair warning. Go, tell us.

STUDENT: I went home, and I tried to use one of these a couple weeks ago. When you talked about getting a glass of water. I did it right after class. You said, I want to hear about this. You turned on the tape recorder and I said, well, it’s not really that interesting, because it wasn’t that difficult. I guess the point is that this is supposed to turn your world around and you feel confused, it’s difficult to adapt to, and then in trying to adapt to it you see the world in a different way.

GARFINKEL: No. That’s not what the mirrors are about. I’ll simply tell you, look, we’re not interested in something called the adaptation problem. How long would it take you to get proficient. How long would it take you?²⁹

STUDENT: That’s what I was saying the problem was.

GARFINKEL: Can you solve it? Can you get comfortable with the ordinary task of simply drawing water from a tap, even though you’re looking at it upside down. No, that’s not what the inverted lenses are about. I’ll call them lenses rather than the mirror, although, in the history of the work on the adaptation problem, very

²⁹ The adaptation problem with the inverting lens was of interest to psychologists, and also, though for different reasons, Merleau-Ponty (1962) in *Phenomenology of Perception*. The problem was to explain or interpret the results of experiments in which subjects wore the inverting lens continuously, and after a couple of days of doing so would adapt to the upside-down world by seeing it right-side-up. Garfinkel was more interested in the immediate disruptions to fluent embodied action engendered by wearing the lenses. Garfinkel also used the inverting lens exercise in the seminar during the previous year (1992), as he did in many other years. He said at that time, regarding the troubles with doing a routine embodied task: “So it becomes a curious kind of instructably observable loss of the coherence of that detail. Not in principle, but via the embodied work, that assures, with the lenses on, that you can’t do it. Not that you can’t ever do it, that you can’t ever do it again, that’s nonsense.”

frequently mirrors have been used, again for the same reasons that we're trying to use them, or I'm thinking that there's still a hope that we can use them. They're cheap. So, one way to get the inverted field is to wear a cap, and then get a mirror and put the mirror on the cap, and then block the forward view, so that now you have to look ahead, but you have to look ahead by the reflection through the mirror, which inverts the field. It's a cheap solution. I went looking for a flat mirror that I could do that with. By the time I got into the problem of how do I cut the glass so that I'm simply not slicing noses or doing other awful things.

In any case, the idea: no, what the inversion does is it presents you with a familiar scene. It looks like the same old thing, except that it's upside-down, until you try to do something with it. And then what happens is that the mirror—the mirror less dramatically [...] than the inverting lenses—*washes out* the coherence of phenomenal detail. That's what the lenses are good for, if they work. If they don't work, then they introduce disappointment, consternation, the kind of thing *you* came on, which is, what's the big deal?

So, for example, one of the early procedures that we used with the lenses, I think I might have told you. Maryann's at the end of this garden, Jerry's at the other end, there's a low wall between them that runs alongside.³⁰ Maryann has the mask on, and Jerry does this: he says, "Maryann, sit over there." He points to a place on the wall, and Maryann complains, and says, "I can see Jerry but I don't know where he is." That's her way of talking. What she's saying is that, though he's pointing, and she knows that a pointing finger has a destination, she can't see the destination, she can't see it as the singular unique destination that he's pointing to. She knows that he wants her to sit somewhere on the wall, alongside. Well, she knows that it's alongside, but he's pointing and saying, "I want you to sit there," and she can't find, with the lenses on, what "there" looks like from where she's standing to see, Jerry, this positioned body. She doesn't see a positioned body, she sees a body, having a position of some sort, but with no coherent direction, and no destination, and nothing about the way he's standing alongside the wall with which this gesture points definitely and without equivocation to a place.

The lenses simply don't make that available except in this way: she goes to what she calls, "I'm coding Jerry," meaning she's rethinking the visual field to find Jerry upside down, standing at a distance that she now can see as a distance without phenomenal details. So, she's alongside the wall and she's patting the wall. There's a photograph I have to see the whole sequence. She's saying "here?" He says "no." "Here? No. Here? Yes." The distance is something like that. He's about the distance to the end of the table.

STUDENT2: I think what you do is reconstruct the phenomena. You put the person at one point, you determine where they are, you start thinking about some- you

³⁰ This example is described in Garfinkel (2002: 209), and the facing page (p. 208) includes two pictures of the student wearing a mask. The mask the student wore in the photos was one that Garfinkel made by mounting an Army surplus tank prism into a welder's mask. He preferred those masks to the mirror device he constructed in order to have a sufficient number of them for the seminar, and which he found inferior.

find a point where you can make an objective delineation between left and right, up-down whatever it is.

GARFINKEL: Yes. The thing that the lenses are good for, and that these mirrors would be good for, if I had the guts to try them with you, and now I don't think I do. I think the thing that we could learn with them is just too damned important to get it lost in, say "Well OK, I see upside down but so what?"

