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Various modes of the foundation for Sociology
Weber, Parsons, and Schutz*

Vários modos de fundamentação para a Sociologia
Weber, Parsons e Schutz

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Abstract: The foundation for Max Weber's *verstehende Soziologie* provided by himself was sufficient for him to deal with his concrete sociological problems. It appeared, however, to be insufficient for Alfred Schutz as well as for Talcott Parsons, in spite of their appreciating Weber's ideas of this sociology as such. Schutz criticized that Weber made little clarification of the fundamental layers of his primary concepts, whereas Parsons criticized Weber's tendency "to obscure the role of the essentially nonfictional generalized system of theory." What does this difference among them means? This essay tries to make an answer to this question through comparing Weber and Parsons, Weber and Schutz, and Schutz and Parsons by focusing mainly on the concepts of "*Verstehen*" (understanding), "action" and "subjective meaning." Such a comparative investigation is expected to shed light on contributions of phenomenology to sociology.

Keywords: Action. *Verstehen*. Understanding. Subjective meaning. Project.

Resumo: A fundamentação de *verstehende Soziologie* apresentada pelo próprio Max Weber foi suficiente para que ele pudesse lidar com seus problemas sociológicos concretos. Contudo, pareceu ser insuficiente para Alfred Schutz assim como para Talcott Parsons, a despeito do reconhecimento de ambos em relação às ideias de Weber sobre essa sociologia enquanto tal. Schutz criticou que Weber pouco esclareceu sobre os fundamentos de seus conceitos mais importantes, enquanto Parsons criticou a tendência de Weber "de obscurecer o papel essencialmente não-ficcional do sistema de teoria generalizado". O que significa a diferença entre eles? Esse artigo tenta dar uma resposta a esta questão comparando Weber e Parsons, Weber e Schutz e Schutz e Parsons, concentrando-se sobretudo nos conceitos de "Verstehen" (compreensão), "ação" e "significado subjetivo". Com essa análise comparativa espera-se jogar luzes sobre contribuições da fenomenologia para a sociologia.

Palavras-chave: Ação. *Verstehen*. Compreensão. Significado subjetivo. Projeto.

Introduction

What contribution does phenomenology make to sociology? This is the theme on which this essay will focus. It might be reasonable, therefore, to examine Alfred Schutz's work intensively in this essay, since he appreciated the so-called "understanding sociology" (*verstehende Soziologie*) of Max Weber, and also pointed out the limitations of Max Weber's theoretical work by saying that "as significant as were Weber's contributions to methodology, […] just as little did a radical retracing of his results to a firm philosophical foundation concern him, as little as did a clarification of the fundamental layers of the primary concepts he develop. It is at this point that the limitations of Max Weber's theoretical work become apparent" (Schutz, 1932, p. 87).

Before embarking on a discussion about this theme, it might be better to refer to two points. The first is that the foundation of understanding sociology which was considered as insufficient by Schutz was sufficient for Weber. Weber certainly made great efforts to provide the foundation to his understanding sociology in a series of works from "Roscher und Knies und die logischen Probleme der historischen Nationalökonomie" (1903, 1905, 1906) through "Kritische Studien auf den Gebiet der kulturwissenschaftlichen Logik" (1906) to "R. Stammlers 'Überwindung' der materialistischen Geschichtsauffassung" (1907). The locus of this series of works shows his serious attempts to establish the foundation of sociology through struggling with ideas of the so-called *Historical School*. Such attempts by Weber, however, seemed to be insufficient from Schutz's point of view. He wrote that Weber was concerned with the problems of the theory of science only insofar as concrete scientific problems required to deal with them and as epistemological inquiries provided useful tools for doing so. Once these tools were at his disposal, he stopped inquiring (Schutz, 1932). From Schutz's point of view, this seemed to result in a lack of clarity of the fundamental presuppositions of even his own primary concepts.

The second point concerns a restriction Schutz imposed on his own references to phenomenological research. In advance of his inquiries about the constitution of meaningful lived experience, he declared that his analysis would be carried out within the phenomenological reduction only insofar as it was necessary for acquiring exact insights into the phenomena of internal time-consciousness. He went on to say that since the purpose of his inquiries in *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt* was to analyze the phenomenon of meaning in mundane sociality, it would not be necessary to acquire transcendental experience beyond this, nor to sojourn further in the transcendental phenomenological reduction (Schutz, 1932, p. 129).

This self-restriction might cause no problems for Schutz who aimed to provide a firm foundation for Weber's understanding sociology. However, because Schutz referred to phenomenology with such a self-restriction, his arguments were and are criticized by many phenomenologists in a similar context as that in which he criticized Weber's arguments.

It is not the theme of this essay to examine Schutz's "limitations" themselves.[1] It should be enough here to point out that whether an attempt to provide the foundation to sociology is sufficient or insufficient depends on what is aimed by sociology in question. Then, I can take a step to examine Weber's limitations which Schutz found out in his arguments, and proceed to shed light on Schutz's attempts to provide the foundation to understanding sociology.

I would like to take up a concept of "action" in this essay as a clue for dealing with this topic, since Weber took up a concept of action as a basic one for doing his understanding sociology, and in addition, Schutz appreciated an excellent originality of this Weber's idea and began his own arguments with examining Weber's concepts of action and meaning.

