

In Search for Aprioris: Schutz's Life-World Analysis and Mises's Praxeology

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Among the intellectual partners of Alfred Schutz, Ludwig von Mises had certainly a formative influence on him, both socially and intellectually. Socially, because Schutz became a member of the Mises-Kreis where many friendships developed which lasted a lifetime, and intellectually, because Mises was an outstanding, prominent and authoritative economist in the Vienna of the 1920ies, and the one who kept "Austrian Economics" alive after his emigration to the United States. Mises was a generation older than Schutz and acted as his mentor. It comes therefore as no surprise that the influence of Mises on Schutz was much greater than vice versa.

It was the declared goal of Alfred Schutz (1967) to provide a philosophical foundation to the methodology of the social sciences. His concept of social science was thoroughly shaped by Max Weber on the one side and Ludwig von Mises on the other. Schutz was fascinated by Weber's approach to an interpretive sociology, but as a member of the Mises-Circle who had passed exams in economics, he had also to come to terms with Mises's approach to human action. Mises had quite a different concept of sociology than Weber: in his view, sociological theory had to be *aprioristic*. In this respect, Schutz and Mises pursued a common project: the *search for aprioris*. While Schutz attempted a phenomenological description of the constitutive features of the lifeworld in order to achieve a foundation for any interpretive social science, Mises formulated an aprioristic praxeology which serves as the very core of catallactics, the economics of the market society. It is the goal of my contribution to explore the relationship between Schutz and Mises, both socially and intellectually, and to show what they share and where they differ.

1. Interlinked Biographies

Ludwig Heinrich Edler von Mises¹ was born in 1881 in the city of Lemberg, Galicia (today Lviv, Ukraine) where his father worked as a construction engineer for the Czernowitz Railroad Company. The family had a Jewish ancestry, but the great grandfather of Ludwig was made an hereditary aristocrat by the Emperor Franz Joseph I. Together with the second child Richard, who later became a well-known mathematician, the family moved to Vienna when the children were still small. In 1900, Mises began his studies of law and received his doctorate in 1906. In 1909 he got a job at the Viennese Chamber of Commerce and became secretary of its Banking and Financial Department, where he stayed for 25 years. Mises studied under Carl Grünberg, an exponent of the so-called Historical School of government science, which stressed fact-finding instead of theoretical analysis. But in 1903, when he read Carl Menger's *Principles of Economics*, the foundational text of the Austrian School of Economics, he turned away from the historical approach. He continued to attend lectures given by Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk who belonged, with Friedrich von Wieser, to the second generation of the Austrian School of Economics. Mises became the most prominent representative of the third generation, teaching as a "Privatdozent" at the University of Vienna from 1913 and then, after the war, from 1919 to 1934. In 1919, he received a prestigious but unpaid appointment as "professor extraordinarius" at the University of Vienna. He never became a full professor and therefore kept his position at the Chamber, which was an official advisory agency of the Austrian government. In addition, he held a private seminar, the "Mises-Kreis".

In 1934, in the face of growing anti-semitism in Austria, Mises moved to Geneva, Switzerland, where he assumed the chair for International Economic Relations at the Graduate Institute of International Studies. In 1940, he emigrated to the United States and taught as a Visiting Professor at New York University from 1945 to 1969. He was not salaried by the university but funded by private

businessmen. He was scarcely as influential in American academia as in Vienna. The predominant school in economics at the time was Keynesianism which was, in the face of the economic crisis of the 1930's, politically implemented by President Roosevelt's "New Deal". Mises, who strongly opposed John Maynard Keynes, nevertheless attracted new students and admirers² who kept "Austrian Economics" alive until today as an American movement now outside Austria. In addition Mises found, as a radical advocate of laissez-faire liberalism, a strong and loyal following among businessmen and other non-academics. He continued his prolific academic publishing and was eager to revive and spread the ideas of classical liberalism, e.g. as a founding member of the Mont Pelerin Society³. Mises died at the age of 92 in New York, in 1973. His life and impact are well documented on the website of the *Ludwig von Mises Institute* (<http://mises.org>) with texts, photos, audio-tapes, downloadable publications, etc.⁴

Alfred Schutz first met Mises when he was one of the examiners for the economics examination requisite for the law degree. After that, Mises accepted him for personal tutelage and later to his private seminar. The Mises-Circle met every other Friday from October to June and comprised up to 26 members from a wide variety of disciplines, like economics, sociology, philosophy, history, political science, and law. In his personal recollections Mises mentioned Friedrich von Hayek, Gottfried Haberler, Fritz Machlup, Oskar

2 Rothbard (no date) mentions Henry Hazlitt, Lawrence Fertig, Percy Greaves, Jr., Bettina Bien Graeves, Hans F. Sennholz, William H. Peterson, Louis M. Spadaro, Israel M. Kirzner, Ralph Raico, George Reisman, and Murray N. Rothbard.

3 The Mont Pelerin Society was founded after World War II, in 1947, when many of the values of Western civilization were imperiled, by 36 scholars, mostly economists, with some historians and philosophers. They were invited by Professor Friedrich von Hayek to meet at Mont Pelerin, near Montreux, Switzerland (which gave the society its name), to discuss the state and the possible fate of liberalism (in its classical sense) in thinking and practice. Its goal was strengthening the principles and practice of a free society and to study the workings, virtues, and defects of market-oriented economic systems, but not create an orthodoxy or align with political parties (<http://www.montpelerin.org/>). Schutz also attended some of the conferences, "although he did not share the political views regularly associated with its members, such as their opposition to governmental intervention" (Barber, 2004: 208).