But let me offer you some really wild things that you can get reminded of. Let's say, what the lenses do is to introduce what Kenneth Burke spoke of as a "perspective by incongruity."³¹ It's the same familiar world, so what? Now, there's introduced into this, just how the familiar world is available to a body that's transparent in its maneuverings, and in its various embodied doings: pointing, grasping, moving, walking in synchrony with a companion, walking continuously, going to the board to write your name, finding a place to start, going to a filing cabinet to find a file, going to a bookcase, turning to a companion, telling the companion, "this is the book I was telling you about." Pointing singularly, directly, unmistakably, so that the companion in fact sees, and not only sees, but in the instant the pointing is done, and the task finished. Then with our perspective by incongruity, we see what an incredible achievement the coherence of a field of persons and movements and actions and jobs, what a tremendously ongoing achievement, not worth anybody's second mention. And coherent across- I have to speak about a field, because it's not an isolated thing like a book in the bookcase.

The bookcase is made up of an alignment of books, where, when you see them, according to a Euclidean version of them, then it's a linear arrangement that satisfies, in good enough approximation, a plan or arrangement of books. They all, for example, come more or less within an inch or so of the edge of the shelf. But, in an arrangement of phenomenal details, the books are made up of facings, up against each other. As soon as you see them like that, then the next thing you know, you're in my office, you see a line of files. The Euclidean character of the files is only a conventional transcendentalized version of what, of our ordinary objects, these consist of with full provision for the curious thing that bodily perspectives and aspects and approaches are, as part of that field. Well, in an Euclidean version of our offices, for example, or of our seminar, the standing achievement of perspectives and aspects and approaches, that these are chained to bodily positions, that left and right and up and vertical. The thing that's really wild about the masks is that you now see that vertical is not just a line up the sagittal plane of the body, but it's seeably up, and straight up. In order to specify that, you have to then be able to find it, over and over again, with respect to arrangements of [...].³²

Put the damn mask on and go ranging around in the world. See what they can possibly be. Because nobody, as far as I know, the psychologists least of all, are prepared to instruct, or to make instructable, what kind of strange arrangements the familiar coherent presence of the directional and orientational features of objects

³¹ See Kenneth Burke (1964).

³² A gap in the recording occurred here while the cassette tape was changed.

consists of. So, that's what Gurwitsch is about, that's what traffic is about, that's what the queues are about. To say, in each case.

In the traffic article, Herman does this incredibly neat examination of the travelling wave.³³ What happens is that he has to settle for indicators in order to give the cops good advice at the Hudson tunnel. Check the flow for two minutes. So, you let approximately 40 cars pass under some typical rate of flow, and you hold the traffic back then so that something like two minutes has elapsed before you permit the second platoon to follow. So, here he got a solution in which he had the causal character of that flow, but that wasn't what he was interested in. He was interested in what advice to give to the cops to produce an increased overall flow. It's a production problem. So from the helicopter you could see the travelling wave. His photographs are in fact helicopter photographs. In order to establish that you had a travelling wave, you'd have to get up in the helicopter to see it. Okay. But in order to give the production problem, you have to know it from the helicopter that there is such a travelling wave, and you now have to deal with it *locally*, that is to say, in the endogenous production of the thing then that's unmistakably available from the helicopter. It's not the aggregate assemblage that's available; it's the same phenomenon, except that at the production, Herman is trying to get it controlled, so he has to be able to advise the cops. Finally, he settles for his indicators, and we're left now with the outside problem that we all can jump on our motorcycles or get in our automobiles and go looking for, which is, you all know where to find a freeway.

Well, get in the car, and see if you can't find, what did the phenomena of the flow look like that Herman, to this day has no idea he's dealing with, but the drivers can't do the work of driving, and the engineers know it, unless they are doing it with the Gurwitschian details we're talking about. You want a problem until we meet on Friday? Try it. The thing that the lenses will do is simply make available immediately what the local coherence of that detail consists of. You'll see the distance, for example, a separation between a follower and the car ahead as properties that Herman theorizes, like he's already talking about the responsiveness and sensitivity of the following car to the car ahead. How quickly does he respond? And so, what you have is the beginning of a characterization of what in fact the coherent phenomenal detail is, that the driving exhibits. The driving is not a separate driver's work. That's the thing that's so wild about traffic flow, is that it's a cohort, it's a travelling company, and they're providing for each other's seeably safe and uninterrupted passage. What does that consist of as work? That's what that Gurwitschian detail attempts to get at. If it's not in the coherence of those phenomenal details, then where do you think it's going to be? In the stimulus/response structures? He doesn't get anywhere near it. He has to depend on that coherence in order that his stimulus/response structures would result at least in these beautiful curves that come out in the calculable character of the flow structures where, again, the causal conditions of the flow are available to Herman, but the beautiful absurdity of that research is that the very elegance of his technical procedures loses the very phenomenon he's out to specify.

³³ See Herman and Gardels (1963). The text was also included in the assigned readings distributed to students in the seminar.

I don't mean therefore that Herman is an absurd theorist or that traffic engineering is an absurd enterprise. I shouldn't really speak of absurdities, I should talk about an alchemical achievement where the notion of the alchemical achievement is that in the very way in which the phenomenon is specified technically, and in the very way it's demonstrated, the phenomenon is itself lost, and the theorists know it.

That's a lot of damn claiming to make, to substitute for the actual mirrors. I'm going to make one more attempt before we meet again on Friday to get a better solution. If there's no better solution on Friday I'll give you the mirrors. Take them away. Good bye, good luck.

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Compliance with ethical standards

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