It might be better to extend arguments through referring to Talcott Parsons' work. It is because, first, both Schutz and Parsons started their inquiries from examining Weber's work and proceeded toward a different direction, and second, it was under the circumstances called "post-Parsons" that Schutz's work, almost unnoticed so far, began to attract many sociologists' attention, and third, they had actually a "dispute" about several topics including a concept of action.

Weber and Parsons

Tracing back a history of sociology in the United States, it might be recognized that acceptance of Max Weber's work came considerably later than is often presupposed.[2] There can be little work for and on Weber's work found before the 1950s. Such circumstances, however, changed completely in the 1950s. It was, in my opinion, Talcott Parsons' work which marked this turning point. Weber's work was spread and came to be well known among American sociologists through Parsons' papers and volumes on, and his and his colleagues' English translations of, Weber's writings.

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[1] H. Wagner found a significance of Schutz's work in his self-restriction just mentioned (Wagner, 1989). This insight, I think, is very much worth paying attention to, and it must be examined seriously whether Schutz's self-restriction is a "limitation" or not.

[2] As to this topic, I made a check on papers published in several *American Journals* in those days; see Nasu (1991a).

There are certain decisive *biases* found in Parsons' interpretation of Weber's work. I would like to indicate just two points here, which are related with each other. The one is about a bias derived from Parsons' theoretical position which led him to discern a *limitation* of Weber's sociology in his tendency "to obscure the role of the essentially nonfictional *generalized system of theory*" (Parsons, 1937, p. 716).

For Parsons, there are two aspects of the goal of scientific investigation. The one is "the 'causal explanation' of past specific phenomena or processes and the predication of future events," and the other is "the attainment of generalized analytical knowledge, of 'law' which can be applied to an indefinite number of specific cases with the use of the appropriate factual data" (Parsons, 1945, p. 214-215). According to the "level of primitiveness" of systematization of conceptual schemes, the social sciences are, in Parsons' opinion, still at the two levels before the final goal of scientific endeavor, that is, they have only reached the level of "categorial system." Therefore, he insisted that the social sciences should be directed, for a moment, to elaborate a "structural-functional theory," which is only "the logical equivalent of simultaneous equations in a fully developed system of analytical theory," that is, in an empirical-theoretical system (Parsons, 1945, p. 218; Parsons and Shils, 1951, p. 50-51).

Provided that Parsons was in such a theoretical position, the concepts of "*Verstehen*" (understanding) and meaning as key concepts in Weber's *verstehende Soziologie* cannot but be residualized, since these concepts are related not to a *nomothetic* aspect but to an *idiographic* aspect of social scientific research. As a matter of fact, he wrote that "Weber dealt with it [the concept of *Verstehen*] almost entirely in the context of causal analysis of action" (Parsons, 1937, p. 635). Parsons can be reasonably considered as "being out of the main stream" of American sociology in those days, because he was interested in epistemological and methodological questions, and therefore, in the "foundation" of sociology at a time when the Chicago School, which attached too much significance to empirical field research, was the mainstream of sociology in the United States (Valone, 1980, p. 376). Nevertheless, even if his concern was with these areas, such indispensable concepts for "*verstehende Soziologie*" as "subjective meaning" and "understanding" (*Verstehen*) became to be less important for him, because he intended to be a "general system constructor," and his main concern was about causal explanation. The first bias derived from Parsons' theoretical position so described might be called, along with H. Wagner, "the functionalization of Weber" (Wagner, 1976).[3]

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[3] From my concern on which the arguments here are based, I cannot but express skepticism about the possibility that certain beneficial insights will be gained from arguments which are

The second point is about Parsons' and his colleagues' English translation of Weber's writings. He (They) translated the German phrase "*ursächlich erklären*" in Weber's definition of sociology by the English phrase "causal explanation," and the title of section 2 of chapter 1 in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, "*Bestimmungsgründe sozialen Handelns*," was rendered as "The Types of Social Action."[4]

Weber defined sociology as "a science which attempts to interpretively understand (*deutend verstehen*) social action, and thereby to causally/ fundamentally explain (*ursächlich* erklären) its course and its effects" (Weber, 1921, p. 1).

Parsons and his colleague translated the phrase "*ursächlich* erklären" by the English phrase "causal explanation." This translation could not be asserted immediately as a wrong translation, because almost all of dictionaries translate the German word "*ursächlich*" into "causal." But in taking it into account that this phrase was adopted to express the goal of Weber's "*verstehende Soziologie,*" this translation is neither detailed nor accurate.

One of the most distinguished features of Weber's sociology consists, in my opinion, in its adoption of a so-called *dual* perspective for approaching social phenomena *adequately* and *fundamentally*; the context of causality (*Kausalzusammenhang*) and the context of meaning (*Sinnzusammenhang*), or objective meaning and subjective meaning. Weber recognized clearly the distinction between subjective meaning, which is meant by the actor with his/ her acting, and objective meaning, which the observer imputes interpretatively to the action of the other. In addition, Weber declared that "*Verstehen*" (understanding) and "*kausales Erklären*" (causal explanation) start its task from the *opposite* poles of an event (Weber, 1913, p. 436). This is precisely because Schutz, who deeply appreciated and followed Weber's idea, wrote that "the theme of all sciences of the social world is to constitute a context of objective meaning either out of contexts of subjective meaning in general or out of particular contexts of subjective meaning" (Schutz, 1932, p. 406).