4 I wish we had such a rich website for Alfred Schutz! For biographical information on Mises, see Mises, 1978; Hayek 1978; Rothbard, 1978; Margit von Mises, 1981; Hülsmann, no date; 2007.

1 "Edler" is, in contrast to "Ludwig" and "Heinrich", not a first name but a title. "Edler von" means "Noble of".

Morgenstern, Walter Froehlich, Ilse Mintz, Eric Voegelin, Alfred Schütz, Felix Kaufmann, and Emanuel Winternitz. This Privatseminar was described by many people, like by Mises himself (1978), by his wife Margit von Mises (1981), by Machlup (1980), Haberler (1961) or Hayek (1978), but also by Schutz's biographers Helmut R. Wagner (1983) and Michael Barber (2004). "Of special interest", writes Margit von Mises (1981: 203) "was the year of methodological discourse, partly thanks to the affiliation of Alfred Schutz and Felix Kaufmann with the ideas of Edmund Husserl and Kaufmann's with the Schlick Circle". Schutz "expounded on such topics as Max Weber's methodology, the economic thought of Wieser and Werner Sombart, Max Scheler's approach to the social sciences, the I and the Thou, group soul and group spirit, and understanding and acting" (Barber, 2004: 14). There was not only an intellectual but also a lively social side to the Mises-Circle. After their discussions in Mises's office, the participants had dinner at the Italian Restaurant "Ancora Verde" and continued their discussions in the Cafe Künstler opposite to the University. They also sang songs together (as was common among academics at the time), using the melodies of traditional folk songs with lyrics created by Felix Kaufmann (see Viennese Songs, no date). Mises never left before 1am, and Machlup reports that when he left at 3:00am, he usually had to say goodnight to Alfred Schütz (ibid.).

The Mises-Kreis ended when Mises left for Geneva. After the "Anschluss" of Austria to Nazi-Germany in 1938, the Gestapo (the Nazi secret police) invaded his apartment in Vienna and confiscated all his documents.⁵ Schutz was on a business trip to Paris at the time, and Mises intervened vehemently to persuade him not to return to Vienna. Schutz organized the emigration of his whole family (including parents) to Paris and from there to the United States. In 1940, he helped Mises in arranging his passage from Lisbon to New York and personally received him at the pier on his arrival. The Schutz and Mises families kept visiting each other regularly in New

York, and Schutz highly respected his mentor's brilliance and wit (Barber, 2004: 16).

2. The Theoretical Premises of Austrian Economics

The Austrian School of Economics was founded by Carl Menger around 1870. His fame built on two pillars: Firstly, Menger led a prominent methodological debate with Gustav Schmoller, the so-called *Methodenstreit* where he argued for a deductive type of theory, which formulates "exact laws" in a similar sense as the natural sciences (Menger, 1883). Schmoller, representing the Historical School of German Economics, pleaded for a *verstehend*-inductive procedure, following Wilhelm Dilthey's distinction that natural sciences operate with the method of explaining (*Erklären*) while the method of the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) consists in *Verstehen*. Secondly, Menger (1871) had formulated the principle of marginal utility, at the same time as Léon Walras in Lausanne, Switzerland, and William Stanley Jevons in London. Together they instigated the famous "*subjective revolution*" in economics, which replaced the classical value theory of Adam Smith, David Ricardo and Karl Marx. Classical economic theory focused on the production side of economic activity and explained the value of goods and services by the amount of the production costs, notably invested labor and capital. The subjective value theory revitalized the Aristotelian distinction between value in use and exchange value: the value of goods and services does not depend on the costs of its production but on the utility the consumers ascribe to them. Based on this basic insight, Mises (1932) explained why socialism and a state-directed, planned economy cannot work: they lack a working method of economic calculation. Only the law of supply and demand can effectively determine the prices. Mises therefore advocated a free market economy as the only possible path to the prosperity of humankind, and vehemently opposed any form of socialism, bureaucracy and government intervention (unlike Keynes).

The three schools of marginal utility share the main message, but are different in several respects. According to Mises, the subjective

⁵ The Gestapo packed all the documents in 38 boxes, and since then they were called the "lost papers". They ended up in Soviet hands and were detected in the early 90ies in Moscow, after the Cold War was over. Now the interwar period of the Austrian School, including the lectures in Mises's private seminar, can be fully reconstructed. Richard Ebeling at Hillsdale College acts as general editor of Mises's "lost papers".

value theory extends the traditional scope of economics substantially: as the analysis of economic problems must always refer to individual actions and acts of choosing, economics needs a general theory of action. In his great treatise *Human Action*, Mises ([1949]1998) presents an elaborate version of such a theory, which he calls "praxeology". Austrian economics has, in this version, the following constitutive features:

Methodological Individualism: The properties of collective entities have to be explained by actions of individuals.

Methodological Singularism: The unit of praxeological analysis is a single action.

Apriorism: The pure theory of economics is aprioristic. It tries to explicate the formal categories of acting and deciding which are pregiven prior to any experience. Its method is not *verstehen* but *begreifen* (conceiving) or, in other terms, "discursive thinking". A science *a priori* produces nothing else than tautologies and analytical judgments. Praxeology, the pure theory of economics, must be clearly distinguished from history. History deals with data, its method is *verstehen*. Economic history, economic statistics and economic description all deal with empirical facts *a posteriori*; they are therefore not part of theoretical economics but part of history.

