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Alfred Schutz

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The sociologist and philosopher Alfred Schutz is the major representative of a phenomenologically based sociology. Using Edmund Husserl's phenomenology he established the epistemological foundations of Max Weber's sociology of understanding. He created the basis for a methodology of qualitative social science and most significantly developed a theory of the life-world. In establishing a specific conception of the life-world, Schutz was able to combine a theory of knowledge and relevance with a theory of social action. He also succeeded in developing a theory of the sign and symbol and a unique methodological perspective to serve as a basis for this entire paradigm.

Schutz was born in Vienna on April 13, 1899. After spending his high school years at the Esterhazy Gymnasium in Vienna, he served in the Austrian army during World War I. His deployment in the army was followed by law studies at the University of Vienna with renowned figures such as Hans Kelsen and Ludwig von Mises. As a war veteran he was admitted to an accelerated study program allowing him to rush through a four-year curriculum in two and a half years (Wagner 1983: 8). In 1921, upon receiving his doctorate in law with a focus on international law, he became executive secretary of the Austrian Bankers' Association; in 1929 he joined the Reitler Bank. Schutz remained with this company when he emigrated with his family to France in 1938 and the United States in 1940 (Kersten 1997: 636). In order to ensure financial security for his family and to support friends who had emigrated to the United States because of the threat of German National Socialism, Schutz continued his work as a banker. As such his biography is characterized by a double life; the philosopher Edmund Husserl portrayed him "as a banker at daytime and a phenomenologist at night." In 1943, he obtained a part-time teaching job at the New School for Social Research in New York City. It was only from 1956 that he was able to dedicate himself full-time and exclusively to his academic career. Many

health difficulties, especially chronic heart disease, were the cause of his untimely death on May 20, 1959 (Barber 2004: 217).

During his Viennese years, Schutz's most significant academic experiences occurred while he was a member of the interdisciplinary "Mises Circle" (Eberle 2009). There he formed friendships with important intellectuals who included, among others, economists Gottfried von Haberler, Friedrich A. von Hayek, Fritz Machlup, and Oskar Morgenstern, philosopher Felix Kaufmann, and political scientist Eric Voegelin. The social scientist who had a major influence on Schutz during that time was Max Weber (especially through his methodological reflections). Weber had lectured in Vienna in 1918 and achieved significant popularity there, and influence on Viennese intellectuals (cf. Barber 2010). Examination of Max Weber's work was decisive for Schutz in establishing his sociological focus, even though he dealt with Weber's considerations from a critical perspective. Specifically, Schutz confronted Weber's basic methodological focus which defined sociology as the science of social action "insofar as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to his behavior" (Weber [1921] 1978: 4). From a Schutzian perspective, these fundamental assumptions in relation to the conception of the sociological discipline required further epistemological foundations; Schutz's major task included a search for the philosophical foundations of Max Weber's methodological individualism. Although challenging the Weberian position in relation to its methodological background, he accepted Weber's fundamental approach of a sociology of understanding. Indeed, the sociology of understanding is the basis for Schutzian thinking.

What were the major issues for Alfred Schutz? Why did he challenge Weber's conception of the subjective meaning of human action? For Schutz the fundamentals of this perspective, the complexity of the subject matter, needed more focus. Therefore, he concentrated on determining Weber's equivocations with the aim of radically defining the notion of subjectivity, thereby developing a subjective approach for his sociological program. Furthermore, he intended to find a solution for the problem of mutual human understanding; that is, for the problem of intersubjectivity. Only if all these theoretical difficulties were resolved, could the creation of a sociology of understanding in all its methodological ramifications be pursued (Wagner 1983: 14f.). This specific subjectivist perspective of a sociology of understanding was decisive for Schutz's theoretical paradigm and central in his thinking until, in his later works, he developed the theory of the life-world.

His project first of all brought him into contact with a popular philosophical orientation of his early years: the vitalist philosophy of Henri Bergson. During the period from 1925 to 1927, Bergson's philosophy of consciousness and inner time helped Schutz to clarify concepts such as meaning, action, and intersubjectivity (Schutz 1982). However, because he was dissatisfied with the Bergsonian investigations of temporality in relation to his effort to establish the foundations for a sociology of understanding, following the recommendations of his friend Felix Kaufmann, he discovered the importance of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology of the consciousness of inner time (Barber 2010). This suited his need to establish the phenomenological foundations of Weber's theory of action. It was Husserl's phenomenology which opened a path for him to solve his research questions. This resulted in the publication of his first and only monograph in 1932. It was entitled *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt* (Schütz [1932] 2004). Major parts of this

were translated into English and published as *The Phenomenology of the Social World* (Schutz [1932] 1997).

A wide variety of diverse research papers appeared during Schutz's lifetime. Posthumously his most significant writings were published in *Collected Papers*, volume I, *The Problem of Social Reality* (Schutz 1962), volume II, *Studies in Social Theory* (Schutz 1964), and volume III, *Studies in Phenomenological Philosophy* (Schutz 1970a); later on, in 1996, *Collected Papers*, volume IV (Schutz 1996) appeared. In 1970, Schutz's important manuscript on *Reflections on the Problem of Relevance* (Schutz 1970c) was published. In the same year a small collection of selected pieces was presented with the title *On Phenomenology and Social Relations: Selected Writings* (Schutz 1970b). A translation of his early works, strongly influenced by Bergsonian vitalist philosophy, was published as *Life Forms and Meaning Structure* (Schutz 1982). At the end of his life, just before his unexpected death, Schutz intended to present his life work in a German-language publication entitled *Strukturen der Lebenswelt* (*The Structures of the Life-World*), for which he prepared an outline as well as numerous notebooks. However, because of his death he was unable to finish this planned systematic work, which is why his wife, Ilse Schutz, asked one of his students, Thomas Luckmann, to take on the difficult task of completing the Schutzian theoretical investigations. Volume 1 of the English translation of *The Structures of the Life-World* (Schutz & Luckmann 1973) appeared in 1973, volume 2 (Schutz & Luckmann 1989) in 1989.