It might be clear now why translating the German phrase "*ursächlich* erklären" by the English phrase "*causal* explanation" is considered to be neither detailed nor accurate. This translation tends to exclude the "understanding" (*Verstehen*) side and mistakenly restricts the theme to "causal explanation," which Parsons, as mentioned above, conceived of as one of the goals of

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developed by pointing out an *affinity* between Schutz and Parsons (Rehorick, 1980; Jules and Rosette, 1980).

[4] Although the section titles are not by Weber but by an editor, they seem to be largely appropriate.

science. Such a translation based on his interpretation of *Verstehen* cannot but be considered as devaluing not only this concept but also *verstehende Soziologie* itself.

Let us proceed to the second problem with Parsons' and his colleague's translation. One of the best-known concepts in Weber's sociology might be the so-called "four types of *social action*." The description of these types appears in section 2 with the title "*Bestimmungsgründe sozialen Handelns*" (Determining Grounds of Social Action). Weber defined four types of the "determining grounds of social action" as follow: "Social action can be determined (1) goal-rationally […], (2) value-rationally […], (3) affectionally […] (4) traditionally […]" (Weber, 1921, p. 12-13). Parsons translated this phrase by "social action […] may be classified in the following four types according to its mode of orientation: (1) in terms of rational orientation" etc., and rendered the section title as "The types of social action" (Weber, 1947, p. 115).

This English translation might be acceptable if a one-to-one correspondence could be assumed between a social action and its determining ground. Such an assumption, however, cannot be made, insofar as a social action is a "*social*" action which is *co*-determined at least by the actor *and* his/her partner(s). The types of "social action," therefore, should not be equated immediately with the types of "its determining ground" on the actor's side. What Weber referred to in this context is only the actor's orientation of action. Therefore it might have been necessary for him to include another section with the title "*Typen sozialen handelns: brauch, sitte*" (Types of social action: usage, custom), which is translated by Parsons as "Modes of orientation of social action." Hence, if someone were to criticize Weber's conception of social action for its being too psychological, I would like to say that such criticism is directed not really to Weber's own conception, but to the translated version which is psychologized by equating the types of determining grounds of social action on the actor's side with the types of social action themselves.[5]

In sum, it can be said that the bias in Parsons' interpretation of Weber's fundamental concepts of understanding sociology derives from conditions under which that he neither took seriously Weber's definition of "action" in terms of "subjective intended meaning" and his definition of "social action" with reference to the relation with others' behavior, nor inquired into such fundamental concepts as "meaning" and "interpretive understanding"

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[5] Some scholars have indicated problems with Parsons' translation of Weber's writings other than the ones illustrated in this essay; see Munch (1975), Wagner (1980), Hinkle (1986).

(*deutendes Verstehen*) seriously and honestly, and, in addition, that these conditions are, in turn, founded on Parsons' theoretical position which led him to conceive of the goals of scientific investigation as the "*causal* explanation of phenomena or processes" and the "attainment of *generalized* analytical knowledge."

Weber and Schutz

In contrast, Schutz did pay his earnest attention to the "understanding" side of Weber's *verstehende Soziologie*, which Parsons did not investigate as such but rather made residualized.[6]

Weber conceived of sociology as a science which attempts to interpretively understand social action and thereby to *fundamentally* explain its course and its effects through a dual perspective, and also he defined "understanding" as "the interpretive grasp of […] meaning or context of meaning" (Weber, 1921, p. 4). For such a Sociology, a theory of "social action" is crucial, and for a theory of action, the concept of "meaning" is of decisive importance. However, in spite of their importance, Weber did not inquire into the concepts of "meaning" and "action" intensively and fundamentally, and as a consequence, there was actually vagueness remained, as Schutz insisted, in Weber's definition of action as meaningful behavior (Schutz, 1932, p. 99).

Following his definition of sociology, Weber defined the concept of "action" as human behavior when and insofar as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to it (Weber, 1921, p. 1). "Action" is obviously defined in terms of "meaning." Furthermore, "action" is distinguished from "behavior in general" based on the criterion whether or not a "subjective meaning" is attached. It necessarily follows that subjective meaning is not attached to behavior as distinct from "action."

Nevertheless, if subjective meaning is defined as meaning which the acting individual attaches to his/her own behavior, can a behavior really be assumed to which no subjective meaning is attached? Insofar as behavior can be conceived of as a kind of human spontaneous activity, should not behavior as well be conceived of as having subjective meaning attached to? If the answer to this question is "yes," is it impossible at all to distinguish action from "behavior in general" by defining action in terms of "subjective meaning"?

Schutz took the same position as Weber's in that he defined the concept of action in terms of "subjective meaning." However, he did not follow Weber

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[6] As for the "causal explanation" side, Schutz seems to basically accept Weber's description.

in distinguishing action from behavior in general with a criterion of whether or not a "subjective meaning" is attached to, and then defining action as having subjective meaning. He rather insisted that although subjective meaning is attached both to action and to "mere behavior," subjective meaning on a specific level is attached only to action, which mere behavior entirely lacks (Schutz, 1932, p. 101). His insistence was founded on his inquiries into the concept of meaning through a *constitution analysis* which traces meaning back to the constituting processes of consciousness (Schutz, 1932, § 6-28).

