Founding Some Practical Disciplines in Schutzian Social Psychology

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> *How can the lifeworld of all of us be made an object of theoretical contemplation and how can the outcome of this contemplation be used within the world of working?*
> *(A. Schutz, CP IV, p. 45)*

Abstract Practical disciplines such as nursing and psychotherapy can have scientific foundations in social psychology. This essay is chiefly concerned with explicating what sociology qua social psychology is according to Alfred Schutz, but ultimately it considers how it can contribute to the foundations of such disciplines.

Introduction

1. I have long been bothered that many colleagues call Alfred Schutz (1899-1959) a phenomenological "sociologist." Besides being mistaken, this characterization has disparaging connotations for some philosophers. It might be that Schutz is characterized that way because he chiefly taught sociology and had famous sociological students, Thomas Luckmann first of all, and that four of his writings are substantively social scientific, e.g., "The Stranger" (1944),[1] "The Homecomer" (1944),[2] "The Well-Informed Citizen" (1946),

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[1] Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers,* Vol. II, Studies in Social Theory, ed. and Introd. Arvid Broedersen (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), this essay hereafter cited as "Stranger" and this volume as "CP II."

[2] Alfred Schutz, CP II, this essay hereafter cited as "Homecomer."

and "Equality and the Meaning Structure of the Social World" (1955).[1] Then again, as will be seen below, what Schutz characterized in "Stranger" and "Homecomer" as social psychology, was characterized in Schutz's master-piece, *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt* (1932), as *"Soziologie,"* although he recognized "sociology" with a different signification in the USA.

2. Schutz's doctorate was in philosophy of law, the vast bulk of his writings are in or on philosophy, and, when his colleague, Leo Straus, praised him as a "philosophically sophisticated sociologist," he said he would prefer to be called a "sociologically sophisticated philosopher."[2] Moreover, if one asks what was central to Schutz's project, the label today that fits is "philosophy of social science," although it did not exist in his day. What he regularly called his work was "methodology and epistemology" and his focus was on the social sciences in the broad signification or, better, the cultural sciences, which include history, but this no more makes him a sociologist than his philosophizing about physics made Carl Hempel a physicist. And since "methodology" now often connotes logic and statistics, Schutz's alternative expression, *Wissenschaftslehre*, translated as "theory of science" or "science theory," can be preferred. While science theory is often engaged in by cultural scientists such as Max Weber with respect to their own particular disciplines, Schutz not only addressed particular disciplines, e.g., eco-nomics,[3] but also addressed the species and the genus of the cultural sciences and was thereby a philosopher.

3. Alfred Schutz's theory of cultural science has three components: (a) basic concepts, (b) disciplinary definition, and (c) relevant methods. In the follow-ing exposition concerning social psychology, the question of disciplinary definition will be approached first, then those of basic concepts and methods will be addressed, and finally how some practical disciplines might have social-scientific foundations will be considered.

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[1] Alfred Schutz, CP II, this essay hereafter cited as "Equality."

[2] Lester Embree, "A Problem in Schutz's Theory of the Historical Sciences with an Illustration from the Women's Liberation Movement," Part I, "Schutz's Project," *Human Studies,* Vol. 27: 281-287.

[3] Lester Embree, "Economics in the Context of Alfred Schutz's Theory of Science," "La economia en el contexto de la theoria de la ciencia de Alfred Schutz," *Arete: Revista de Filosofia,* vol. XVIII, No. 2, 2006, pp. 309-322. Korean translation by Youngjin Kiem in *Korean Journal Research in Philosophy and Phenomenology,* Vol. 33 Summer 2007, pp. 209-224. English original, *Schutzian Research,* Vol. I (2008), pp. 163-173.

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What is social psychology?