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

The academic career of Alfred Schutz was strongly determined by the political and social circumstances of his time. After finishing his dissertation in the 1920s, because of the widespread anti-semitism in Austria, especially in Vienna (Barber 2004: 10f.), it was impossible for him to obtain an academic position at the University of Vienna where Jews were only able to practice as private lecturers without payment. It is highly likely that he was forced into a double life as a banker as well as a sociologist and philosopher, because his Jewish descent made it unfeasible for him to pursue a regular university career. After the German invasion of Austria and the "Anschluss" to the Third Reich in 1938, Schutz left Austria with his family and went into his first exile in Paris, where he stayed with the phenomenologist Aron Gurwitsch (cf. Embree 2009), and above all established contacts with Paul Ludwig Landsberg, Jean Wahl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Raymond Aron, important members of the French phenomenological and sociological disciplines. After 16 months in Paris and because of new orientations and opportunities relating to his job as a bank executive, Schutz decided to emigrate to the United States, just before the beginning of World War II. In the US, he was immediately introduced to a small circle of American phenomenologists around Marvin Farber and Dorion Cairns, whom he knew from meetings within Edmund Husserl's academic context in Freiburg in Germany (Endreß 2006: 16f.). Furthermore, Schutz wanted to be introduced into American sociological circles, and especially sought Talcott Parsons's acquaintance, and presented a paper at the Parsons-Schumpeter seminar at Harvard University in Cambridge in 1940. This included an intense discussion of Parsons's major study on *The Structure of*

Social Action (Parsons [1937] 1968a, [1937] 1968b). In 1943, Schutz managed to gain a position in the American academic system when he became a lecturer in sociology at the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research in New York City (established specifically for European exiles). At the New School, he was appointed to the position of visiting professor in 1944. In 1952 he was appointed full professor of sociology and social psychology (Endreß 2006: 17f.).

Among the European immigrants who had to move to the United States because of the National Socialist threat, Alfred Schutz was definitely an exception. He was able to successfully continue his career as a bank executive, and he also managed to establish a career within the academic field. Several incidents in relation to Schutz's biography, the double experience of exile, and the specific social context of his times are reflected in some of his writings on applied theory. His well-known (in sociological circles) article on "The Stranger: An Essay in Social Psychology" (Schutz [1944] 1964), published in 1944, phenomenologically characterizes the situation of the stranger as a continuing interaction process of adaptation and assimilation to the receiving in-group with a specific taken-for-granted experience and interpretation of the world. In his Viennese years as a marginalized young Jewish academic, and in exile in France and the US, Schutz himself continuously experienced this situation of the stranger. "The Homecomer" (Schutz [1945] 1964) reflects upon his personal experience as a returning soldier in World War I, coming back from the Italian front, as well as on the situation of American soldiers returning from their deployment in Europe and Asia in World War II. From the perspective of the sociology of knowledge Schutz describes the convergence process the homecomer undergoes when away from his home community for a certain length of time and involved in interaction processes of adjustment and adaptation. Another study from 1946 with the title "The Well-Informed Citizen: An Essay on the Social Distribution of Knowledge" (Schutz [1946] 1964) ideal-typically differentiates between the "man on the street" and the "expert," establishing the category of the "well-informed citizen" in-between these two. The categorizations can be compared to Schutz's own biographical situation; as an expert in finance and banking and simultaneously an academic teacher, and as a "well-informed citizen" who helped several family members, friends, and colleagues who had to flee from National Socialism in Europe and emigrate to the United States (cf. Endreß 2006: 23). Furthermore, Schutz's reflections on "Equality and the Meaning Structure of the Social World" (Schutz [1957] 1964) specifically concentrate on expressions of inequality within intercultural community life in the US, which basically have to do with racial discrimination. On a more general level, this analysis within the perspective of sociology of knowledge mirrors the intercultural disturbances of the imperial and royal Austro-Hungarian Empire.

THE INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT

The core influence on Alfred Schutz's work, as mentioned, comes from Max Weber's sociology of understanding which was already the focus of his early work. He struggled to discover the foundations of Weber's postulate that sociology has to concentrate on the subjective meaning the individual actor confers on his or her actions. In the beginning Schutz relied on Henri Bergson's vitalist philosophy. By examining the

durée or inner duration of subjective consciousness Schutz was able to study the basic nature of the I and Thou relationship. The idea was to theoretically deal with the subjectivity of the individual actor, which in the sociology of Weber and other orientations of the social sciences would be unreachable. Schutz epistemologically intended to enter a domain which actually was not part of the focus of the social sciences (but rather of psychology), yet nonetheless of high relevance for their research perspective. The question is how legitimate scientific knowledge of the world is defined by everyday, nonscientific life in the natural attitude. Schutz proceeds from the inner duration to the common, typifying I–Thou world of things and events which offers the foundations of the pragmatic everyday life. The concept of “life form,” which is adapted from Wilhelm Dilthey, Max Scheler, and Henri Bergson, was supposed to resolve the problem of the sociality of the I–Thou relationship. However, in formulating the related problem of relevance it was revealed that the concept of “life form” was not suitable for Schutz’s considerations of the I–Thou relationship (Kersten 1997: 636f.), or as an epistemological foundation for the social sciences more generally.

Instead, Schutz found the solution to his major theoretical concerns in Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology, especially when studying Husserl’s lectures on the consciousness of inner time (Husserl [1928] 1991) as well as *Formal and Transcendental Logic* (Husserl [1929] 1969), *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy* (Husserl [1913] 1982), and *Cartesian Meditations* (Husserl [1931] 1965). Schutz turned the Husserlian account of temporality in the direction of an action theory, describing levels of passive experience (e.g., bodily reflexes), spontaneous activity without a project of guiding (e.g., acts of noticing stimuli), and intentionally planned and projected activity, which are described by the concept of “action” (Barber 2010) (e.g., committing a murder). Planning an action to be realized in the future functions on the basis of a specific reflexivity, since one imagines a project as completed in the future perfect tense. The point to reach is what will have been realized after one’s acting, and this project establishes the “in-order-to motive” of one’s action (Schutz [1932] 1997: 86ff.). As opposed to this, “because motives” (Schutz [1932] 1997: 91ff.) are based on convictions resulting from socio-historical circumstances in which the individual actor is involved; these motives influence the decision to realize a project and can only be discovered by investigating and exploring those factors that preceded the past decision (Barber 2010). This temporal framework of motivation was the basis for Schutz’s criticism of Weber’s position, namely the idea that it is possible for the social scientific observer to develop statements about the subjective meaning and motivation of individual actors. Phenomenological reflections demonstrate that the constitution process of meaning within action might on the one hand depend on “in-order-to motives,” and on the other it might be based on “because motives.” If the temporality of the action process is not taken into consideration, misinterpretations of action can be a result when, for example, one assumes that the outcome of an act may have been its motive without reflecting on the actor’s “in-order-to motive,” which due to unplanned or unforeseen events may have been changed or may have led to results different from those intended (Barber 2010).