Mises thus takes clearly sides with Carl Menger in the *Methodenstreit* with Schmoller. Furthermore, he also dismisses the neo-Kantian distinctions between nomothetic and idiographic sciences (Wilhelm Windelband) or the distinction between natural and cultural sciences (Heinrich Rickert), and consequently Weber's conception of ideal types. According to Mises, they all have not understood Menger's pathbreaking concept of pure (aprioristic) theory.

Logical deduction: From the *a priori* propositions of praxeology, further economic insights may be logically deduced.

Process orientation: Economic phenomena are constituted by goal oriented human actions. Therefore, they have to be explained as a process. The Austrian School therefore rejects a great deal of classical and neo-classical economics, which operate with static concepts like "equilibrium". The process orientation implies a time perspective. In fact, Mises was one of the first economists who considered time as a constitutive feature of economic theory.

No use of mathematical methods: Mathematics can be a useful tool, but

the mathematical modeling of a hypothetical static equilibrium does not provide any new insights. This objection points against the Lausanne school of marginal utility and a great many other economic theories, which formalized their models by means of mathematics.

The postulate that *subjective values cannot be measured and thus not be compared* is again directed against the other schools of marginal utility. This point is crucial to the whole program. Mises contends that Menger's *subjectivism* has been generally misunderstood: The subjective revolution by marginal theory in economics has not only introduced the consumer's choices as central to price formation (while classical economics had explained prices by the value of production costs). The subjective revolution primarily lies in the fact that economics has to abstain from any value-statements about the goals people strive for. This is the very heart of liberalism: Let people decide themselves what is good and what is bad for them; what they prefer and what they defer; what they choose to be more or less important to them. Nobody can judge that better than the individuals themselves. In Mises's view, all of them try to relieve uneasiness. However, they may strive for quite different goals – decisions that nobody else should take for them. The aggregation of all individual actions will make up the market process. The postulates of a free society and a free market are therefore the logical result of praxeology.

Reviewing these fundamental tenets, it becomes evident that Schutz agreed on most of them: he explicitly endorsed methodological individualism and singularism. Furthermore, he shared the conception of human action or acting as a process, analyzing the constitution of meaning (or sense) in a time perspective. He also agreed that the mathematical method was not helpful in elucidating human action, and he never supported any attempt to measure and compare subjective values. Like Mises, he also endorsed the value-freedom of the social sciences. Schutz even shared the search for *aprioris*, however in quite a different sense. It is this point where life-world-analysis and praxeology have major differences.

3. Aprioristic Praxeology vs. Interpretive Sociology

Schutz was critical of Mises's aprioristic praxeology and adopted Max Weber's conception of an interpretive sociology. In the foreword to his *Phenomenology of the Social World*, Schutz (1967: xxxi) writes that "Weber's approach was correct ... he had determined conclusively the proper starting point of the philosophy of the social sciences". Weber, influenced by the neo-Kantianism of Rickert and others, tried to bridge the positions between Menger and Schmoller in the *Methodenstreit* by his conception of an interpretive-explaining (*verstehend-erklärende*) sociology (which Schutz adopted). He defended Menger's position on economic theory-building against Schmoller's criticism, but accused him at the same time of a naturalistic misconception: Menger's "exact laws" are not analogous to physical laws, they are rather ideal-typical constructions. Conceived as such, they are perfectly legitimate (Weber, 1922b). Mises on his part criticized Weber's historicism and claimed that the neo-Kantian distinction between nomothetic natural sciences and idiographic human sciences must be complemented by a third conception, the aprioristic theory of action. In Mises's view, Weber misjudged the fact that sociological propositions are invariably valid (Mises, 1933: 71ff.). To avoid further misunderstandings, he dropped the term sociology and replaced it by *praxeology* (since Mises, 1940).

What are such aprioristic propositions? The centerpiece of Mises's praxeology is *choosing*, the act of preferring and deferring. Making a choice is always a rational process, searching the adequate means to reach one's goals. The ultimate ends people strive for are always irrational, based on the subjective values of the actor. When choosing, the deferred options always produce the costs of preferring another option (named "opportunity costs", which is just another formulation of the principle of marginal utility). These are a priori truths: they are universal, apply to every human actor, are always true and in every situation. All the further elaborations of Austrian economic theory start from here.

Schutz, along with Kaufmann, questioned the aprioristic character of such propositions. As Machlup (1980) reports, they had lively

discussions about this point in the Mises-Circle: "Now, Mises gave us his views on his *a priori* ideas and they were criticized by Kaufmann, Schutz and others". Schutz has not published any criticism of Mises's position during his life-time. In his manuscript of 1936, "Political Economy: Human Conduct in Social Life" (the response to Hayek's paper on *Knowledge and Economy*), first published in the *Collected Papers IV* (Schutz, 1996), Schutz makes some explicit remarks about Mises's concept of *a priori*. He points to the various meanings of this concept in philosophy and refers to the discussion by Kaufmann. Schutz follows Kaufmann and declares that the universal and objective laws of praxeology are, as the laws of physics, "hypothetical in character" (Schutz, 1996: 103). In addition, he concludes: "It would not do to declare that the principle of marginal utility is a tautology" (p. 104). Such laws and principles must be related to the reality as it is experienced by the actor.