4. Alfred Schutz is no positivist for whom all science either is or is like physical science. Social science in the broad signification, alias cultural scence, is different by its subject matter from naturalistic science for him:

> The concept of Nature, … with which the natural sciences have to deal is, as Husserl has shown, an idealizing abstraction from the *Lebenswelt,* an abstraction which, on principle and of course legitimately, excludes persons with their personal life and all objects of culture which originate as such in practical human activity. Exactly this layer of the Lebenswelt, however, from which the natural sciences have to abstract, is the social reality which the social sciences have to investigate.[1]

5. Schutz is next clear in many places that the social sciences in the narrow signification investigate the realm of "contemporaries," who have community of time but not space with a self, while the historical sciences investigate the realm of "predecessors," who do not have community of time. Social psychology is in these terms a social science like economics, linguistics, and political science, but how it differs especially from sociology requires some explication.

6. Where the substantive sciences that Schutz did a few times engage in are concerned, the case can be made that at least in the USA "Equality" is sociological, while "Stranger" and "Homecomer" are social-psychological. This is a matter of contrasting approaches that either begin from the social group or begin from the individual. Thus, while he disapproved of it, Schutz did recognize that at some universities in the USA sociology and social psychology could be studied separately[2] and he also recognized that one can conduct laboratory experiments in social psychology, but presumably not in sociology. (CP I, p. 49) Otherwise, he rarely refers to social psychology, but see CP II, p. 230.

7. No distinction is made between sociology and social psychology in Schutz's *Aufbau.* In the last paragraph of the penultimate section, he writes,

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[1] Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers,* Vol. I, The Problem of Social Reality, ed. Maurice Natanson (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962), hereafter cited as "CP I," p. 58.
[2] Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers,* Vol. IV, ed. Helmut Wagner, George Psathas, and Fred Kersten (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996), hereafter cited as "CP IV," p. 113.

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"There is still a word to be said about the field and method of interpretive sociology. The primary task of this science is to describe the processes of meaning-establishment and meaning-interpretation as these are carried out by individuals living in the social world." (PSW 248) This was sociology as he understood it in Austria in 1932, but when Schutz published "The Stranger" and "The Homecomer" in 1944, he had, in effect, learned that in the USA this was a description of social psychology.

8. In his book he does claim that "social collectives," such as the state, the press, the economy, the nation, the people, and the working class, are absolutely anonymous ideal types and asserts that "every 'action' of the state can be reduced to the actions of its functionaries."[1] Twenty years later, he mentions that Husserl referred to groups as "personalities of a higher order," but, against that, asserts that "The attempts of Simmel, Max Weber, [and] Scheler to reduce social collectivities to the social interaction of individuals is, so it seems, much closer to the spirit of phenomenology than the pertinent statements of its founder." (CP II, p. 39)

9. As for what sociology strictly speaking is about in the USA, Schutz refers to books of Talcott Parsons, whose work he had begun studying in 1940,[2] and asserts that "Modern sociologists dealing with the social system as such describe a concrete social group, for example, as a structural-functional context of interlocked social roles and status relations, of patterns of performance and significance."[3] "Equality" is then sociological since it begins as follows. "The subject of the present paper is the theoretical analysis of various aspects of the notion of equality in the common-sense thinking of social groups." And in "Equality" and other later writings (e.g., CP II, p. 276) Schutz does distinguish and describe subjective and objective interpretations

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[1] Alfred Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World,* trans. George Walsh and Frederick Lehnert (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1967), p. 199.
[2] Alfred Schutz, *The Theory of Social Action: The Correspondence of Alfred Schutz and Talcott Parsons*, ed. Richard Grathoff (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1978).
[3] "Equality," p. 231. Earlier Schutz stated that for Parsons "Sociology [is] a special analytical science on the same level with economic theory as 'the science which attempts to develop an analytic theory of social action systems (the term social involving a plurality of actors mutually oriented to each other's action) in so far as these can be understood of the property of common-value integration." Social action systems would seem collectivities or groups and "Not the concrete individual or the concrete person, but the role is the conceptual unit of the social system." (II 269) Cf., e.g., CP II, pp. 84-85 on the behavior of groups.