Besides phenomenology, especially when entering the American academic context, Schutz became acquainted with the work of pragmatist philosophers such as William

James, Alfred North Whitehead, John Dewey, the behaviorist George Herbert Mead, and others. The incorporation of these influences into his theoretical conception was highly relevant for the development of a theory of the life-world which turned out to be the paradigm for Schutz's life work. One crucial idea, following William James (James [1890] 1950), is that the world of everyday life as "paramount reality" characterized by the pragmatic motive is defined as the core category of the life-world. At the same time the subjectively centered life-world consists of everyday transcendent "multiple realities" described as "finite provinces of meaning." It turned out that Schutz's early analyses in his monograph *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt* had strong affinities to the ideas of the pragmatist thinkers; the basic conception of his theory of the life-world was already present in this early writing.

THE THEORY

Schutz's outline of a theory of the life-world was developed just before his death with the aim of presenting a theoretical summary of his work. This was to be published under the title *The Structures of the Life-World*. Having prepared the sketch of this major work as well as several notebooks paraphrasing the content of the book, due to his physical condition and his unexpected death he was unable to finish *The Structures of the Life-World*. As a result it became Thomas Luckmann's difficult task to complete Schutz's life's work, which Luckmann accomplished using Schutz's manuscripts. These have also been published under the title of "Notebooks" (Schutz 1989: 158–324). The following presentation of Schutz's theory of the life-world is based on the original outline of *The Structures of the Life-World*, as intended by Schutz himself.

The life-world of the natural attitude

Following pragmatist reflections, Schutz defines the "world of daily life" as the reality experienced within the natural attitude by the alert adult who acts within it and upon it amidst his or her fellow human beings. The "natural attitude" is the state of consciousness in which we accept the "reality of everyday life" as a given. Because it is governed by a "pragmatic motive," the everyday life-world is something that we have to modify by our actions or that modifies our actions (Schutz [1945] 1962: 208f.). The everyday life-world includes both the cultural meaning-stratum that first of all makes physical objects into objects of naïve experience, as well as the everyday social world. Furthermore, the life-world, in Schutz's terms, comprises more than the everyday reality. We regularly sink into sleep and relinquish the natural attitude in order to lapse into fictive worlds and fantasies. Furthermore we are able to transcend the everyday life by the means of symbols and, as a special case, are able consciously to modify our natural attitude and shift to different reality spheres. Schutz grasps the idea of the life-world so broadly that it includes all modifications of attitude and alertness, in other words, every tension within consciousness (Dreher 2003: 143; Schutz & Luckmann 1989: 21).

The life-world in general must necessarily be seen as a pre-theoretical world of experience; life-world describes a certain stratum of human experience previous to

the socio-historical world with its essential invariant structures that exist within all human acts of consciousness (Luckmann [1970] 1983: 41). Edmund Husserl, from whom Schutz adopts a modified version of the concept of the life-world, discovers a general structure belonging to the life-world in all its relativities wherein all relative Being is tied to this general structure which itself is not relative (Husserl [1936] 1970). Obviously, this concept of the life-world was sociologically amplified by Schutz, including the social world and everyday transcendent reality spheres. Criticizing Husserl's conception of the life-world, in a letter to his friend Aron Gurwitsch, he argues: "And granted that the life-world doubtlessly has its essential typicality, I just can't see how Husserl can hope to come to the idea of an ontology of the life-world without clarification of intersubjectivity" (Schutz & Gurwitsch 1989). It is exactly this typicality Schutz takes into consideration in arguing that the whole intersubjective world of working in standard time and the problem of how the experience of fellow human beings is experienced in the natural attitude is a topic of theoretical contemplation – for Schutz it is the principal matter of the social sciences (Schutz [1945] 1962: 254). The crucial problem resulting from this approach is the possibility for the solitary thinker with his or her disinterestedness and aloofness from all social relationships to find an approach to the world of everyday life in which human beings act among their fellow humans beings within the natural attitude. It is precisely this natural attitude that must be abandoned by the social scientist when theorizing. Only in the *We*-relation within a community of space and time, can the Other's self be experienced within the natural attitude; it is of importance that outside the vivid present of the *We*-relation the Other appears just as a *Me*, the individual taker of social roles and not as a unity.

But why is the natural attitude so important for the social sciences as an expression of the world of everyday life? The interpretation of this world is based on a stock of previous experiences about it which are transmitted to us during our socialization; a familiarity is established for us on the basis of this specific knowledge transferred to us. To the natural attitude the world is not the private world of the solitary individual from the outset – it is an intersubjective world to which we all are accustomed and in which we do not have a theoretical but a practical interest. The world of everyday life is characterized through the fact that we act and interact in it to dominate and to change it in a coexistence with our fellow human beings. "Our bodily movements – kinesthetic, locomotive, operative – gear, so to speak, into the world, modifying or changing its objects and their mutual relationships" (Schutz [1945] 1962: 209). But these objects of the everyday life-world at the same time offer resistance to our acts which we have to overcome or yield to. This is why Schutz argues that our natural attitude is governed by a pragmatic motive toward the world of daily life. Applying such a perspective, the world is something that we constantly have to modify by our actions and which simultaneously modifies our actions (Schutz [1945] 1962: 209). The fundamental assumptions we get from these reflections in relation to the natural attitude of the life-world, which we accept unquestioned as given, are the following: we assume the constancy of the structure of the world, the constancy of the validity of our experience of the world, as well as the constancy of our ability to act upon the world and within the world (Schutz [1957] 1970: 116).