Schutz considered that to attach a meaning to a lived experience (*Erlebnis*) is nothing other than to demarcate this lived experience and to make it stand out against the stream of experience by turning to it. "A lived experience is being turned to" and "a lived experience is meaningful" are, in his opinion, equivalent expression. It follows that the meaning attached to an action is nothing but a particular manner of turning-to (*Zuwendung*) (Schutz, 1932, p. 127-128, p. 172).

From such an idea regarding meaning and the attachment of meaning, it is not fully accurate to say that the acting individual "attaches" meaning to his/her own behavior. In the sense of "meaning" just outlined, every lived experience, and therefore, even "pre-phenomenal lived experience," (Schutz, 1932, p. 397) can be meaningful, and this meaning varies necessarily in accordance with the manner of being of the subject at the moment when that subject attaches meaning.

Whereas Weber did not pay deserved nor sufficient attention to these conditions of meaning when he tried to define action in terms of subjective meaning, Schutz distinguished, to begin with, on the basis of his concept of meaning just mentioned above, between "lived experience" (*Erlebnis*) on the one hand, which is with a strict correlate of consciousness (Schutz, 1932, p. 161) but is as yet *not reflectively* turned-to, and whose intentional objects are therefore as yet unspecified "somethings," and, on the other, "experience" (*Erfahrung*), which is reflectively turned-to and becomes to be characterized by a higher degree of determinacy and distinctness of the lived experiential core and by greater thematic consistency of the lived experiential flow. In a nutshell, "lived experience" is set in relief or stands against the stream of consciousness *by itself*, whereas "experience" is singled out and constituted by reflective attention. It follows that "experience" consists in *transcending* the stream of consciousness through reflective attention, and that the meaning of experience consists in being related to something else through *reflective* performances of consciousness (*Bewusstseinsleistungen*) (Schutz and Luckmann, 2003, p. 449-450). "Meaning" can then be concisely defined in the most commonly

cited way as "the result of an interpretation of a past experience looked at from the present" (Schutz, 1945, p. 210).

In addition, it should be remarked here along with Schutz that "reflection" can be performed in anticipation. The course and effects of an action can be imagined, anticipated, and even reflected in the *project* of this action. It follows that the past related to "meaning" is not only the actual past but also the "past" in anticipation, i.e., the "past" anticipated in the *future perfect tense*. It is "past experience" in the latter sense that Schutz's concept of "action" (*Handeln*), or more precisely, "act" (*Handlung*) as the outcome of future action, is related to. He noted that "experiences that derives their meaning from their relation to a human project are called acts" (Schutz and Luckmann, 2003, p. 450).

Schutz conceived of the problem of "meaning" as a problem of time (Schutz, 1932, p. 93). Therefore, in spite of his defining "action" in terms of the concept of "meaning" as Weber had done, he could not define "action," like Weber, in terms of the concept of "subjectively intended meaning," which, in his opinion, necessarily needed to be supplemented (Schutz, 1932, p. 166). The general concept of human "behavior," to which subjective meaning is attached, refers both to "action" as an ongoing process and to an "act" as the result of such a process. It is the concept of "project" which he proposed as a substitute for the concept of subjective meaning. The crux of his theory of action lies in a theory of the "project." He definitively said that "it is inadmissible to interpret objectively pre-given processes of act as a unity without any reference to the pre-given project and to ascribe to them a subjective meaning" (Schutz, 1932, p. 398).

Which discussion did Schutz develop on the concept of project, and how did he talk about action? Before examining these topics, the relationship between Schutz's and Parsons' work, both of whom started their sociological inquiries from studying Weber's work, should be investigated even briefly with regard to the theme of this essay.

Schutz and Parsons

Before the middle of the 1960s, Schutz's work was recognized in the United States only by a certain small circle. As for Parson' work, on the contrary, his influence was growing since the second edition of his *The structure of social action* was appeared in 1949, and from the 1950s to the 1960s, his perspective called structural-functionalism was becoming the mainstream of sociology not only in the United States but also worldwide.

There were several correspondences remained, however, between the two polarized scholars from 1940 to 1941. This was just after Schutz had fled

from Vienna to New York via Paris. Their correspondence went on with regard to Schutz's review for *Economica* of Parsons' *The structure of social action*, which had been requested by F. A. Hayek, who was one of colleagues in the so-called Mises Seminar in Vienna.

Although Schutz and Parsons argued about various topics in their correspondences, considering the theme of this essay, it might be sufficient to confine my attention to a theory of action conceived of by each, and to ascertain the fundamental standpoints on which each theory is founded.[7]

As was mentioned in section 2 of this essay, Parsons pointed out a *limitation* of Weber's sociology in his alleged tendency to obscure the role of the essentially nonfictional generalized system of theory modeled on the systems of differential equations of analytical mechanics (Parsons, 1937, p. 716; 1945, p. 216). Given his criticism, it is rather a truism that the focus of Parsons' arguments about action was on the general structure of action. He tried to answer the question what action is by equating it with the question which elements action consists of and what relation should be established among these elements.