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of in-groups and out-groups and also of existential groups and voluntary groups. (e.g., CP II, pp. 250-257)

10. Not only does he thus recognize groups but also recognizes that "the individual finds himself always a member of numerous social groups," (CP II, p. 253) even though it is possible by a "fictitious abstraction" to consider an individual "separated from his fellow-men" (CP I, p. 218), i.e., "we proceeded as if the world were my private world and as if we were entitled to disregard the fact that it is from the outset an intersubjective world…" (CP I, p. 10, cf. I, p. 53, I, p. 306) On this basis one can say that for Schutz groups are concrete and individuals considered apart from their memberships are abstractions.

11. Schutz's great emphasis, nevertheless, is on individuals and this is perhaps clearest with respect to how individuals understand and/or influence consociates, contemporaries, predecessors, and successors, something he describes in many places. (See CP I, p. 318 for the last statement) "Stranger" is "an essay in social psychology" and "Homecomer" is quite similar. Both begin not from collectivities or groups but from the typical common-sense thinking of individuals about others. Schutz could have recognized that immigrants, his chief example of strangers, often come in families, as his own did from Austria to the USA, and thus as groups, but he focuses on the typical individual immigrant. People can also return home in groups, but Schutz focuses on individual homecomers.

12. Besides the two essays chiefly drawn on in the present essay, the focus on individuals occurs in many other essays by Schutz, so that "Equality" as sociological is the exception rather than the rule. Sociology begins with groups of which individuals are members and social psychology begins with individuals relating to others. The same data are approached in opposite directions. Where his minor engagement in substantive science with "Stranger" and "Homecomer" is concerned, Schutz is, in sum, far more a social psychologist in American terms than a sociologist.[1]

13. It can be argued, finally, that psychology for Schutz is about individual life whether or not it is related to individual or collective others and that this is clear in such texts as "On Multiple Realities" (1945) and, arguably, *Reflec-*

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[1] When asked about the difference between sociology and social psychology, my colleague George Psathas (pers. com. 8/20/09) replied that "The short answer is that sociology focuses more on the group than the individual."

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tions on the Problem of Relevance (1947-1951), but this claim does not need to be pursued in the present essay.[1]

Some basic concepts of social psychology

14. In the early pages of the *Aufbau* and many times in his other books Schutz refers to basic concepts (*Grundbegriffe*). Both "Stranger" and "Homecomer" are rich essays and only some basic concepts presented in them can be sketched here. In the latter, the "typical experiences of the homecomer will be analyzed … *in general terms* of social psychology." (CP II, p. 107, emphasis in original) Schutz's example is the veteran returning from war, which Schutz himself did after World War I. While the stranger goes into a new situation where he is an outsider seeking to become an insider, a homecomer returns to an old situation in which he arrives believing that he is still an insider.

15. The first basic concept that Schutz analyzes in "Homecomer" is that of "home" and in relation thereto, there is "life at home":

> It means, of course, father-house and mother-tongue, the family, the sweet-heart, the friends; it means a beloved landscape, "songs my mother taught me," food prepared in a particular way, familiar things for daily use, folkways, and personal habits—briefly, a peculiar way of life composed of small and important elements, likewise cherished. … Life at home follows an organized pattern or routine; it has its well-determined goals and well-proved means to bring them about, consisting of a set of traditions, habits, institutions, timetables for activities of all kinds, etc. There is no need to define or redefine situations which have occurred so many times or to look for new solutions of old problems hitherto handled satisfactorily. (CP II, p. 108)

16. Where social relationships are concerned, "it could be said that life at home is, for the most part, actually or at least potentially life in so-called primary groups" (CP II 109), the concept of which is plainly basic. Schutz seeks to overcome the equivocalness of this concept in the thought of Charles Cooley. To begin with, face-to-face relationships and intimate relationships (surely two more basic concepts) need to be distinguished. Individuals face-to-face have space and time directly in common so long as the relationship lasts.

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[1] Cf. Lester Embree, "The Nature and Role of Phenomenological Psychology in Alfred Schutz," *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology,* vol. 39 (2008).