The stratifications of the life-world

A significant aspect of the Schutzian theory of the life-world is the stratification of the life-world into different dimensions. Schutz defines a space, time, and social structure of the life-world; furthermore he divides the life-world into multiple realities, into reality spheres of finite meaning structure; the individual is constantly confronted with given boundaries through this stratification of the life-world. In relation to the *spatial stratification*, the sphere of the here and now is of major importance since it is the basis for the face-to-face relationship. Furthermore, Schutz differentiates between the world within actual reach and the world within potential reach (restorable and attainable) and describes the manipulatory sphere as the "world within your actual and potential reach" and the "world within your actual and potential manipulatory sphere." This also describes the spatial presence of our fellow human beings.

As far as the *time structure* of the life-world is concerned, it is relevant that the physical and social world existed before my birth and that they will exist after my death; there is a historicity of the inanimate and the human world. Objective time has subjective correlates which need to be taken into consideration due to the subjectively centered conception of the life-world. Objective time correlates with the actuality of reach with reference to interpretable horizons and the stock of experience, with reference to the restorableness of experiences through retention and recollection, and with reference to the attainableness of future experiences through protention and anticipation (Schutz 1989: 166f.). The time structure of the life-world is of course related to the problem of sedimentation and wakening of past experience which from a phenomenological perspective is related to consciousness activities such as association and passive synthesis. The individual actor does not know the time dimension of the vivid present. Instead he or she does have, according to William James, a particular "specious present" within which he or she lives or acts and which is defined at any moment by the span of projects conceived (Schutz [1945] 1962: 253). Concerning the past, the specious present is limited by the remotest past experience which is sedimented and preserved in that section of knowledge at hand that is still relevant for the specific projecting in the present. In relation to the future, the specious present is limited by the span of the projects presently conceived – it is determined by the remotest acts which are still anticipated "modo futuri exacti" (Schutz [1959] 1964: 291).

As far as the *social structure* of the life-world is concerned, the social dimension of the life-world within our reach is considered to be the domain of direct social experience and the subjects we encounter in it are our fellow human beings. With them we share a common span of time and a sector of the spatial time is within our common reach. The bodies of my fellow human beings are within my reach and vice versa; this circle is surrounded by the world of my contemporaries whose subjects coexist with me in time without being within a spatial reach. Furthermore, the world of our predecessors acts upon us but is beyond the reach of our actions, and the world of our successors can be influenced by our actions but cannot act upon us (Schutz [1957] 1970: 119). As we can see, the world of everyday life is intersubjective from the outset; it is not my private world. Rather I am connected to my fellow human beings within diverse social relationships. According to the Schutzian

reflections, the face-to-face relationship obtains a significant position within the conception of the life-world. Each partner within the face-to-face encounter shares the other, as mentioned, in a vivid present; both participate in a set of common experiences of the outer world and are able to actually influence it with their working acts. Only within the face-to-face relationship can the other be experienced as unbroken totality and a unity, which is highly relevant since all other manifold social relationships are derived from it (Schutz [1945] 1962: 220f.). For all the other social relationships the self of the Other merely appears as a partial self. The encounter with the Other is based on the fundamental axiom of the reciprocity of perspectives (Schutz [1953] 1962: 11ff.; [1955] 1962: 315ff.) ideally relevant for each interaction situation. This axiom opens up the possibility to understand each other in everyday life; it is the obvious assumption to understand and share the standpoint of the Other and its relevances in an idealized form.

The world of everyday life as the world of working proves as paramount as opposed to many other sub-universes of reality. It is the world of physical things to which the body of myself and my fellow human beings belongs. I share this world and its objects with others and with them I have ends and means in common with them; I work with them in diverse social acts and relationships. Only within the reality of the world of working, communication and mutual motivation become effective (Schutz [1945] 1962: 226f.). This paramount reality sphere is unique due to a particular tension of consciousness (wide-awakeness and full attention to life), a specific form of spontaneity and form of sociality, as well as a specific time perspective. But there are other reality spheres with a finite meaning structure which belong to our life-world and with regard to all these aspects they differentiate from the reality of everyday life. The subjectively centered life-world is also composed of realities such as the world of dreams, of imageries and phantasms, and specifically the world of art, the world of religious experience, the world of scientific contemplation, the play world of the child, or the world of the insane are such finite provinces of meaning related to the life-world of the individual. They all have a peculiar cognitive style, all experiences within these worlds are consistent in themselves and each one possesses a specific accent of reality. However, as Schutz argues, the "world of working in daily life is the archetype of our experience of reality. All the other provinces of meaning may be considered as its modifications" (Schutz [1945] 1962: 232f.). Particularly important in regard to the experiences of the multiple reality spheres of the life-world is the fact that these experiences – e.g., religious, aesthetic, and scientific – are communicated within the paramount reality of the everyday life with the help of symbols (cf. ch. V).

Knowledge of the life-world: relevance and typicality

We now have to concentrate on the specific structure of knowledge in the life-world as experienced within its different spheres of reality. The knowledge of the world, in commonsense as well as in scientific thinking, consists of constructs such as abstractions, generalizations, formalizations, and idealizations specific to the respective level of thought organization. From such a perspective there are strictly speaking no such things as pure facts; all facts are from the outset selected from a universal context by the activities of our mind. For this reason, they are always interpreted facts,

either facts regarded as detached from their context by an artificial abstraction, or facts considered in their particular setting (Schutz [1953] 1962: 5). All the knowledge which is socially derived is accepted by the individual member of the cultural group as unquestionably given. This is so because it is transmitted to him or her as valid, tested, and unquestionably accepted by the group. Therefore it becomes a schema of interpretation of the common world and a means of mutual agreement and understanding. These reflections are closely related to the structuring of all knowledge about the life-world with its diverse reality spheres.

