An analytical outline of A. Schütz's semiotics*

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Introduction

It is our intention in this paper to give explicit definitions of semiotic concepts as they were used in phenomenological writings by A. Schütz, thus clarifying a system of concepts that seems to be of some relevance for the development of a framework for semiotics. The system of semiotic concepts proposed by A. Schütz, however, is not in a state in which it can be used or studied by nonphenomenologists without problems. We try to remedy this deplorable situation by giving the first steps of a reconstruction of his ideas (a reconstruction as it is understood in analytical philosophy).

In his presentation of his semiotics Schütz does not distinguish explicitly between the elaboration of the system of concepts and the formulation of theses on the basis of the concepts introduced. When presenting Schütz's semiotics it is our intention to distinguish explicitly between the introduction and the use of a concept, thus taking over the part of Procrustes. The bed we offer our guest A. Schütz consists of a standardized language that we shall introduce in our third section. Before we do that, we give — in the second section — a rough sketch of Schütz's semiotics, without distinguishing between the introduction and the use of concepts. In the final section we use the concepts introduced under 'Explicit definitions' for the formulation of some theses of Schütz's semiotics.

Informal presentation

Schütz presents his semiotic system in three steps. These three steps may be conceived of as the realization of a definition in the style of traditional logic by giving the *genus proximum* (step 1) and *differentiae specificae* (steps 2 and 3) of a general concept of semiotic relation comprising four

subrelations. In our informal sketch of his system we follow his procedure.

In step 1 Schütz introduces E. Husserl's concept of appresentation that describes the phenomenon of pairing common to all sign relations. Pairing is a general characteristic of human consciousness that enables an individual to experience an object as referring to another object. If the experiences of two objects *a* and *b* are present simultaneously in the consciousness of an individual, a pair (*a*, *b*) is constituted such that, whenever one of those objects is experienced, the experience of the corresponding object is produced. Every object is experienced as a member of an order (or structured set) of objects. As a consequence, various schemes are distinguished in which objects may be experienced. Let the object *a* appresent the object *b* for an individual: the structured set to which *a* belongs is the 'apperceptual scheme' of *a*, *b*; the structured set to which *a* together with the appresentational relation belongs is called the 'appresentational scheme' of *a*, *b*; the structured set to which *b* belongs is called the 'referential scheme' of *a*, *b*; the structured set to which the relation between *a* and *b* belongs is called the 'situational' or 'contextual scheme' of *a*, *b*. If an individual is in an appresentational situation, he may experience the objects involved in one of those four schemes and, as a consequence of this, appresentational relations are characteristically ambiguous. Moreover, appresentational relations are ambiguous due to another fact: they are subject to internal structural changes. As principles of these changes Schütz mentions: (a) the principle of the relative irrelevance of the vehicle, (b) the principle of the variability of appresentational meanings, and (c) the principle of figurative transference.

In step 2, Schütz investigates the motives for the use of sign relations by human individuals. His basic contention is: human individuals use sign relations in order to cope with experiences of transcendency of various kinds. First he shows what sort of transcendency an individual has at a certain point of his biographical existence, regardless of his relations to other persons. At each point of his existence, an individual finds himself in a world that he takes as given. This world is experienced depending on the individual's stock of knowledge and relevance system and is altered by acting. In the world given to an individual, certain regions are to be distinguished. The region of the world that is perceived by the individual at a certain moment is called the world within actual reach. The region of objects in the world of actual reach that can be manipulated is called the manipulatory sphere. At each moment of his existence, an individual has recollections of his previous world(s) within actual reach and anticipations of his future world(s) within actual reach. The first one is called the world within restorable reach, if the individual is able — by a change of position — to reach that region of the world. *Indication* and *mark* are defined as those sign relations that enable an individual to cope with certain

experiences that transcend the manipulatory sphere, the world within actual reach, and the world within restorable reach.