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> In the face-to-face relation I can grasp the Other's thoughts in a vivid present as they develop and build themselves up, and so can he with reference to my stream of thought; and both of us know and take into account this possibility. The Other is to me, and I am to the Other, not an abstraction, not a mere instance of typical behavior, but, by the very reason of our sharing a common vivid present, this unique individual personality in this unique particular situation. These are, very roughly outlined, some of the features of the face-to-face relation which we prefer call the "pure we-relation." (CP II 110)

17. Charles Cooley included intimacy in his notion of primary group and the face-to-face relationship, but Schutz contends that there are "manifold degrees of intimacy and anonymity," which must also be basic concepts, in such structures. "To share the vivid present of a woman we love or of a neighbor in the subway are certainly different kinds of face-to-face relations." (Ibid.)

18. There is a third aspect to primary groups:

> A marriage, a friendship, a family group, a kindergarten, does not consist of a permanent, a strictly continuous, primary face-to-face relationship but rather of a series of merely intermittent face-to-face relationships. More precisely, the so-called "primary groups" are institutionalized situations which make it possible to reestablish the interrupted we-relation and to continue where it was broken off last time. (Ibid.)

19. The warrior returning home from the war expects to be at home again, but plainly he and also probably also his home have changed in the mean time, so there can be difficulties, which Schutz explores, but our concern here is merely to present some basic concepts in social psychology.

20. Several basic concepts in "Stranger" also deserve comment. While a member of an in-group is at home in actual or potential primary groups, the stranger is an individual outsider encountering the "cultural pattern of group life," which is

> all the peculiar valuations, institutions, and systems of orientation and guidance (such as folkways, mores, laws, habits, customs, etiquette, fashions) which, in the common opinion of sociologists of our time, characterize—if not constitute—any social group at a given moment of its history. This cultural pattern, like any phenomenon of the social world, has a different aspect for the sociologist and for the man who acts and thinks within it. (CP II 92)

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The "cultural pattern of group life" would seem a basic concept of sociology that can also be made use of in social psychology for Alfred Schutz because related to by the individual stranger.

21. Schutz furthermore accepts Robert S. Lynd's "thinking as usual," which would seem the cognitive component in "life at home," and also accepts W.I. Thomas's definition of a "crisis," which "'interrupts the flow of habit and gives rise to changed conditions of consciousness and practice.'" (Quoted at CP II, p. 96). Strangers are usually in crisis and homecomers soon are often as well.

22. Perhaps these examples suffice to show what basic concepts are for social psychology. A great number more need to be recognized in various areas of social life approached in relation to individuals.

The approach of social psychology for Schutz

23. Methodology is an account of a method or approach and can be described in terms of the rules for a process, the attitude involved and/or effects on the object. The concern here is with the approach to be taken in social psychology in general. There seem to be at least six components to the methodology of social psychology for Schutz.

(1) Social psychology is, first of all, a science conducted in the natural or, better, worldly attitude and thus not in the transcendental attitude Husserl distinguished.
(2) The abstraction described above by which nature is distinguished is not performed in cultural science, which is to say that the social psychologist remains in an attitude accepting the sociocultural stratum of the lifeworld. These two features of the attitude do not require any special effort to be adopted and are only mentioned here for the sake of completeness.
(3) Science for Schutz is theoretical and how the theoretical attitude is established through a specific *epochē* is extensively described by him in "On Multiple Realities" (1945).
(4) Next, because the lifeworld is not only social but also historical, the regions of consociates, predecessors, and successors need to be abstracted from for the sake of the region of contemporaries, which is the subject matter of the social sciences in the strict signification.
(5) To distinguish the subject matter of social psychology from that of sociology, there is furthermore need to begin from individuals relating to individual and collective others rather than from collectivities or groups.