On the other hand, Schutz agreed with Mises that a basic social theory should search for aprioris. He had however, following Husserl, a *different concept of a priori* than Mises. Aprioris can not be formulated in the form of propositions, such as laws and principles, but are to be found on a much more fundamental level, namely in the *constitutive features of the life-world*. These form, as first-order constructions, the basis and the reference point of any second-order constructions of the social sciences. The starting point of a phenomenological analysis is subjective experience. Phenomena are meaningfully perceived and experienced as unities of noema and noesis in prepredicative acts of cognition, and meaning/sense is constituted by synthetic achievements of subjective consciousness, based on the biographical stock of knowledge and the systems of relevancies at hand. Therefore, a separation of a priori structures and concrete experience does not make sense. A careful phenomenological analysis permits describing the manifold modes of givenness of phenomena and to reveal the structures of the life-world, like its temporal and spatial structure, its knowledge-base, the systems of relevancies and typifications, the signs and symbols, the different perspectives between actor, observer and scientist, the multiple realities, and much more. And Schutz's life-world has, as we know since Ilja Sribar's (1988, 2007) pioneering analysis, not only a subjective, but also a pragmatic pole: the life-world is not only subjectively experienced but also constituted by social

actions and interactions. It is therefore crucial to make two distinctions in Schutz's work: Firstly, to distinguish between the form of presentation (which often starts with the subjective consciousness of a solitary ego) and the core argumentation about the logic of constitution (which describes social reality as a subjectively experienced, but at the same time as a socially constituted, intersubjective world), and secondly to distinguish between the protosociological level of social theory (which elucidates mainly the relationship between time, meaning/sense and action) and the level of a theory of society (which, in basic components, focuses on the relationship between action, typification and processes of institutionalisation) (Endress, 2004).

The phenomenologically described *structures of the life-world* represent a kind of *matrix* (Luckmann, 1979), which serves as a *tertium comparationis* for intercultural comparisons (Srubar, 2004). They are aprioris on a very basic level: actors act meaningfully, orient in space and time, have a stock of knowledge which is structured by (socially acquired) typifications and systems of relevancies, they live primarily in the pragmatic world of everyday life but sometimes also in other realities like dreams and fantasies, they produce the social reality by working acts and communication, and so on. But there is no proposition whatsoever as regards the contents of these formal features; the contents can vary substantially in different social, cultural and historical contexts and have to be explored empirically. All propositions of sociology are therefore hypothetical in character and cannot be considered as aprioristic. The constitutive features of the life-world allow however to clarify the process of *verstehen* and to elucidate the methodical procedures of social science.

The search for aprioris in Schutz's life-world analysis is therefore different in character than the search for aprioris in Mises's praxeology. Based on his phenomenological investigations and methodological reflections, Schutz formulates *four major caveats against Mises*:

Mises's principle of marginal utility is not an aprioristic, but an ideal-typical construction;

Mises's concept of rationality is problematic;

Mises's analysis of choosing is incomplete;

Mises's praxeology is not a general theory of action, but a genuinely economic perspective.

4. Schutz's Reformulation of the Ideal Type

In his *Phenomenology of the Social World*, Schütz (1967) analyzed the process of *verstehen*. As the subjective consciousness of alter ego is inaccessible, the everyday observer has to rely on signs and bodily indices. Although subjective knowledge is socially derived, two individual stocks of knowledge are never completely congruent; therefore, interpreting the subjective meaning of another person's actions cannot be more than an approximation. The different modes of givenness of other persons in time and space require different ways of interpretation: the lively encounter with consociates in a face-to-face relation differs much from interpreting the actions of contemporaries, predecessors or successors, which can only be conceived of as "types". The same holds true for the scientific observer, who constructs objective meaning-contexts out of subjective meaning-contexts. Contemporaries' or predecessors' actions can only be grasped in an ideal-typical way. The "problem of ideal types" is therefore, as Schutz states in accordance to Weber, "the central problem of all the social sciences" (1967: 226).

In the following discussion, Schutz attempts to develop a position which would allow for reconciling the opposing approaches of Weber and Mises. In fairly polemical statements, Mises (1929)⁶ had argued that ideal types are adequate means for historical science, that the notions of economics are however not ideal-typical at all: they are not "arrived at through the one-sided *intensification* of *one* or *several* aspects and through integration into an immanently consistent *conceptual representation* of a multiplicity of scattered and discrete *individual phenomena*" (Weber, 1922a: 191, quoted in Mises, 1933: 75), as Weber described them. "On the contrary, they are obtained through reflections having in view the comprehension of what is contained in *each* of the individual phenomena taken into consideration" (p. 75). Schutz concedes that Mises's criticism of Weber's ideal types is correct if one refers to this early definition of the concept. In Weber's

⁶ Schutz cites Mises (1929), but the same arguments are repeated in Mises (1933), which I quote here from its English edition (2003).

later developments however, he recognizes a change of the concept. Thus Schutz believes to be in accordance with Weber when he now redefines ideal-typical constructions “by postulating certain motives as fixed and invariant within the range of variation of the actual self-interpretation” of an acting Ego (1967: 244). “Our own theory of ideal types”, writes Schutz:

therefore, covers the concepts and propositions of theoretical social sciences, including those of pure economics. For even the examples cited by Mises – the economic principle, the basic laws of price formations, and so forth – are in our sense ideal types. Of course these principles must be based upon thoroughgoing formalization and generalization of material that has already been postulated as fixed and invariant. It is this formalization and generalization, which give the ideal types universal validity. Such ideal types do not refer to any individual or spatio-temporal collection of individuals. They are statements about anyone’s actions, about action or behavior considered as occurring in complete anonymity and without any specifications of time and place. They are precisely for that reason lacking in concreteness (Schutz, 1967: 244).