In the second part of step 2, Schütz deals with those transcendent experiences an individual has when his relations to other persons are not disregarded. *Signs* are defined as those semiotic relations that enable the individual to cope with the transcendent experiences referring to the intellectual and psychic life of other persons. The intellectual and psychic life of an individual is transcendent for every other individual and can only be experienced by the use of signs. The use of signs is fundamental for communication between individuals. Idealizations on the exchangeability of standpoints and the congruence of systems of relevance are pre-suppositions for the understanding of signs. The world where communi-cation is possible is the so-called *everyday world.*

In step 3, experiences of those objects that transcend the everyday world are investigated. Appresentational relations that pair objects of the everyday world with objects transcending the everyday world are called *symbols.* Besides the everyday world there are various regions having their own style of confirmation. Schütz calls them finite provinces of meaning. These finite provinces of meaning are distinguished from each other by their styles of experience (perception, dream, fiction, etc.). There is one paramount finite province of meaning among them, characterized by the following properties:

(1) It contains human individuals as physical objects uninterruptedly;
(2) Its objects put limitations on human activities;
(3) It can be altered by human individuals;
(4) It is the only province where communication is possible.

Schütz calls this finite province of meaning the world of everyday life. Symbols are defined as those relations of appresentations by which human individuals cope with experiences that transcend the world of everyday life.

Explicit definitions

As was noted earlier, it is not our intention to give explicit definitions of all concepts introduced or used by Schütz. Only those concepts will be defined explicitly that we consider directly relevant for semiotics or a theory of communication. The concepts of central importance are:

(1) indication
     mark
     sign
     symbol
     communication

In order to define these central concepts we introduce auxiliary concepts, some of them by explicit definition; others we take to be primitive. Of these auxiliary concepts the most important are:

(2)　immediate givenness
　　　relevance
　　　style of experience
　　　manipulation
　　　pairing
　　　appresentation
　　　manipulatory sphere
　　　world of actual reach
　　　world of potential reach
　　　world of everyday life (everyday world)
　　　transcendence
　　　cogitation
　　　finite province of meaning

As primitive concepts we use the following:

(3)　immediate givenness
　　　relevance
　　　style of experience
　　　manipulation

The primitive concepts, if not immediately evident, will be described intuitively. They will be introduced just before their first use. Other concepts definable with the concepts mentioned above will be introduced:

(4)　understanding
　　　interpreter
　　　face-to-face situation

As is usual, we distinguish between a concept and the linguistic expression designating it. For purposes of explicit definition we use standardizations of the linguistic expressions, thus clarifying the nature of the concepts designated by them; clarifying the nature of a relational concept, for instance, we understand to be specifying the number and the category of its relata. The standardized forms we introduce are the following:

(5)　a is immediately given to i at t
　　　in i objects a and b are paired at t
　　　a appresents b at t for i
　　　i manipulates a at t
　　　the manipulatory sphere of i at t

the world within actual reach of i at t
i and j are in a face-to-face situation
the world within potential reach of i at t
the world of everyday life
a transcends world w at t
a is a cogitation of i at t
e is a style of experience
a is a finite province of meaning
a is relevant for i at t
a is a mark of b for i at t
a is an indication of b for i at t
a is a sign of b for i at t
a is a symbol of b for i at t
i communicates with j at t by means of a
i communicates with j at t
i understands the cogitation of j (at t)
i understands a at t
i is an interpreter of a at t

As is evident from (5), we use i, j as variables ranging over individuals (persons); t, t' ranging over points of time; a and b ranging over objects; w ranging over worlds; and e ranging over styles of experience. No ontological commitments are to be connected with this use of variables; we might as well use just one sort of variables and add predicates.

In connection with each of the subsequent definitions, we describe the relations the concept defined has to other concepts, and we cite textual evidence for our standardization (and the interpretation presupposed by that standardization).

The definition of appresentation presupposes the concept of pairing, and the concept of pairing presupposes the concept of immediate givenness. As we take this concept as primitive (cf. (3)), we give no definition of it but only some sort of intuitive characterization.

(6)   An object a is *immediately given* to an individual i at t if i perceives a at t or i dreams a at t or i remembers a at t or i imagines a at t, etc.
'... the (appresenting) immediate experience need by no means consist in the perception of the physical object: it may be a recollection, a fantasm, a dream etc' (p. 297).

(7)   Definition
In an individual i two objects a and b are *paired* at a moment t if
(i) a is immediately given to i at t and
(ii) b is immediately given to i at t.

'The most primitive case of a coupling or pairing association is characterized by the fact that two or more data are intuitively given in the unity of consciousness, which, by this very reason, constitutes two distinct phenomena as a unity regardless of whether or not they are attended to' (p. 295).