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(6) Lastly where his methodology is concerned, Schutz emphasizes three postulates for the constructing of all social-scientific models:

(a) To begin with, models in social psychology need "to be established with the highest degree of clarity and distinctness … and must be fully compatible with the principles of formal logic." (CP I, p. 43) Besides this "postulate of logical consistency," there is

(b) "the postulate of subjective interpretation" ("which has, indeed, been observed so far in the theory formation of all social sciences" [CP I, p. 62]):

In order to explain human actions the scientist has to ask what model of an individual mind can be constructed and what typical constructs must be attributed to it in order to explain the observed facts as the result of the activity of such a mind in an understandable relation. The compliance with this postulate warrants the possibility of referring all kinds of human action or their result to the subjective meaning such action or result of an action had for the actor. (ibid.)

(c) Finally, there is "the postulate of adequacy":

Each term of 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 actor in the way indicated by the typical construct would be understandable for the actor himself as well as for his fellow-men in terms of common-sense interpretation of everyday life. Compliance with this postulate warrants the consistency of the constructs of the social scientist with the constructs of common-sense experience of the social reality. (CP I, p. 44)

(How accounts can be intersubjectively verified among scientists is not analyzed by Schutz (but cf. CP II, p. 288), yet they deserve to be and could be a matter of historical falsification, which will be the theme of another essay on Schutz.)

24. In sum, once the theoretical attitude toward individual contemporaries and groups in the social world is adopted, the social psychologist can build models of typical individual action and understanding relating to others that are composed of not only logically consistent scientific constructs about the common-sense subjective meanings, constructs, or interpretations of the typical individuals, e.g., strangers and homecomers (and social psychologists!), but also deemed adequate through being understandable by such individuals.

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Practical disciplines based on social psychology

25. One may wonder whether social psychology as sketched above can be applied in at least some practical disciplines. I do not like the traditional expression, "applied science," because it appears to connote that there are previously developed purely theoretical disciplines, philosophy included, from which practical disciplines are subsequently derived. This may be the case for naturalistic science and technology in modern times, but in the practical species of cultural disciplines, as they might be called,[1] such as nursing, psychotherapy, politics, and, in one signification, economics, disciplined practices have existed with considerable success for many centuries before any attempt was made to make them scientific through providing scientific foundations, and this is so even if that attempt is considered to have begun in general with Aristotle. When there are such foundations, the practical disciplines in question can be said to be "scientific" without being considered sciences, because they are not theoretical disciplines. And instead of "applied sciences," I would then prefer to speak of "science-based disciplines." Experience has shown that a practice based on a scientific understanding is typically more effective.

26. Not all practical disciplines can have social-psychological foundations. Theoretical economics is often "applied" and sometimes political efforts of late have bases in political science, but the focus in the cases of those social sciences is on collective behavior and groups. Nursing and psychotherapy, however, are science-based practical disciplines in which the practitioners focus on the actions and lives of individuals and their foundations are then in social psychology.

27. "Homecomer" is explicit at the end on how veterans returning from war may be helped to live at home again and help for strangers entering new in-groups can be inferred from "Stranger," so they are not purely theoretical accounts. (While not social-psychological, "Equality" also has practical implications where race relations in the USA are concerned[2] and the same can

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[1] Lester Embree, "Introduction: Reflection on the Cultural Disciplines." In *Phenomenology of the Cultural Disciplines*, edited by Mano Daniel and Lester Embree, 1-37. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994.

[2] Lester Embree, "Alfred Schutz on Reducing Social Tensions." In *Phenomenology of the Political*, edited by Kevin Thompson and Lester Embree, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers. 1999, pp. 81-102.

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be said of "The Well-Informed Citizen") These essays address relatively temporary conditions for normal individuals.

28. In nursing, psychiatry, and psychotherapy, however, there are typically longer-lasting and pathological conditions to be addressed. Such conditions specify these disciplines. And where methods are concerned, the methodology sketched above is at best generic and hence a great deal needs to be added where discipline-specific research and practice are concerned. It is hoped that what has also been shown here about the basic concepts, disciplinary definition, and methods of social psychology can be a place to start for advancing such specific theories of science and practice, which already exist, but appear not yet to have availed themselves of the social-psychological contributions of Alfred Schutz.

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