Schutz further accepts Mises’s criticism of Weber who restricted the propositions of marginal utility to those economic actions, which follow a calculation of entrepreneurs. Modern theoretical economics, Schutz argues, does not just explain the behavior of the businessman, but the behavior of the consumer, in fact “the behavior of anyone and everyone” (p. 245). And he concludes: “In our view, pure economics is a perfect example of an objective meaning-complex about subjective meaning-complexes” (Schutz, 1967: 245).

Mises (1933: 75) cites Schutz, alludes to his reinterpretation of the ideal type and promises to deal with it in a later publication. However, he never did. In his *opus magnum*, *Human Action*, first published in 1949, he mentions him only twice: once in the context of his view that scientists ought to treat their fellow men as human beings, and later, when he discusses time as a praxeological category (Mises, 1998: 28; 100). In his chapter on ideal types however (1998: 59-64), he obviously considered Schutz not worth mentioning. Schutz, on his

part, remained consistent, too. In his later writings, he chose Machlup’s theory of the oligopol to illustrate the scientific construction of humunculi (Schutz, 1964a: 46; 1964b: 64f.). The ideal-typical constructions of Austrian economists, who often used imaginary constructions without any empirical relevance, the *ceteris paribus* clause or even explicitly unrealistic assumptions,⁷ remained a major point of reference throughout his life. He also kept later formulations of the postulate of adequacy so weak that Machlup (1954: 17) could interpret it merely as “requirement of understandability”.⁸

George Psathas (2005) wonders, as many do, why

Schutz’s phenomenological grounding did not move him in the direction of studies of the particular, concrete, specific, situation and of the specific contexts of action and social relationships (p. 162).

...the practices of meaning constitution, the methods of ordinary reasoning, the ways in which social action was ongoingly organized and made accountable, everyday types and typifications and their uses, the practical theorizing found in the mundane world, all had been noticed by Schutz. ... But the scientific model of ideal type construct formation and his acceptance of a unified model of scientific procedure led him to support the existing system of scientific procedure (p. 164).

Schutz’s big achievement in the present context is the “*descriptive analysis of economics*” (Eberle, 1988), which elucidates what economists do. Most of them, including Mises, overlooked the lifeworldly ground of economic theory. Schutz situates economic theorizing “with reference to its own non-theoretical horizon, namely, the life-world out of which it arises and from which it abstracts” (Barber, 2005: 185). In the “actual world” one deals with “you and me, with Peter and Paul” in their full existence, in theoretical economics with abstract generalizations of an anonymous “anybody” (Schutz, 1996: 99). As a

7 See e.g. the “marginalism controversy” which Machlup (1946) sparked in the *American Economic Review*, or his contention that Samuelson had delivered his best work where he operated with unrealistic assumptions (Machlup, 1964: 735).

8 Cf. my critique of such a general and ‘soft’ concept of adequacy (Eberle, 1999a; 1999b; 2000).

formal ideal-typical construction, the principle of marginal utility may indeed be applied to anyone in any kind of situation; but as soon as it does get applied, its formal goals are substituted by material goals, which are more concrete and more personal. This transition turns the abstract and anonymous, universal law into a testable empirical hypothesis, and opens the possibility for type-transcendent actions. Schutz's theory of typifications allows for mediating social scientific constructions with the world of everyday life as experienced by the actor.⁹

5. The Concept of Rational Action

Schutz's second caveat is directed against Mises's concept of rationality. In Mises's view, every human action is rational, always and in every situation (because it goes beyond merely reactive behavior). "Human action" and "rational action" are tautological (and aprioristic). He therefore criticizes Weber's ideal types of action and his talk of irrational actions. For Weber, his four ideal types fulfilled two main functions: Firstly, they are useful for describing the increasing rationalization and detraditionalization of Western societies. Secondly, they make different kinds of actions and different degrees of rationality recognizable. Weber prefers the purposive-rational type as a methodical tool and makes it the prototype of sociological description. On its basis, irrational and emotional actions become visible as "deviations" of a purely rational course of action. To explain a panic at the stock exchange, for example, it is advisable to first build an ideal-typical construction of how a rational course of action would have looked like, and then to interpret the actual course of action as "deviations", which makes the degree of irrationality, caused by errors, misapprehensions and emotions of all sorts, visible and accountable (Weber, 1972: 2).

In Mises's perspective, such ideal types may be useful for historical analysis, but they have no place in theoretical sociology (and economics). He agrees with Weber that only the means can be chosen rationally but not the goals, which have to be accepted as "given".

The other ideal types, however, make no sense to him. "Value-rational" ("valuational") action cannot be distinguished properly from purposive-rational action as it only means that a certain value is preferred to others. The same is true for "traditional" action, which implies that the actor obviously ranks traditions and habits higher than other goals which he defers. Even "affective" or "emotional" actions, which are in Weber's typology the most irrational, are in fact rational when seen in their temporality: in an affect, the ranking of goals shifts; an actor may thus give way to his emotions and do something, which he later, with a cooler mind, will judge differently and maybe feel sorry for. The most affective and emotional actions are therefore as rational as all the other actions. Mises (1933: 79f.), in other words, traces all of Weber's ideal types back to rational action, and he does it by logical reflection. He adds that distinguishing rational from irrational action has no other purpose than to judge actions morally as being better or worse; such categories import implicit value-judgments and have to be eliminated in pure theory.