Following William James, Schutz uses the differentiation between "knowledge of acquaintance" and "knowledge about" to demonstrate that there is only a comparatively small factor of our knowledge which is thorough, clear, distinct, and consistent, of which we are competent experts – the "knowledge about." Our "knowledge of acquaintance" only concerns the what and leaves the how unquestioned (Schutz [1957] 1970: 120f.). This composes the major part of our knowledge of the life-world. Both of these zones are surrounded by dimensions of mere belief that are graded in various expressions as to well-foundedness, plausibility, likelihood, reliance upon authority, blind acceptance, and complete ignorance. Considering all these knowledge spheres, only the "knowledge about" stands under the postulate of clarity, determinateness, and consistency. All other spheres belong to the realm of what is not questioned, to the realm of what is "taken for granted" (Schutz [1957] 1970: 120f.), as long as it serves to function within the life-world. All the mentioned knowledge spheres of the life-world perpetually change for the individual, from individual to individual, from individual to the social group, for the group itself, and from one group to the other. Therefore, the content of what we know, what is familiar, believed, and unknown, is relative; for the individual it is relative to the biographical situation, for the social group to its historical situation.

If we concentrate on the knowledge of the life-world and if we examine the individual experience of its structure, we discover that the subjective correlates of this knowledge are related to different zones of individual motivation. The individual living in the world always experiences him- or herself in a certain situation he or she has to define. This situation is imprinted by two different moments; one originates from the ontological structure of the pre-given world and the other component results from the actual biographical state of the individual. The ontological component of the situation of the individual is experienced as *imposed upon* and occurring to him or her, without the possibility of spontaneously changing the pre-given conditions. However, the biographical situation determines the spontaneous character of the situation within the imposed ontological framework (Schutz [1957] 1970: 122). These reflections open up the path to Schutz's theory of relevance which offers the possibility of connecting subjective motivation with the objectively imposed knowledge structures that regularly confront the individual.

Based on his reflections on the objectively given structure of the world and the subjectively experienced biographical situation, Schutz describes two systems of relevance according to which our knowledge is structured, and differentiates between three different types of relevance. He proposes on the one hand the "system of intrinsic relevances" and on the other hand the "system of imposed relevances." "Intrinsic relevances" are the outcome of our chosen interests, established by our spontaneous decision to solve a problem by our thinking, to attain a goal by our action etc.

In contrast, "imposed relevances" are not connected with interests chosen by us. They do not originate in acts of our discretion; we have to take them just as they are, without the power to modify them by our spontaneous activities (Schutz [1946] 1964: 126f.).

Furthermore, Schutz develops three different ideal types of relevances in distinguishing between "motivational," "thematic," and "interpretational relevances," mentioning that their pure expression cannot be found empirically. With motivational relevance, Schutz describes the aspect in which specific causal relations of the objective world are considered to be relations of interest or problematic items; our interest decides which elements of the ontological structure of the pre-given world are *relevant* to us (Schutz [1957] 1970: 123f.). This interest in form of a relevance is subjectively experienced as motive for the definition of the situation, independent of the fact of whether the components of the situations are imposed or intrinsically result from the spontaneity of the individual. All motivational relevances are also subjectively experienced as a system of plans within a paramount life plan. Thematic relevances, however, arise from circumstances in which not all motivationally given elements are sufficiently familiar or pre-known; it also might be the case that the actual situation does not coincide with a situation type present within one's stock of knowledge. Therefore, supplementary knowledge concerning the situation is required; that is, additional knowledge which is relevant for the definition of the situation. In this case, existing knowledge elements are not considered to be unquestionably given or taken for granted; they are questionable. The problem we have to solve in relation to the thematically relevant topic is guided by the rule of "first things first," which states that the most important problem has to be elucidated first (Schutz [1957] 1970: 124f.). The third ideal type of interpretational relevances refers to those relevances which are used for the solution of the thematically relevant topics with reference to the stock of knowledge at hand in which not all elements are relevant. To realize a specific interpretation of a certain thematic issue, some knowledge elements serve for the interpretation and, through the interpretation, typification processes are established. If knowledge about the solution of the actual interpretation problem is obtained and typified, no further interpretation is required (Endreß 2006: 106f.; Schutz [1957] 1970: 127). The concept of relevance in this sense is a most significant regulative principle of reality construction since it coordinates between knowing and experiencing of objects and serves the subjective actor in defining the situation. Without a theory of relevance, therefore, no foundation of a science of human action is possible, a fact that underlines the fundamental importance of the problem of relevance for the social sciences (Nasu 2008: 91, 93).

With reference to the problem of relevance and typification, there are no types in general, but only types that are formed for the solution of a particular theoretical or practical problem. Typification in relation to knowledge about a typical kind and way of behavior, the typical concatenation of underlying typical motives or typical attitudes of typical personalities, results from the problem at hand, for the sake of whose definition and whose solution the type is formed. The problem depends on the situation of the individual actor, its foundedness on the ontology of the world, my, his or her biographical situation, and consequently the system of relevances that grow out of it or enter into it (Schutz 1989: 213).

The life-world as the realm of practice

A theory of the life-world rooted in Max Weber's sociology of understanding has to include reflections on the issue of social action as the key concept of this sociological orientation. The structure of social action analyzed from a phenomenological perspective will be highlighted with reference to the life-world of the individual. Schutz's aim is to investigate the pattern of action and social interaction which underlies the construction of course-of-action and personal types in commonsense thinking. He uses the term "action" to designate human conduct planned by the actor in advance. Principally, it is based on conduct resulting from a preconceived project. In using the concept "act" he refers to the outcome of this ongoing process which is the accomplished action. From such a standpoint, action may be covert if for example a scientific problem is solved mentally, or overt, gearing into the outer world. The action can be fulfilled by commission or omission, whereas purposive nonparticipation in acting is considered an action in itself. Decisive in this theory of action is the view that projecting of action

consists in anticipation of future conduct by way of phantasying, yet it is not the ongoing process of action but the phantasied act as having been accomplished which is the starting point of all projecting. I have to visualize the state of affairs to be brought about by my future action before I can draft the single steps of such future acting from which this state of affairs will result. (Schutz [1953] 1962: 19f.)