Parsons wrote that an "act" involves logically the four elements; (1) an "actor," (2) an "end," (3) a "situation," which is analyzable into "conditions" and the "means," and finally (4) a certain mode of relationship between these elements called "normative orientation" (Parsons, 1937, p. 44). What is remarkable here about these elements is that they are posited from Parsons' epistemological position which he called "analytical realism" (Parsons, 1937, p. 730). This implies that the four elements have to be involved in an act insofar as it is considered logically, and that they do not correspond "to concrete phenomena, but to elements of them which are analytically separable from other elements" (Parsons, 1937, p. 730). The "unit act," which Parsons posited as an analytical unit for his theory of action, certainly has its analytical position in his theory, but it has no reference to an actor's interpretation of his/her own action.

Schutz, on the other hand, tried to develop his theory of action in a different direction, that is, led by the question how persons organize and perform their actions in their daily lives. He conceived of action as "human conduct as an ongoing process which is devised by the actor in advance, that is, which is based upon a preconceived project" (Schutz, 1951, p. 67). Such

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[7] There are so many essays devoted to discussing their correspondence, and I discussed it in more detail; see Nasu (1991c) and Nasu (2004).

a conception of action by Schutz obviously indicates his attempts to take a subjective point of view.

Having pointed this out, the following questions arise: Doesn't Parsons realize the importance of the subjective point of view for a theory of action? If he actually did, what did the difference between Schutz and Parsons derive from?

In fact, Parsons, like Schutz, emphasized the significance of the subjective point of view for a theory of action. He insisted that "the frame of reference of the schema [of action] is subjective in a particular sense. That is, it deals with phenomena, with things and events *as they appear from the point of view of the actor* whose action is being analyzed and considered" (Parsons, 1937, p. 46). He, however, relied on the assumption that the observer cannot grasp fully the subjective events in the mind of the actor. Against this background, he developed his thought in a direction guided by his definition of "fact" as an "empirically verifiable statement about phenomena in terms of a conceptual scheme" (Parsons, 1937, p. 41), and argued that any subjective point of view should be replaced by an observer's conceptual scheme of interpretation of such events. As a matter of fact, he sent a letter to Schutz in february 2, 1941, which reads that "[…] from my point of view, the antithesis you [Schutz] draw between the objective and subjective points of view is unreal. […] Subjective phenomena have meaning *only* as described and analyzed by an observer" (Schutz and Parsons, 1978, p. 88).

Schutz relied on the same assumption as Parsons that the observer cannot grasp fully the subjective events in the mind of the actor. He, however, developed his arguments in a direction different from that of Parsons. From his point of view, Parsons seemed to be confused objective schemes for interpreting subjective phenomena with these subjective phenomena themselves[8] (Schutz and Parsons, 1978, p. 36), because Schutz, from his constitution analysis of consciousness and lived experience, has already gained a convinced insights into not merely the *difference* between, but also the "*incommensurability*" of, objective and subjective points of view (Schutz, 1996, p. 129). For him, precisely because an observer has no access to the actor's subjectivity in its totality, it is required as a *postulate* for social scientific activities to interpret the objects, events, and occurrences from the subjective point of view. Otherwise, the scientific conceptual scheme might easily, on the one hand, be permeated

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[8] Schutz aptly said that Parsons' definition of a fact "seems to me not only unusual, but rather dangerous," and enumerated "a confusion among three essential categories of the epistemology of sciences" (Schutz and Parsons, 1978, p. 10).

by common-sense interpretation, and on the other, get rid of and lose sight of common-sense interpretation. This was Schutz's position toward subjectivity. Then, how did he talk about action?

Schutz's theory of action

The kernel of Schutz's theory of action consists, as mentioned above, in a theory of the "project." Projecting means positing an actor by him/herself in an undetermined time and space called the future. The project belongs, therefore, to a world of phantasy. "All projecting consists in an anticipation of future conduct by way of phantasying" (Schutz, 1951, p. 68).

Projecting, however, should be distinguished from mere fancying. Whereas the latter is a thinking *modo optativo*, and therefore, is left to the discretion of the fancying subject from the beginning to the end, the former is a thinking *modo potentiali*, and therefore, is restricted first in the following sense: projecting is within the framework of practicability, which is estimated by the projecting subject on the basis of his/her evaluation both of the objective conditions and his/her own capacities for attaining goals, which is, in turn, based on his/her stock of knowledge at the time of projecting. Furthermore, since every project stems from a projecting subject, it is restricted in still another sense: It is based on the interests of the projecting subject with respect to the future. Interest is a sediment from the biography of the projecting subject, and therefore, projects have a prior history just as the interests behind them do (Schutz and Luckmann, 2003, p. 480-481, p. 487-488; 1984, p. 272).