We want to draw attention to the fact that objects that are paired in an individual may not only be perceived but also remembered or imagined (cf. (6)). '... pairing is also possible between an actual perception and a recollection, between a perception and a fantasm (fictum) ...' (p. 296).

(8)   Definition
       An object *a appresents* an object *b* at a moment *t* for an individual *i* if
       (i)   in i *a* and *b* are printed at a moment *t'* prior to *t* and
       (ii)   *a* is immediately given to *i* at *t* and
       (iii) *b* is not immediately given to *i* at *t*.

'The appresenting term, that which is present in immediate apperception, is coupled or paired with the appresented term' (p. 295).

'The result of the passive synthesis of association here involved is that the apprehension of a present element of a previously constituted pair "wakens" or "calls forth" the appresented element ...' (pp. 296–297).

'In all these cases an object, fact, or event is not experienced as a "self", but as standing for another object which is not given in immediacy to the experiencing subject' (p. 297).

It is not clear whether Schütz considers appresentation to be a relation between objects (p. 296, §1) or experiences (p. 297, §2). We take 'object' in our definitions to comprise objects as well as experiences (of objects). In some definitions, however, 'object' must be understood as 'physical object' (see, e.g., (9)), but it will be obvious where it should be understood with this qualification.

   The concept of the manipulatory sphere of an individual is used in the definition of 'mark' and 'communication'. We take 'manipulation' as a primitive concept; cf. its standardized designation in (5).

(9)   Definition
       The *manipulatory sphere* of *i* at *t* is that region of the world containing
       the objects that can be manipulated by *i* at *t*.

'The manipulatory sphere is the region open to my immediate interference which I can modify either directly by movements of my body or with the help of artificial extensions of my body, that is, by tools and instruments in the broadest sense of this term' (p. 307).

The concept of the world within actual reach is used in the definitions of 'mark', 'indication', and 'communication'.

(10)   Definition
The *world within actual reach* of *i* at *t* is that region of the world containing the objects that can be perceived at *t* by *i*.

'This sector of the world of perceived and perceptible objects at whose center I am shall be called the world within my actual reach, which includes, thus, the objects within the scope of my view and the range of my hearing' (p. 307).

At this point we are able to define what it means for two individuals to be in a face-to-face situation. This concept is needed later on for the definition of communication.

(11)   Definition
Two individuals *i* and *j* are in a *face-to-face situation* if
(i)   *i* is in the world within actual reach of *j* and
(ii)   *j* is in the world within actual reach of *i*.

The concept of the world within potential reach is used in the definition of 'sign'.

(12)   Definition
The *world within potential reach* of *i* at *t* is that region of the world containing those objects that may be brought into the actual reach of *i* by a change of *a*'s position.

'In a certain sense it might be said that the part of the world within my reach which does not belong to the manipulatory zone transcends it: it constitutes the zone of my potential manipulations or, as we prefer to call it, of my potential working acts' (p. 307).

'... it is a corollary of the idealization of the interchangeability of standpoints ... that the world within actual reach of another is also within my attainable (potential) reach and vice versa (p. 317). Remark: This concept is used by Schütz with different interpretations: on page 307 the concept could refer to the 'difference' between the world within actual reach of *i* at *t* and the manipulatory sphere of *i* at *t*; on page 317 it is used approximately in the above sense.

Schütz introduces some further concepts of 'worlds': the world within restorable reach and the recollected world (p. 308).

The concept of the everyday world is necessary for the definition of 'symbol'.

(13)   Definition
The *everyday world* (world of everyday life) of a group of individuals is that region of the world that contains the worlds within possible reach of all individuals of that group.

'... it [world of everyday life] includes those outer objects, facts, and events which are within my actual reach and those which are within the several zones of my potential reach (comprising those within actual and potential reach of my fellow-men)' (p. 328).

The concept of transcendence is necessary for the definition of all semiotic concepts listed in (1).