Schutz (1964a; 1964c) takes a different and novel approach, when he asks what rational action means to an actor in the common-sense world. The concept of rationality in everyday life has a variety of meanings: "rational" action is sometimes interpreted as "reasonable" or "reflected" action, other times as "planned" and "projected" or as "predictable" or "logical" action. "Rational" action, defined as choosing the best suited among different means in order to reach one's goal, is for the actor in everyday life, on the common-sense level

always action within an unquestioned and undetermined frame of constructs of typicalities of the setting, the motives, the means and ends, the courses of action and personalities involved and taken for granted. They are, however, not merely taken for granted by the actor but also supposed as being taken for granted by the fellow-man. From this frame of constructs, forming their undetermined horizon, merely particular sets of elements stand out which are clearly and distinctly determinable. To these elements refers the common-sense concept of rationality (Schutz, 1964a: 33).

There are therefore different degrees of rationality: actions in

⁹ Christopher Prendergast (1986) argues that Schutz's analysis of the process of *verstehen* and of the ideal-typical constructions solved the methodological crisis auf Austrian Economics.

everyday life “are at best partially rational” (p. 33). A completely rational action requires full knowledge about all the goals and meaning chains, their complex interdependencies in the social world and all the intentional and unintentional consequences. It is, argues Schutz, the “paradox of rationality on the common-sense level” that

the more standardized the prevailing action pattern is, the more anonymous it is, the greater is the subjective chance of conformity and, therewith, of the success of intersubjective behavior. Yet (...) the more standardized the pattern is, the less the underlying elements become analyzable for common-sense thought in terms of rational insight. (...) Only on the level of models of interaction patterns constructed by the social scientist in accordance with certain particular requirements defined by the methods of his science does the concept of rationality obtain its full significance (1964a: 33).

The concept of rationality has its original location not on the level of everyday life but on the level of scientific model construction (Schutz, 1964b: 80), which Mises and many others ignore. It is therefore crucial, concludes Schutz, that the two levels are not confounded and that the modifications of meaning in the transition between first and second order constructions are carefully considered.

6. The Conception of Human Choice

Rational action is defined as choosing the best suited among different means in order to reach one's goal. The problem of rationality is therefore intimately linked to the conception of choice. For Mises (1998: 12f.), every action is a rational and therefore an economic action, as it consists in preferring something and deferring other things. Every action requires to make a choice, as every action is at the same time the preference of *a* and the renunciation of *b, c, ... n*. Schutz's life-world analysis however revealed that people do not experience everyday life as making choices all the time. They often act in routinized and standardized ways, and sometimes they reflect about what they should do and make conscious decisions. Schutz recognized clearly that Mises put forward a specific economic perspective on

human action, and that a sociological theory of action must be much broader. The problem of making choices has never been very prominent in sociology, except for Rational Choice Theory which originated in economics. That Schutz invested some time at all to clarify it, is a direct consequence of his association with Austrian economists. In his personal correspondence of 1955 with Adolph Lowe, an (non-Austrian) economist whom he met in 1942, he criticizes Mises in three respects:

- 1) “the decisive problem involved (in the process of choosing) is taken just for granted by Mises, that is the problem how it comes that things stand to choice at all” (Schutz, 1955: 5-6);
- 2) “He overlooks also the difference which seems to be vital for me, namely on the one hand choosing between objects equally within my reach and, on the other hand, choosing between projects of actions which have to be carried out by me” (p. 6);
- 3) “Mises is trying to develop a general praxeology which he identifies – erroneously, as I think – with the theory of economic action, namely an action according to the assumed scale of preferences of the actor. ... If this were the case there would be no human action whatsoever which were not an economic action” (p. 3).

The first question is, how it comes that something stands to choice at all. In “Choosing Among Projects of Actions”, Schutz (1964b) tackles the problem not, as many others, by a reconstruction of past experiences but by a phenomenological analysis of the flowing experience in subjective consciousness. He adopts Husserl's constitution of problematic possibilities, Henri Bergson's time perspectives and Gottfried Leibniz's concurrence of volitional intentions, which lead to the finite “*fiat*” of a decision. He describes the complex, unreflected “*petites perceptions*” (Leibniz) which determine our actions as because-motives. They may influence us, when walking through a garden, to turn left or right or go straight ahead. People do not make conscious choices in such situations, but just go one way or the other. Schutz interprets Weber's ideal types of traditional and affective action as forms of such automated activities. The small perceptions can also cause, as because-motives, a state of uneasiness

and constitute problematic possibilities in the prepredicative sphere; they become because-motives of projected actions, and if alternatives are considered, they will eventually require that a decision is taken. Schutz also provides a short analysis in which way the choice between objects equally within reach and the choice between projects of actions differ, and he is correct that Mises confuses the two. The main argument however is that choice is always a *conscious choice* which requires reflection, a comparison of alternatives and volition. This is often not the case in everyday life, and if there is a rational choice, it is only partly rational.