It is not sufficient to direct attention only to these restrictions on project and projecting when they are dealt with in the context of a theory of action. Every projecting does not necessarily lead to overt actions, and projecting does not stand in a one-to-one correspondence to an action. The process of "deciding" in the sense of "choosing among projects" should be described and analyzed.[9]

The process of choosing among projects of action is an interpretive process as a whole, and as such it should be distinguished from a process of choosing among objects. In the latter process, the objects to be chosen are ready-made and well circumscribed, and in addition, they coexist in the outer world, i.e., they coexist in the simultaneity of outer time. As such their constitution

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[9] From the actor's point of view, this process can become an issue anytime, but it happens rather infrequently, because when the actor lives naively and straightforwardly in daily life and performs his/her action within a situation where "routinized interests" or "imposed relevances" are prevailing, the actor's practical interest does not urge him/her "to reflect back beyond taking notice of the external process" (Schutz, 1996, p. 126).

is beyond the control of the choosing subject. On the contrary, what stands to be chosen in a process of choosing among projects are not "problematic possibilities" coexisting in outer time. This process is characterized by the following conditions: first, the constitution of alternatives to be chosen is under the control of the choosing subject, and second, strictly speaking, at the time of projecting, there are no problematic alternatives to be chosen. The alternatives, i.e., the several projects of a projecting subject's future actions, do not coexist in the simultaneity of outer time. Projects must be constituted *successively* and *exclusively* in inner time, within the *durée* (Schutz, 1951, p. 84-85; Schutz and Luckmann, 1984, p. 276-278).

Now, let us assume that a project is chosen among several projects. Such a decision to choose a project is not an "operation" (*Wirken*) but a mere "thought" (*Denken*), since there is nothing in the outer world which would suggest that a decision has been taken. Even after deciding to choose a project through deliberating in a mind, the whole process leading to this decision can be withdrawn without any change in the outer world. This decision leads only to a "covert action" with an intention to bring about the projected state of affairs. Schutz called this "performance" as opposed to "mere fancying" (Schutz, 1951, p. 67).

In order for a projected action to be executed, a decision other than the one to choose a project, that is, a decision to put the project into practice, is required. Schutz called such a decision, borrowing a term from W. James, "fiat" (Schutz, 1951, p. 88). An action starts when the project is transferred into a purpose by a voluntative fiat in the form of an inner command. The fiat is a "last impulsion" (Schutz and Luckmann, 2003, p. 512), and there is no need for any additional processes to intervene between the fiat and the actual conduct.

The conduct, which starts with the fiat, "gears into" the outer world and can change it, in that, it is an "overt action" or "operation." In addition, the changes which it brings into the outer world are not merely incidental, because they are executed on the basis of a certain project. It is, more strictly speaking according to Schutz, "working" among operations (Schutz and Luckmann, 2003, p. 456-460).

Working is based on a project devised by the actor in advance of its beginning. Nevertheless, it neither necessarily follows the pre-devised course nor goes straight toward the pre-conceived "purposes," and it does not always finish with realizing the pre-conceived purposes. It may be that in the course of action conditions can occur which the actor has never foreseen in advance, and consequently, additional decisions are required and/or the pre-conceived

purposes are cancelled or revised. As far as actions in daily life are concerned, these conditions occur rather normally and regularly. In any case, the possible forms or types of the course of an action cannot be enumerated exhaustively (Schutz and Luckmann, 2003, p. 525-528).

Schutz's description of action, as sketched above briefly, began with the distinction between lived experience (*Erlebnis*) and experience (*Erfahrung*) by paying attention to the stream of consciousness; it arrived at a definition of, and a distinction between, action (*Handeln*) and act (*Handlung*) by focusing on the time structure of "meaning"; it proceeded through the concepts of "thinking," "performance," "operation," and "working" toward a description of how action begins, proceeds, and ends.

What should be noted here is that Schutz described action, like his description of certain categories of common-sense thinking, "in terms of the entirely abstract and unjustified assumption that the actor is an isolated individual, not a man living among and interacting with his fellowmen" (Schutz, 1997, p. 138). Sociology, however, has to deal with social action in daily life, in which the actor always and already assumes actual or imaginative others and their actions. The others are factors indispensable for discussing social actions, social relations, and society, and therefore, for doing sociology.

Having made this point, it should be recognized that to assume the being of others is in itself not the same as to make an assumption about the *manners of being* of the others. One of Schutz's criticisms against Weber was, in my opinion, directed toward this point; that is, Weber failed to distinguish between them. Weber wrote about "social action" as follows; "Action is 'social' insofar as, by virtue of the subjective meaning attached to it by the acting individual(s), it takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course" (Weber, 1921, p. 1). Weber paid attention to the others in his own way. However, as Schutz pointed out, he "presupposes the meaningful existence of the others as simply pre-given, when he talks about the interpretation (*Deutung*) of the behavior of others" (Schutz, 1932, p. 101). This presupposition leads Weber to assume the world in general and also the meaningful phenomena naively as a matter of *intersubjective agreement* precisely in the same way as we in daily life assume naively the pre-givenness of the homogenous outer world conforming to our grasping (Schutz, 1932, p. 88). This assumption, in turn, provides a foundation for the idea to introduce an objective and hypostatized category of "*cultural significance*" (*Kulturbedeutung*) as a criterion for selecting as the object of the social sciences those parts which are "essential" in the sense of being "worthy of being known" from the surrounding reality

of life (*Wirklichkeit des Lebens*) which appears to us in absolutely infinite multiformity[10] (Weber, 1904, p. 170-171, p. 177-178).