(14) Definition
    An object a *transcends* a world w at t if a does not belong to w at t.
'In a certain sense it might be said that the part of the world within my reach which does not belong to the manipulatory zone transcends it ...' (p. 307).
'... the world of another transcends mine (p. 317).
'... there are experiences which transcend the finite province of meaning of the world of everyday life ...' (p. 329).
'The knowledge of indications helps the individual transcend the world within his actual reach ...' (p. 311).
Remark: It is not quite clear what sort of arguments are required for this concept: Schütz predicates 'transcend' at various times of objects (p. 307), sets of objects (p. 317), experiences (p. 329) and even human individuals (p. 311). It is, of course, possible to reformulate this definition in such a way as to comprise all these different cases, but these refinements are not necessary for our purpose.

The concept of cogitation is necessary for the definition of 'sign'.

(15) An object a is a *cogitation of i* at t if a is a thought or a feeling or a volition of i at t.
'The term "cogitation" is here used in the broadest Cartesian sense, denoting feelings, volitions, emotions, etc.' (p. 319).
    The concept 'finite province of meaning' is necessary for the definition of 'symbol'. It presupposes the concept 'style of experience', which we take to be primitive. We give a clarification of it in (16).

(16) e is a *style of experience* if e is a class of ways of experiencing objects, e.g., dreaming or remembering or wishing, etc.

(17) Definition
    A *finite province of meaning* is a set of objects that are experienced in a style of experience e.
'Each province of meaning ... has its particular cognitive style. It is this particular style of a set of our experiences which constitutes them as a finite province of meaning' (p. 341).

The concept of relevance is necessary for the definition of 'mark'. We take it to be a primitive concept, cf. its standardized designation in (5). We are now in a position to define the central concepts of (1).

(18)   Definition
       An object a is a *mark* of an object b for i at t, if
       (i) a is in the nanipulatory sphere of i at a moment t' prior to t and is manipulated by i at t',
       (ii) a appresents b for i at t,
       (iii) b transcends the world within actual reach of i at t,
       (iv) a and b are relevant for i at t', and
       (v) i assumes at t' that b will be relevant for i at a moment after t'.
'I shall be able to recognize those elements which I now find relevant in the world within my actual reach, especially within the manipulatory zone, and which ... will prove relevant also when I return later on. I am, thus, motivated to single out and to mark certain objects. When I return I expect these marks to be useful as "subjective reminders" ... What counts is merely that all these marks, themselves objects of the outer world, will from now on be intuited not as mere "selves" in the pure apperceptual scheme. They entered for me, the interpreter, into an appresentational reference' (pp. 308–309).

(19)   Definition
       An object a is an *indication* of b for i at t, if
       (i) i knows from previous experiences that a and b are connected,
       (ii) i does not know the kind of connection between a and b,
       (iii) a appresents b for i at t, and
       (iv) b transcends the world within actual reach of i at t.
'If we know that event B usually appears simultaneously or precedes or follows event A, then I take this as a manifestation of a typical and plausible relationship existing between A and B, although I know nothing of the nature of this relationship. Until further notice I simply expect or take it for granted that any future recurrence of an event of type A will be connected in typically the same way with the preceding, concomitant, or subsequent recurrence of an event of type B. I may then apprehend A not as an object, fact, or event standing for itself, but standing for something else, namely, referring to the past, present or future appearance of B' (p. 310).

(20)   Definition
       An object a is a *sign* of b for i at t, if
       (i) a appresents b for i at t, and

(ii)   there is a *j* such that
(a)   *a* is manipulated by *j* at some moment *t′* prior to *t* and
(b)   *b* is a cogitation of *j* at some moment *t′*.

'We propose ... to use the term "sign" for designating objects, facts, or events in the outer world, whose apprehension appresents to an interpreter cogitations of a fellow-man' (p. 319).

(21)   Definition
An object *a* is a *symbol* for *b* for *i* at *t*, if
(i)   *a* appresents *b* for *i* at *t*,
(ii)   *a* is in the everday world, and
(iii)   *b* transcends the everyday world.

'We can ... redefine the symbolic relationship as an appresentational relationship between entities belonging to at least two finite provinces of meaning so that the appresenting symbol is an element of the paramount reality of everyday life' (p. 343).

The concept of communication is defined in two steps:
1.   Communication is defined as a ternary relation between two individuals and a point in time.
2.   This ternary relation '*i* communicates with *j* at *t*' is defined with the help of a four-placed relation '*i* communicates with *j* at *t* by means of *a*'.