In planning my action, I have to place myself in my phantasy at a future point of time, when the action will already have been accomplished. If this phantasying takes place, I am able to reconstruct in phantasy the single steps which will have to be realized to fulfill the future act. According to the Schutzian perspective, it is not the future action but the future act that is anticipated in the project; the act is anticipated *modo futuri exacti* in future perfect tense (Schutz [1953] 1962: 20).

A specific time perspective taken within this theory of action does have consequences; all projects of forthcoming acts are based upon one's knowledge at hand at the time of projecting. This knowledge is based on the experience of acts from the past which are typically similar to the actually projected one. Projecting of action therefore involves a particular idealization – Husserl calls it the idealization of "I-can-do-it-again" – which refers to the assumption that only under typically similar conditions that were present in acts from the past, I am able to project my action (Schutz [1953] 1962: 20). Furthermore, the time perspective of the project explains the interconnection of project and motive; as mentioned before, Schutz differentiates between "in-order-to motives" as the state of affairs to be brought about by the future action phantasied in its project, and "because motives," referring to past experiences which have determined the project of action.

Taking into consideration the social world as part of the life-world of the individual actor, the structure of action becomes more complex. Social interaction is also based on the general action patterns dependent on the time perspective of the course-of-action. Within the interaction of two persons in a question-answer situation, the in-order-to motive of one actor is to obtain adequate information which presupposes that the understanding of the in-order-to motive of the first actor will become the

Other's because-motive to perform an action in-order-to give some information to the asking actor. Actor one anticipates that he or she will be guided by the same types of motives by which in the past, according to his or her stock of knowledge at hand, the actor and many others were guided in typically similar circumstances. This example demonstrates that even the simplest interaction presupposes a series of commonsense constructs, such as in our example constructs of the Other's anticipated behavior, which are based on the idealization that the actor's in-order-to motives will become because-motives and vice versa. This is why Schutz designates it as "the idealization of the reciprocity of motives" (Schutz [1953] 1962: 22f.)

A further decisive aspect of Schutz's theory of action was developed in his paper "Choosing among Projects of Action" (Schutz [1951] 1962), in which he discusses the "fiat" to distinguish a merely phantasied project from a decided purpose which depends on one's in-order-to motive. He analyzed how the actor had to believe that a projected action was feasible at least as to its type in order to approve it as a purpose; such feasibility depended on the world taken for granted offering a horizon of open possibilities with types for potential ends of the action. The biographical situation of the actor, which compels him or her to choose one project over another, converts these open possibilities into problematic ones. It is therefore necessary to contrast between choosing among already existing and well defined objects within reach, and choosing among projects, which do not yet exist and which the chooser generates and considers in succession within inner *durée* (Barber 2004: 142).

The transcendences of the life-world and their overcoming by signs and symbols

As far as the life-world as a whole is concerned, it becomes relevant how the multiple realities and the social world as parts of the life-world are connected to the world of everyday life, respectively connected among each other with a specific meaning structure. Regarding the constitution of the life-world, signs and symbols have a crucial function because as "appresentation forms" they are responsible for the production of an internal meaningfulness of the life-world. From a phenomenological point of view the function of signs and symbols is based on the ability of the subjective consciousness of "appresentation," a concept that Schutz adapts from Edmund Husserl in a modified form. While Husserl defines "appresentation" as a basic consciousness activity for the constitution of intersubjectivity as part of the experience of the Other (Husserl [1931] 1965: § 42ff.), Schutz describes "appresentation" as the analogical association by which through the perception of an object another object is produced, for example as memory, fantasy, or fiction (Schutz [1955] 1962: 294ff.; Dreher 2003: 145).

The Schutzian theory of sign and symbol starts from the already exposed stratification of the life-world. According to this conception, the life-world includes not only the sphere of the "solitary I," but especially the social world, and particularly collectively shared ideas, such as religious, scientific, artistic, or political realities with a finite meaning structure, but also dreams and fantasy worlds. We act and operate solely within the world of everyday life, in our world of working in which we communicate. This decisive aspect expresses the idea that only within the world of everyday life as paramount reality, communication with signs and symbols is

possible (Schutz [1955] 1962: 306ff.; 1989: 241ff.; Dreher 2003). These reflections are based on the philosophy of culture of Ernst Cassirer, who calls the human being an *animal symbolicum*, considering the symbol ability a basic feature of human existence (Cassirer 1972: 23ff.; Srubar 2009).

The theory of the life-world assigns signs and symbols a particular “meaning clip function” (Srubar 1988: 247). With the help of signs – for example, as elements of language – one can overcome the boundaries or “transcendences” that exist between individuals; the “transcendences” to the world of others can be overcome by the use of signs. Symbols on the other hand allow extra-ordinary experiences to be communicated, providing a common understanding of religious, scientific, aesthetic, or political experience and everyday transcending ideas and concepts in intersubjective contexts. In this sense, symbols ensure that the boundaries of the everyday world can be bridged and that we as individuals can share symbolically represented spheres of reality with other people. Signs and symbols are the elements of the life-world, which are intersubjectively shared and handed down and thereby ensure the cohesion and the meaningfulness of the individual’s life-world as a whole.

Symbolical appresentational systems structure the transcendent world of human reality by connecting their different levels to each other and establishing a relation with the world of everyday life of the acting individual. Appresentational systems are the carriers of the reciprocity of perspectives and communication that transform the reality of everyday life into a paramount one. They provide a link between everyday reality and the realities that transcend it (Srubar 1988: 247f.); in particular they allow one to overcome boundaries of the social world which transcend the everyday world of the experiencing subject. In his most significant section of his theory of sign and symbol, Schutz extends the conception of the symbol to a further stage. He points out that some realities of the life-world with their specific cognitive styles are socializable, and therefore can be transferred into knowledge and action relationships. They themselves may be institutionalized and, as institutions situated outside the reality of everyday life, can become part of the everyday-transcending order of “society” (Srubar 1988: 246). Examples of such systems of appresentational references are philosophy, religion, science, art, and politics. However, in this case, the relationship of symbolization is reversed: within these systems the reality of everyday life is symbolically appresented.