7. Delimiting the Realm of Economics

Schutz' life-world analysis makes plausible that a great deal of human action in everyday life is not rational as conceived in scientific models, and even when actors prefer something, they are not necessarily oriented to the principle of marginal utility. Otherwise, writes Schutz (1955: 3) to Lowe, it would mean that "if gentlemen prefer blonds they are economic subjects". Praxeology is not suited as a general theory of action, as Mises claims, but only applicable to economic actions. To avoid further misconceptions, Schutz attempts to delimit the realm of its applicability. This is no easy task, and Schutz takes different roads. Firstly, in his *Phenomenology of the Social World*, he identifies the principle of marginal utility as part of the systems of relevancies of economics: "The law of marginal utility, then, turns out to be a stipulation that merely marks out the fixed boundaries of the only area within which economic acts can by definition take place" (Schutz, 1967: 245); and a few years later, in the "Hayek-paper" (1936):

The fundamental role of the principle of marginal utility is to serve as regulator of the forming of all its concepts and as definitional principle for the delimitation of its thematic realm. This explains why the propositions of this political economy appear with the claim of "always and everywhere being valid [propositions] if and only if the conditions exist which they presuppose" (von Mises) (Schutz, 1996: 102f.).

However, this does not solve the problem, as it only defines the perspective of (Austrian) economics. Mises (and others) could go on considering any type of action as a rational action in the praxeological sense, they would just look at them under an "economic perspective". Why should they refrain from investigating *any* aspect of social life, including family relationships and love life, religious and cultural practices, on the basis of an "economic approach to behaviour" (cf. Becker 1976; 1981)? The only advantage of such a delimitation is that Mises's (and others') approach are not considered as a "*general* theory of action" in an encompassing sense, but as a distinctly *economic* perspective. In any case, the often bemoaned "economic imperialism" is not contained.

Schutz's second attempt was to delimit the *thematic realm of economics*. In his "Hayek-paper" he argues:

...if one does not deprive the term "action" of its general connotation, one faces in turn the task of deciding what *differentia specifica* are characteristic of economic actions. Whichever alternative I may choose, it seems purposeful to separate acting turned toward so-called economic goods from other acting. Of course I am aware of the multiple meanings attached to the term itself, "economic goods"; they can be comprehended only after far-reaching preparation (Schutz, 1996: 104).

A first step in this direction was the above mentioned distinction of the choice between objects (goods) equally within reach (which are concrete, visible and comparable in the here and now) and the choice between projects of action (given only *futuri exacti*). Upon closer inspection however, it does not prove really seminal (Eberle, 1988). The differentiation of the economy into a service economy and the new means of communication made economic actions much more complex, so that in the majority of cases, goods cannot be separated from the actions they are embedded in. By the same reasons, it becomes increasingly difficult to decide, which are "economic" goods or services and which not (e.g., think of unpaid labor of housewives, etc.). Schutz did not expand this idea in later years, and it is not a very promising way either.

A third attempt was finally a rather tentative remark, again in his correspondence with Lowe:

Pareto was, I think, right in so far as he made a distinction between rational and non-rational actions, in stating that the former constitutes the realm of economics and that part of jurisprudence which deals with contracts, whereas the latter constitutes the domain of sociology (Schutz, 1955: 5).

This suggestion is probably the most surprising of all, in particular as he uttered it late in his life and has to my knowledge never elaborated on it in any of his publications. Why should he propose this, after having restated repeatedly sociology's preference for rational types, as Weber had suggested? I can only speculate, but would offer the following explanation: Firstly, through all his lifetime Schutz found hardly any resonance among Austrian economists. Mises stuck to his position, and the other members of the Austrian School ignored his methodological reflections. Machlup, who devoted a substantial deal of his work to methodological questions, too, seems to be the only one who integrated some ideas of Schutz, if only marginally.¹⁰ All in all, the economists were obviously preoccupied with rational action and hardly interested in bounded rationality and irrational behavior.¹¹ Secondly, Schutz may have realized more and more that the concept of rationality has its place in scientific models but not in the world of common-sense. As his analyses show, he was far more interested in how actors experience everyday life. If this was the realm of bounded rationality and irrationality – who else would engage in it than sociology? In addition, Schutz must have felt that new ways of researching the social world of everyday life had to be developed; and who else would do it than sociology?¹²

10 See the numerous references and homages to Schutz in Machlup (1978).

11 If economists refer to "bounded rationality" they usually refer to Simon (1955), although Schutz's corresponding publication appeared earlier. But even so, economic models rarely integrated this concept systematically, but stayed with the concept of "unbounded" rationality for decades to come.

12 Cf. the quotation of Psathas above, and also Embree (1988).

8. Conclusion

Looking back at the developments in the last half century as seen from nowadays, the legacy of both intellectual partners survived. The Ludwig von Mises Institute keeps Mises's work and thoughts alive, and Schutz's resonance in sociology is still high. What has become of the different views between Schutz and Mises? Let me summarize this in four points:

1. Schutz's search for aprioris in form of the constitutive features of the life-world has proved more promising than Mises's aprioristic conception of praxeology. While the structures of the life-world are still being discussed as a *matrix* and *tertium comparationis* or as a social theory, nobody believes anymore in the possibility of an aprioristic economics, as Mises had suggested. Present-day Austrian economists are not just interested in theory but also in empirical facts, and some of them discuss Schutz's methodological reflections on ideal types (Koppl, 1997; Ebeling, 1999).¹³

2. In regard to the concept of rationality, the differences persist. This is due to the different scientific system of relevancies of economics and sociology. Schutz, based on his life-world analysis, proposes that sociology should research the everyday world in its complex meaning contexts. This implies, for example, that rational action – which presupposes reflection, comparison of alternatives and volition – is distinguished from automatic activities, like habitual, traditional or emotional actions. In spite of the plausibility of this suggestion, it confronts empirical research with the difficult challenge, how rational and automatic actions can actually be identified and distinguished from each other. Economics, which hardly ever engages in the collection of primary data, sees no point in getting that close to the actor's subjective experience. Its primal goal is to elicit and judge the efficiency of actions and processes. For this type of relevancy it will suffice to use a model of rational action as a schema of interpretation, which can be applied to any type of action, irrespectively of the question, if the means were chosen consciously-reflectively or unconsciously-habitually in order to reach a certain goal.