Against the background of this criticism, Schutz developed his arguments about the constitution of meaningful lived experience in my own stream of consciousness, acquired his own viewpoint founded on these arguments, and concluded by saying that "intersubjectivity is not a problem of constitution which can be solved within the transcendental sphere, but is rather a datum (*Gegebenheit*) of the life-world" (Schutz, 1957, p. 82). In addition, he declared in his discussion of the alter ego that "we set aside the transcendental problems and turn to the mundane sphere of our life-world" (Schutz, 1962, p. 167), and tried to investigate how it is that people take others for granted in their daily lives, "how it is possible to grasp by a system of objective knowledge subjective meaning structures" (Schutz, 1953, p. 35).

Now let us take a brief look at Schutz's remarks on social action and its orientation to "others." On the basis of his arguments about the relation between the actor-being-social and action-being-social, he characterizes "social action" first along the lines of Weber by saying that "we speak of social action only when the *meaning* of the act is social," and then in his own terms by saying that "social action is characterized by the fact that others appear in its thematic core or at least in the thematic field of the *project*" (Schutz and Luckmann, 1984, p. 545).

In Schutz's conception of social action, therefore, the mode of the others' appearance, or more precisely, the mode of the others' givenness, is decisive for the form of social action, since social action is oriented toward the meaning which the others have for the actor, which is, in turn, determined jointly by the others' givenness and the actor's interest in and attitude toward them (Schutz and Luckmann, 1984, p. 547). Then he formulated the four forms of social action in terms of two axes of "immediacy – mediation" and "unilateralness – reciprocity," that is, "unilateral immediate action," "reciprocal immediate action," reciprocal mediate action," and "unilateral mediate action" (Schutz and Luckmann, 1984, p. 548-582). The four forms were defined apparently by focusing on the mode of the other's formal givenness, irrespective of the contents.

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[10] If it were Schutz who wrote these sentences, he would introduce, instead of "cultural significance," the phenomenologically inspired and founded term "*relevance*" as a criterion for selecting and choosing the objects or aspects being "worthy of being known" from the surrounding reality of life; see Nasu (2005).

Distinctive features and significance of Schutz's work

Weber aptly distinguished between "subjective meaning" and "objective meaning," as well as between "understanding" (*Verstehen*) and "causal explanation" (*kausale Deutung*). He tried to investigate the social world by focusing on "social action," and, in addition, from a dual perspective, which Parsons reduced to mere causality and causal explanation. Weber, however, had little concern with providing a firm philosophical foundation for his distinctions and was satisfied with assuming the world as pre-given in the form of "a matter of intersubjective agreement," as Schutz put it. This led him to introduce a category of "cultural significance" as a criterion for selecting the objects to be investigated. Schutz, who appreciated Weber's ideas in general but found the limitations of his theoretical work in its poor philosophical foundation, tried to provide a firm philosophical foundation to Weber's concepts and insights through a constitution analysis of lived experience. On the basis of such an inquiry, Schutz gained insights into the "incommensurability" of objective and subjective meaning, and tried to cope with a very crucial topic for sociological research: "How is it possible to grasp by a system of objective knowledge subjective meaning structures?"

Schutz's arguments, as is clear from the description thus far, might seem rather "vague" to traditional sociologists. His description of action does not seem to indicate anything about the concrete factors or elements of action or about the concrete and specific courses of action. It does not seem to add new empirical insights filled with contents to a traditional conception of action.

This impression is not restricted to his theory of action but rather refers to his sociological theory as a whole. His arguments are not filled with "contents" but rather "formal." If some sociologists point to this feature of Schutz's sociological argumentations and conclude that they fail to make any contribution to sociology, their conclusion is, in my opinion, too hasty.

If sociologists approach Schutz's work from a traditional perspective of sociology as an empirical science of the concrete social world, they might say, like Parsons, that Schutz made points which as they were stated sound perfectly plausible, but "I am always compelled to ask the question 'what of it?'" (Schutz and Parsons, 1978, p. 67). For such sociologists, the task of sociology is to draw empirical propositions filled with contents and with reference to the manner of being of the concrete social world in the past and the present. If sociologists adhere only to such a traditional sociological framework, they would be dissatisfied with Schutz's work.

The feature of Schutz's work mentioned above, its significance of which Parsons could not understand, is one of the reasons, in my opinion, why Schutz's work has been called "phenomenological." One of the distinguished features of phenomenology consist in a "changing in attitude" toward the world, that is, in depriving the world "which formerly, within the natural attitude, was simply posited as being, of just this posited being" in order to "return to the living stream" of my experience of the world and to "direct my view exclusively to my consciousness of the world" (Schutz, 1940, p. 122-123). Schutz's efforts to describe action, as shown above, consists in depriving the objects of their contingent factors, that is, in bracketing differences among individual actors in their "stock of knowledge," "interest," and "motive," which jointly characterize concrete and specific action, and then describing "forms" or "essences" of action and social action.

Why are such inquiries required? Why should the actor's future-oriented projects be inquired retrospectively for explaining action and social action? Isn't it sufficient to start the discussion, like Weber, with presupposing the meaningful phenomena naively as a matter of intersubjective agreement? Cannot action be explained scientifically, as Parsons tried to do, by finding out the causal relationships between the factors of action and certain other preceding factors through elaborated deductive procedures without taking into account the uncertain factor of the actor's own interpretation of their action?