Accordingly, it can be argued that signs and symbols are constitutive of the dialectic relationship between the individual and society, as Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann – two scholars of Alfred Schutz – argue (Berger & Luckmann [1966] 1987: 65ff.). The human individual with the ability to use signs and symbols is able to constitute intersubjectivity and to objectify social entities in this context. Collective entities, such as social relationships (Dreher 2009) or groups, communities, or societies, are developed in conjunction with the objectification of symbolic worlds of meaning and thereby receive their effectiveness. It is essential that symbolic knowledge is internalized again in the socialization of the individual, i.e., becomes a component of the individual’s subjective knowledge. Commonly shared, everyday transcendent ideas and concepts that are legitimized as part of symbolic reality spheres cause the constitution of social entities in specific interaction contexts. The “nation” as an idea comes from an everyday transcendent political reality and can be represented symbolically within the everyday world. The constant objectification

of symbolic knowledge about the nation, for example through their representatives, as well as the continuous reference to relevant existing national symbols, causes the collective of the nation to exist and stay alive. In particular, collective symbols have the potential to overcome and to unite often contradictory ideas and conceptions of individuals with respect to a collective, and various cultural, religious, or ethnic affiliations of individual members of the nation can be harmonized through the help of collective symbolism (Soeffner 2000). For the constitution and collective determination of social structure, collective symbols have a special integrative function because they produce a sense of community in the related individuals and ultimately ensure the cohesion of the collective.

The sciences of the social world

When planning his major work on *The Structures of the Life-World*, Alfred Schutz intended to conceptually integrate a final chapter on "The Sciences of the Social World," which was not included by Thomas Luckmann who finished this publication. Schutz's outline for *The Structures of the Life-World* (Schutz 1989) demonstrates his idea to use the conception of a theory of the life-world to describe the life-world as "unexamined ground of all sciences." He starts from the assumption that all scientific constructs are designed to supersede the constructs of common-sense thought and, according to this reflection, there is a principal difference between the natural and the social sciences. The facts, data, and events focused by natural scientists are just facts, data, and events within their observational field; it is important to consider that this field does not "mean" anything to the molecules, atoms, and electrons therein (Schutz [1953] 1962: 5). In opposition to the natural sciences, the social sciences concentrate on facts, events, and data of an entirely different structure because their observational field, the social world, is not essentially structureless.

It has a particular meaning and relevance structure for the human beings living, thinking, and acting therein. They have preselected and preinterpreted this world by a series of common-sense constructs of the reality of daily life, and it is these thought objects which determine their behavior, define the goal of their action, the means available for attaining them – in brief, which help them to find their bearings within their natural and socio-cultural environment and to come to terms with it. (Schutz [1953] 1962: 5)

At this point of the argumentation, Schutz generates his methodological differentiation between *first* and *second order constructs* which is of crucial importance for the social sciences. Schutz claims that the thought objects constructed by the social scientists are founded upon the thought objects constructed by the commonsense thought of human beings living their everyday life among their fellow human beings. This is why the constructs developed and applied by the social scientist are constructs of a second order, "namely constructs of the constructs made by the actors on the social scene, whose behavior the scientist observes ..." (Schutz [1953] 1962: 6). From this perspective, for a foundation of their methodology, the social sciences need to take the structures of the life-world into consideration, and especially commonsense thinking as part of the world of everyday life.

As a result of his methodological reflections Schutz presents a scientific model of the social life-world (Schutz 1989: 234). As a first step he proposes the construction of typical course-of-action patterns, corresponding to the events observed by the social scientist. The second step concentrates on coordination of these patterns with a personal type, namely the model of an actor whom the social scientist imagines as being gifted with consciousness. Following this, in a third step, constant typical in-order-to and because motives are ascribed to this consciousness. In a fourth step it is relevant to consider that these models of actors – he also calls them “puppets” or “homunculi” (Schutz [1953] 1962: 40f.) – are not human beings within the social world of everyday life and do not have any biography or history; they are not in a situation defined by themselves, but in one that the social scientist has defined. The social scientist has equipped them with a particular stock of knowledge and has determined their system of relevances; what is important is that this is the system of scientific relevances of its constructor and does not result from an actor within the world. “Puppets” or “homunculi” are constructions of the social scientist. In a fifth step, the model of actor, the “homunculus,” is brought into a fictional reciprocal interaction relationship with other similar constructed models. Motives, types of action and persons, and the distribution of knowledge related to this social situation are determined by the social scientist according to his or her scientific problematic.

As a result of his life-world-based methodology, Schutz develops four postulates for scientific model constructs of the social life-world which summarize his methodological conception (Eberle 1984: 304ff.). The “postulate of logical consistency” requires that the system of types must be constructed by the social scientist with the highest degree of clarity and distinctness of the implied conceptual framework so that it is fully compatible with the principles of formal logic. According to the “postulate of subjective interpretation” it is necessary that the social scientist constructs the model of an individual consciousness in order to explain human action. This warrants the possibility of referring all kinds of human action or their result to the subjective meaning such action had for the actor. Furthermore, the “postulate of adequacy” demands that each term in a scientific model of human action must be constructed in such a way that a human act performed within the life-world by an individual human actors in the way indicated by the typical construct would be understandable for the actors as well as for their fellow human beings in terms of commonsense interpretation of everyday life. Finally, it is relevant that rational interaction patterns and personality types have to be constructed in such a way that the actor in the life-world would perform the typified action if he or she had a perfectly clear and distinct knowledge of all the elements assumed by the social scientist as being relevant to this action (Schutz 1989: 234f.). In establishing this methodological framework for the social sciences, Schutz assumes the unity of science, arguing that there is no different logic for natural and social sciences. This does not mean that the social sciences have to adopt the methodical procedures of the natural sciences – therefore it is unjustified to presuppose that only the methods of the natural sciences, especially physics, are scientific (Schutz 1989: 240). The Schutzian methodology with the life-world of the individual actor as its basis was specifically influential for the development methods of qualitative empirical social science.

IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT

The major impact for social theory resulting from Alfred Schutz's paradigm was achieved through a productive integration of phenomenology into the field of social science, especially sociology. This was first and foremost accomplished with the elaboration of Max Weber's sociology of understanding through an epistemological foundation of Weber's concept of social action and subjective meaning on the basis of phenomenological reflections. Schutz established a phenomenologically founded sociology with a specific focus on the individual actor by establishing a pragmatic theory of the life-world.

Schutz's theory specifically influenced the development of a "new" sociology of knowledge by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann in *The Social Construction of Reality* (Berger & Luckmann [1966] 1987), which became one of the classic texts of the sociological discipline. With the help of the Schutzian theory of the life-world and philosophical anthropology, Berger and Luckmann present a sociology of knowledge free of materialist implications which describes society as objective as well as subjective reality with a specific emphasis on the dialectical relationship of individual and society. Another position oriented towards philosophy and human sciences was introduced by Schutz's student Maurice Natanson who established an existential phenomenology starting from the Schutzian theoretical conception (Natanson 1964, 1986). As far as Schutz's impact on the creation of qualitative methodologies and methods is concerned, some orientations among several others need to be mentioned: his methodological reflections essentially influenced Erving Goffman's interaction theoretical conception of frame analysis (Goffman 1959, 1974, [1961] 2007), Harold Garfinkel's ethnomethodology (Garfinkel [1967] 2003; Psathas 2004, 2009), grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Strauss 1987), genre analysis (Luckmann 2002), social scientific hermeneutics (Soeffner 1982), etc. The development of a strong discipline of qualitative empirical research with a tendency to establish a consistent orientation was to a wide extent achieved on the basis of the methodological writings of Alfred Schutz.

Due to its focus on the subjectivity of the individual actor, commonsense thinking, and the life-world, the Schutzian paradigm has been criticized by some scholars using similar arguments. As Zygmunt Bauman points out, typifications of a second order, such as state, people, economy, or class, according to Schutz only have a hypothetical nature. Bauman criticizes that "for all practical purposes, concepts like society or class enter the life-world of the human individual as myths, sedimented from a long and tortuous process of abstraction of which the member himself lost control at a relatively early stage" (Bauman 1976: 63). Due to the fact that supra-individual phenomena can only be seen as mental concepts, the Schutzian sociology lacks a potential of critique, as Bauman argues. Defending Durkheim he claims that Schutz's theory does not offer the possibility of dealing with the effect of objective socio-structural factors. Jürgen Habermas's criticism of the Schutzian perspective formulates the reproach of "the culturalistic abridgement of the concept of the lifeworld" (Habermas 1987: 135) which needs to be corrected because personality structures and normative orders are not integrated into this notion of the life-world. Although taking over the concept of the life-world from Alfred Schutz, Habermas fails to

grasp all decisive elements of the Schutzian life-world conception and disregards the fact that normative orders are represented in the life-world through the individual actor's experience of multiple reality spheres, which are often determined by institutions. A further criticism of Schutz's "subjectivism" was presented by Pierre Bourdieu who found in Schutz and ethnomethodology "the purest expressions of the subjectivist vision" as opposed to the "objectivist" position as represented by Durkheim (Bourdieu 1990: 127ff.). In trying to overcome the discrepancy between subjectivism and objectivism, Bourdieu tries to demonstrate that subjective representations of the agents constitute structural constraints and at the same time structural conditions determine the socialization of the individual. To bridge the gap between the two perspectives, he introduces the theoretical concept of habitus "as a system of models of perception and appreciation" (Bourdieu 1990: 131) which is acquainted in the lasting experience of a social position. But this habitus concept does not reflect the "subjectivist vision" of Schutz since it cannot describe or does not allow reconstruction of, for example, subjectively centered systems of relevance as part of the life-world of the individual actor which are pre-conditioned by social structure, but include the realizations and decisions within the actor's biography. With the help of the Schutzian concept of relevance, phenomena such as power and inequality (Schutz [1957] 1964; Nasu 2003) in their objective and subjective expressions can be investigated profoundly since a model for the reconstruction of subjective reality is being offered.

Schutz's life work remained unfinished and incomplete, due to his early death, but at the same time it provides a source of a wide variety of starting-points for further theoretical and empirical investigation in social science. Schutz's theory of the life-world especially offers great potential to explore the social world from the perspective of methodological individualism and proposes a theoretical conception to deal with the interrelationship of individual and social collectivity or society. The Schutzian theory establishes a profound and unique conceptual framework for the sociological analysis of the subjectivity of the individual actor in the social world which is incomparable, and the further impact of this paradigm will definitely characterize essential future developments in social science.

Reader's Guide to Alfred Schutz

Schutz's most significant English-language writings are published in *Collected Papers*, volume I: *The Problem of Social Reality* (1962), which among others includes his major methodological papers as well as "Multiple Realities" and "Symbol, Reality and Society." *Collected Papers*, volume II: *Studies in Social Theory* (1964) is also important and includes the essays "The Stranger," "The Homecomer," and "Equality and the Meaning Structure of the Social World." Furthermore, *Collected Papers*, volume III: *Studies in Phenomenological Philosophy* (1970) includes Schutz's work on Husserl's phenomenology such as "The Problem of Transcendental Intersubjectivity in Husserl." *Collected Papers*, volume IV (1996) introduces an additional variety of Schutzian texts. His theory of the life-world was presented by co-author Thomas Luckmann as *The Structures of the Life-World*, volume I (1973) and volume II (1989).

As far as secondary literature on Schutz is concerned, two highly valuable biographies must be mentioned. *Alfred Schutz: An Intellectual Biography* (1983), written by Helmut R. Wagner,

offers a lucid introduction to the different stages of Schutz's theoretical work with specific attention to philosophical influences. Second, *The Participating Citizen: A Biography of Alfred Schutz* (2004), by Michael D. Barber, highlights Schutz's diverse biographical situations: a young Jewish academic in Vienna, in exile in France and the United States, and so on. As well, he continually refers to phenomenological and sociological developments in Schutz's work. Numerous research papers dealing with Schutzian thought have appeared in the renowned journal *Human Studies*. A yearbook titled *Schutzian Research* first appeared in 2009.

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