13 At the Conference 2005 of the Southern Economic Association, Austrian economists organized a session on *Alfred Schutz and Phenomenological Economics*.

To judge efficiency, it seems to be more promising to view human action *as if* they were rational. In fact, by analyzing the efficiency of traditional actions, economics helps to rationalize and detraditionalize ever more realms of society, and thereby acts as a carrier of modernization (with all its positive and negative effects).

3. Delimiting the realm of economics has not the same meaning anymore as it had in the 1920ies. After the enormous differentiation of disciplines and scientific knowledge, we have got used to the multiplicity of theoretical perspectives. There is not just *one* economic perspective and not just *one* sociological perspective, but there are many of them. To define the realm of economics by the principle of marginal utility would hardly find a consensus among modern economists. And meanwhile, Rational Choice Theories have spread in sociology, too. The different theoretical perspectives provide a variety of interpretations and explanations, which compete with each other. It is ultimately the institutional field of social science, which governs what is accepted as a “sociological” or an “economic” approach. A seminal way to deal with the multiplicity of different approaches would be, as I have stated time and again, to revitalize Schutz’s postulate of adequacy in a more restrictive form: social scientific interpretations and explanations are to be judged if they are adequate to the factual subjective meanings of actors in everyday life or if they just supersede them with some inadequate schema of interpretation (Eberle, 1988; 1998; 2000; Nasu, 2005).

4. Finally, it should be recalled that this contribution focussed more on the differences between Schutz and Mises than on their agreements. As mentioned in the beginning, they shared a great many theoretical assumptions, which were not further discussed here. In comparison with other positions in the landscape of the social sciences, however, there would arise a number of new problematic possibilities for further debate.

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Alfred Schutz and his intellectual partners

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Preface

The origin of this anthology goes back to the Alfred Schutz Centennial Conference held at the University of Konstanz, Germany, May 26-29, 1999, which was organized by Martin Endress and Ilja Srubar.

During an intermission, the participants were invited to the Alfred Schutz Memorial Archive. Hisashi Nasu also visited and examined several of Schutz's books that were deposited in the Archive. There were numerous annotations that Schutz had written in the margins of these books. Nasu read some of them and realized immediately that they provided valuable materials for research on Schutz's philosophical and sociological thought. They shed a new light on the wide reaching network of Schutz's intellectual partners which included his contemporaries and scholars of former times as well. It became obvious that they needed to be preserved as soon as possible because all were written in pencil and some had already become so pale that they were difficult to read.

After the conference, Nasu discussed with Srubar and Endress a possible project for preserving the annotations and they began to collaborate on such a project. Under grants from Waseda University (2000) and from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (2001-2002), they microfilmed all of Schutz's annotations. Srubar was in charge of the microfilming.

They had a plan, from the beginning, to organize an international conference based on the preserved documents as well as on their preliminary studies and discussions. The aim of the conference was to invite an international group of philosophers and sociologists and ask them to contribute essays on Schutz's relationship to his intellectual partners using his respective book annotations as one of their sources.

An executive committee was organized and became the editors of the present volume, namely: Hisashi Nasu, Ilja Srubar, George Psathas, and Lester Embree. They held a preparatory meeting for the conference during March 5-6, 2003, at Waseda University, Tokyo, under the sponsorship of Waseda University, and selected the title of the conference, the schedule, and the speakers who would be invited

to treat particular topics. We invited Professor Thomas Luckmann as a keynote speaker and then Evelyn Schutz Lang and Claudia Anne Schutz, a daughter and a granddaughter of Alfred and Ilse Schutz, and Tomoko Hisatome, a daughter of Alfred Schutz's Japanese friend, Tomoo Otaka, as special guests. All accepted our invitation and joined the conference.

The conference entitled "Alfred Schutz and his Intellectual Partners" was held April 3-6, 2004 at Waseda University, sponsored by the Alfred Schutz Archive at Waseda University, and supported by Waseda University and the Commemorative Organization for the Japan World Exposition ('70). This conference featured 26 essays of which 22, plus an additional three, are included in this volume.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to Evelyn Schutz Lang and Claudia Anne Schutz for their support of this project from the beginning. They offered the project a valuable and memorable book, *Formale und Transzendente Logik*, which Husserl had presented to Alfred Schutz with his warmest dedication and in which heavy annotations by Schutz were also found.

We would like to thank Waseda University, the Alfred Schutz Archive at Waseda University, the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, and the Commemorative Organization for the Japan World Exposition ('70) for their generous financial support in making the annotation-microfilming project, the conference, and then this volume possible.

We would like to extend our thanks further to Dr. Tairo Utsunomiya for the support provided to the Alfred Schutz Archive at Waseda University and also to Masato Kimura and Ken'ichi Kawano for their careful and diligent editorial work on this volume. Without this support and assistance the present volume would not have been possible.

Hisashi Nasu Ilja Srubar
George Psathas Lester Embree

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