It might be sufficient for sociology to be founded only to the degree Weber tried to do, or in such a direction as that advocated by Parsons, insofar as sociology deals exclusively with a situation in which the differences in meaning of social phenomena derived from differences in the perspective of persons do not offer any troubles; or it deals exclusively with circumstances in which a history is being made exclusively by so called "big events" or by powerful individuals; or it deals exclusively with an action which the actor performs by relating an "end" with "conditions" through "normative values," all of which are logically or scientifically constructed by social scientists in accordance with the frame of reference of their science; or it deals exclusively with such a formal organization whose defining characteristics can be conceived of in advance as "primacy of orientation to the attainment of a specific goal" (Parsons, 1956, p. 17).

The reason it might be sufficient in these cases is that such social events or occurrences could be successfully explained by establishing certain *causal* relations among social factors which are assumed in advance to be significant and important for social research on the basis of a social scientific framework, even if people living at the bottom of society and having little effect on any

social policies are forgotten and excluded, or even if the ordinary people is described as a "cultural dope", that is, as "the man-in-the-sociologist's-society who produces the stable features of the society by acting in compliance with pre-established and legitimate alternatives of action that common culture provides" (Garfinkel, 1964, p. 68). In these cases, social events and occurrences could be explained successfully in the same way as a plant physiologist explains the "natural facts" like the cycle in vegetable life "by reducing them to others which have a greater generality and which have been tested in a broader field" (Schutz and Parsons, 1978, p. 52).

However, when sociologists try to bring the light of their inquiries to cope seriously with differences in meanings of social phenomena derived from differences in the perspectives of persons; or when they try to make circumstances themselves their research topic in which a history is being made amidst unnamed ordinary people's activities in their daily lives; or when they try to shed light on aspects of action which the actor constructs with orientation toward the future and polythetically in her/his biographically determined situation; or when they conceive of the goal of an organization not as given to the organization from the beginning but as a product of interactions among its members and, at the same time, conceive of an organization as constructed and sustained through the activities of its members, it might be insufficient for their research to be founded in a mode of either Weber's or Parsons'. For doing sociological research from such perspectives, among others, the foundation for sociology in a mode of Schutz's might be required, because it might be insufficient for the research to refer only to the manner of being of action and the social world as ready-made and existing by itself, and because sociologists as persons-not-concerned cannot decide in advance which aspects of social phenomena should be selected and chosen as the object of research.

Sociologists so inclined should inquire, at any rate, which meaning the concerned persons attach to the social phenomena, and furthermore they should take into account not only meaning attached *ex post facto*, but also projects devised in advance with an orientation to the future by the actors. This make it insufficient for sociologists to consider action and the social world as ready-made and existing by itself. They should pay attention with the same weight to possible or expected action and the social world. In order to do this, that is, in order to describe the manner of being of action and the social world – borrowing a term from Schutz – *adequately*, they should, to begin with, bracket the manner of being of action and the social world in the past and the present, and then describe and analyze it fundamentally (*ursächlich*) through tracing it back to the level of "intentionality." This might lead to empirical

research which inquires *adequate* how meaning is constituted and modalized and how the others and I appear through mutually and reciprocally regulating each other.

Adequate research, then, should not be in a "philosophically naïve" position which begins inquiry with the object of knowledge (Natanson, 1978, p. xii), since the aspects of action and the social world to be inquired are not given in advance to the researcher. Empirical research should not start its inquiry from the unfounded assumptions that several "problematic possibilities" are already constructed and pre-given to the actors, and that these actors orient their actions by choosing among them as if they were choosing among objects. If an inquiry starts with assumptions filled with ready-made contents, such an inquiry cannot but take on some implicit biases derived from these contents.

Which events and occurrences does sociology investigate, from which perspective and by which method? What can be selected and chosen as events to be investigated? What are constituted as "problematic possibilities" by the actors in their daily lives? sociologists should take these questions seriously as topics for their inquiries. Only on the basis of inquiries into these topics, could sociologists state with confidence, on the one hand, that events conceived of now in this manner could in principle be different, and on the other, which conditions or factors lead events to appear as they do. In this sense, it must be said that philosophy is not only compatible with sociology, but also "necessary to it as a constant reminder of its tasks; and that each time the sociologist returns to the living sources of his knowledge, to what operates within him as a means of understanding the forms of cultures most remote from him, he practices philosophy spontaneously" (Merleau-Ponty, 1960, p. 110).

It is true that the work of Schutz does not in itself provide new or additional empirical insights to sociology. It invites, however, sociologists to critical and fundamental arguments about sociological reasoning as well as common-sense reasoning, and in this sense, it is no less significant than traditional sociological work providing empirical insights. In my opinion, what is required for building a firm foundation for sociological knowledge is not to elaborate "discussions of causality which, having to do with man, are by their nature interminable" (Merleau-Ponty, 1960, p. 111), but to realize "the price of schematization" (Merleau-Ponty, 1960, p. 102), to bracket the legitimacy of accumulated and approved sociological insights for a while, and then to return to our lived experience. It is the work of Schutz inspired and directed by the spirit of phenomenology; "*zu den Sachen selbst*," which indicated the direction for inquiries of this kind.

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