

Contributions To Phenomenology 78

Lester Embree

The Schutzian Theory of the Cultural Sciences

 Springer

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*This study is dedicated to the memory of
George Franklin Schutz,
kindred spirit*

Preface

The present work is devoted to advancing as well as expounding the theory of the cultural sciences of the philosopher Alfred Schutz (1899–1959). How *Wissenschaftslehre* is fundamental for him is shown in the Introduction. It is sad to report, however, that a remarkable proportion of scholars of phenomenology fail to recognize that the project of Edmund Husserl, the founder of our tradition, was of a *Wissenschaftslehre*. This seems due to how most of the leading phenomenologists (Merleau-Ponty is the major exception) who came later in our multidisciplinary tradition have usually been the opposite of positively interested in the sciences, thereby apparently throwing the beautiful baby out with the dirty bathwater of naturalism and positivism.

But Schutz was chiefly interested in science. *Wissenschaftslehre* can be rendered in English as “theory of science” or “science theory,” the latter conveniently yielding “science-theoretical(ly)” as modifiers. He usually referred to the subdiscipline in question as “methodology,” but that was in a time when this word did not yet chiefly denote statistical and logical techniques in much of science and philosophy and hence the alternative expression of *Wissenschaftslehre* that he used but once can be preferred today.

Schutz’s approach in science theory is distinctive in fully appreciating that scientists as well as philosophers tend to reflect on their own disciplines and that there can then be interaction between them to the benefit of both, something the recognition of which originally drew me years ago into the problematics of this study (see Chap. 11). The disciplinary difference evident in Schutz’s thought is that scientists tend to focus exclusively on their own particular disciplines, while philosophers seek to understand shared aspects of whole species and genera of science. Thus it is philosophical for Schutz to focus on the whole classes not only of the social sciences but also of the cultural sciences, which also include the historical sciences. “Science theory” additionally and valuably avoids the awkwardness of scientists not prepared in philosophy saying that they engage in philosophy of science. Perhaps unfortunately, philosophers seem less prone to claim their work is scientific.

Even though they include points of wider significance, nine of the 18 chapters of this book are devoted to particular disciplines and can be studied separately by

scientists interested in reflecting on just their own disciplines, the possibility of such separate studies calling for and possibly excusing some of the repetitions that occur, particularly in this new commercial and technological era when chapters within a book can be purchased separately. The additional eight chapters are, however, philosophical by having multidisciplinary bearing.

What are best called the “cultural sciences” are focused on by Schutz. These are often currently called “the human sciences,” an expression not yet coined in Schutz’s time, but the title, “cultural sciences,” a title that he did use significantly, is arguably preferable first of all in order to include primate ethology, where culture in non-humans is now recognized.¹ In the second place and systematically speaking, if the naturalistic sciences are about natural things, then the sciences that are about cultural things are the cultural sciences, something that requires recognizing that humans, e.g., taxi-drivers, and non-human animals, e.g., watchdogs, can have cultural characteristics of use and value.

Some of the following chapters are devoted to cultural sciences that Schutz himself referred to, but the historical sciences other than archaeology are omitted because, while there are remarks scattered elsewhere, he nicely devotes the concentrated § 41 of his masterpiece, *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt* (1932), to history.² While quite a bit is now known about Schutz’s views of language,³ there are no indications about how he conceived the theory of linguistics. Chapters on the theories of nursing and psychotherapy have been included to show how Schutz would probably have approached “science-based” practical disciplines.

Except for his *Aufbau*, the expression of Schutz’s ultimately consistent thought is not systematically presented. Statements about most of the relevant topics can be found scattered about in many places in the oeuvre and thus have needed to be collated in this chiefly internal study. This in addition to how well he expresses himself has led to an unusual amount of quotation that the reader is also asked to excuse if it irritates her. And because four chapters are significantly based on work by others than Schutz, this work is called “Schutzian” rather than “Schutz’s.”

Finally, it deserves mention that Schutz’s thought is currently appreciated in many theoretical and practical disciplines beyond those covered here, e.g., commu-

¹ Cf. Lester Embree, “A Beginning for the Phenomenological Theory of Primate Ethology,” *Topos*, 2/11 (2005): 149–160. Castillian translation, “Un comienzo para la teoría fenomenológica de la etología de los primates,” published in *Escritos de Filosofía*, vol. 45 (2005): 145–60 (appeared in 2007). Modified English version in *Journal of Environmental Philosophy*, Vol. 5/1 (2008): 61–74.

² I have proposed modifications of Schutz’s position to accommodate so-called “Contemporary History” in “A Problem in Schutz’s Theory of the Historical Sciences with an Illustration from the Women’s Liberation Movement,” *Human Studies*, 27 (2004): 281–306.

³ Alfred Schutz, “Problems of a Sociology of Language (Fall Semester, 1958),” ed. Fred Kersten with an Introduction by Lester Embree and Fred Kersten, *Schutzian Research*, vol. II (2010), 53–107.

nicology, geography, and psychiatry. Among the major hopes for the present work is that it will not only encourage deeper research on the cultural sciences in general as well as the particular disciplines focused on here, but also that other colleagues will undertake Schutzian science theories of yet further particular disciplines.

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Other chapters were previously presented at conferences: “Alfred Schutz on Ideal Types,” Conference on Lebenswelt und Lebensformen, Universität Erlangen, October 2009; “Sketch of a Schutzian Theory of Archaeology,” Society for Phenomenology and the Human Sciences, Arlington, Va., October 2009; “Constructing a Schutzian Theory of Political Science,” Human Science Research Conference,” Seattle University, July 2010; “A Start for a Schutzian Theory of Psychotherapy,” Interdisciplinary Coalition of North American Phenomenologists, New York, May 2012; and “Verification in Schutz,” The Alfred Schutz Circle for Philosophy and Interpretive Social Science, Buenos Aires, April 2014.

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September 2014

Lester Embree
Delray Beach,

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