(22)   Definition
An individual *i* *communicates* with individual *j* at *t* by means of *a*, if
(i)   *a* is in the world within actual reach of *j* at *t*,
(ii)   *a* is in the everyday world,
(iii)   *a* is manipulated by *i* at *t*,
(iv)   there is a *b* such that
(a)   *a* is a sign of *b* for *i* at *t* and
(b)   *a* is a sign of *b* for *j* at *t*, and
(v)   *i* intends *a* to be a sign of *b* for *j* at *t*.

'... communication requires under all circumstances both events in the outer world, produced by the communicator, and events in the outer world apprehensible by the interpreter. In other words, communication can occur only within the reality of the outer world ...' (p. 322).

(23)   Definition
An individual *i* *communicates* with individual *j* at *t* if there is an object *a* such that *i* communicates with *j* at *t* by means of *a*.

Using the concepts defined so far we can define other concepts of semiotics, among them those in (4).

(24)   Definition
An individual i *understands the cogitation* of individual j at t if there is an object a such that a is a sign of the cogitation of j for i at t.

(25)   Definition
An individual *understands* a at t if there is an individual j and a cogitation b such that
(i) a is a sign of b for i at t and
(ii) b is a cogitation of j at some t' that is not later than t.

(26)   Definition
An individual i is an *interpreter* of a at t if
(i) a is a sign of something for somebody at some time and
(ii) i understands a at t.

Theses

With the help of the concepts explicitly defined above we now state explicitly some theses of Schütz's semiotics. A first group of theses refers to the different worlds that 'surround' individuals.

(27)   The different worlds of the individuals are sections of the everyday world.
'This world [world of everyday life] ... includes those outer objects, facts, and events which are within my actual reach and those which are in the several zones of my potential reach (comprising those within actual and potential reach of my fellow-men)' (p. 328).

(28)   Worlds of different individuals may overlap.
'... the world within my actual reach overlaps that within his reach ...' (p. 316).

(29)   Worlds within potential reach may be transferred into worlds within actual reach (relative to one individual).
'To my unique biographical situation pertain, among many other things, my recollections of the world within my reach in the past but no longer within it since I moved from There to Here, and my anticipations of a world to come within my reach and which I must move from Here to another There in order to bring it into my reach' (p. 308).

(30)   For every world within actual reach there exist objects transcending it.

'... the world within my actual reach carries along the open infinite horizons of my world in potential reach, but to my experiences of these horizons belongs the conviction that each world within potential reach, once transformed into actual reach, will again be surrounded by new horizons, and so on' (p. 329).

Theses (31) and (32) are combined by Schütz into the 'thesis of the reciprocity of perspectives'.

(31)   Each individual assumes that, in principle, it could have the worlds of every other individual as its own world.

'... I take it for granted, and I assume my fellow-man does the same, that I and my fellow-man would have typically the same experiences of the common world if we changed places ...' (p. 316).

Schütz calls this thesis 'the general thesis of the exchangeability of standpoints'.

(32)   Every individual assumes that other individuals think essentially the same objects to be relevant.

'I take it for granted until counter-evidence is offered — and I assume my fellow-man does the same — that the differences originating in our private systems of relevances can be disregarded for the purpose at hand ...' (p. 316).

Schütz calls this thesis 'the general thesis of the congruence of standpoints'.

(33)   Each cogitation of an individual transcends every world within potential reach of an arbitrary individual.

'His psychological life, however, is not given to me in originary presence but only in copresence, it is not presented, but appresented' (p. 314).

(34)   The world within actual reach of an individual is (contained) in the world within potential reach of an arbitrary individual.

'... the world within actual reach of another is also within my attainable (potential) reach ...' (p. 317).

Schütz assumes that the following condition is necessary for communication:

(35)   Two individuals *i* and *j* can communicate only by using objects of the everyday world.
'... Communication requires under all circumstances both events in the outer world produced by the communicator, and events in the outer world apprehensible by the interpreter' (p. 322).

This is why the everyday world is understood as a paramount province of meaning.

Note

* This is an English version of a German paper in which we tried to reconstruct parts of A. Schütz's semiotics for the development of a theory of communication. As our source we used Schütz (1967). Parenthesized numbers after quotations in our paper refer to pages in this text.

Reference

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