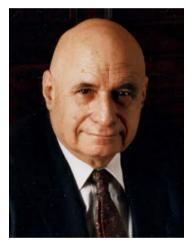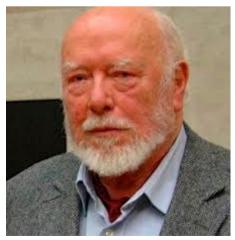Alfred Schutz

Peter L. Berger

Thomas Luckmann

Schutz, Berger and Luckmann.
The question of the natural attitude

Luigi Muzzetto

The purpose of this paper is to highlight different interpretations of the fundamental characteristics of the natural attitude, as formulated by Berger and Luckmann, and Alfred Schutz respectively. The first part of the paper explores the notion of taken-for-granted in the everyday life-world in The Social Construction of Reality by Berger and Luckmann and The Problem of Multiple Realities: Alfred Schutz and Robert Musil by Berger. The two essays show the presence of a articulated vision based on the same theoretical matrix. The second part of the paper analyses the essential characteristics of the natural attitude in the work of Husserl and Schutz. Although Berger and Luckmann are commonly viewed as being Schutzian scholars, their work actually presents significant differences, not only with respect to Husserl, but also to Schutz himself.

Part I

Among the various aspects of Schutz's work on the "life-world" which require study, the nature and characteristics of taken-for-granted knowledge is undoubtedly a key element. A clear vision of the semantic spectrum of this concept, and that of the natural attitude, is essential for a correct interpretation of the entire structure of the life-world.

The first part of the paper aims to show how the well-known essay by Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, follows a similar theoretical path to that of Schutz, but presents significant differences with regard to key aspects of the latter's work. It significantly modifies Schutz's theoretical framework on the essential point of the type of belief that belongs to the natural attitude, yet without discussing this change, or discussing the differences with respect to Schutz's original vision. Berger's essay *The Problem of Multiple Realities: Alfred Schutz and Robert Musil* moves further away from Schutz's ideas but can be interpreted as a legitimate development of the model presented in *The Social Construction*.

The change in the original theoretical framework, together with the fact that the work of Berger and Luckmann is commonly viewed as an organic

development of Schutz's ideas, contributes to creating misunderstandings and clouding the concepts of taken-for-granted and natural attitude, which occupy an important place in Schutzian thinking[1]. First of all let's take a look at the main issues mentioned in *The Social Construction*.

1. In the introduction the two authors repeatedly underline the difference between epistemology and the sociology of knowledge: the first deals with issues that concern the methodology of the social sciences, and therefore philosophy, while the second regards issues to do with sociology as an empirical science. The central terms of the work, according to the authors, are "reality" and "knowledge". For the actor living in the world of daily life, his world is "real", "albeit in different degrees, and he 'knows', with different degrees of confidence, that this world possesses such and such characteristics". All of this is therefore taken-for-granted by the actor. «The philosopher, of course, will raise questions about the ultimate status of both this 'reality' and this 'knowledge'» (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 13). The sociologist takes a different stance: "One could say that the sociological understanding of 'reality' and 'knowledge' falls somewhere in the middle between that of the man in the street and that of the philosopher" (ibid. 14). In the sense that the sociology of knowledge cannot simply adopt the actor's perspective on reality and knowledge of it, or investigate these phenomena on an ontological or epistemological level. «Within the frame of reference of sociology as an empirical science it is possible to take this reality as given, […], without further inquiring about the foundations of this reality, which is a philosophical task» (ibid. 33). The sociology of knowledge has to deal with the relativity of reality and knowledge with respect to the social context and «the general ways by which 'realities' are taken as 'known' in human societies» (ibid. 15).

Berger and Luckmann, therefore, separate the sociology of knowledge from phenomenology. But, as I hope will become clear further on, in *The Social Construction* the phenomenon of taken-for-grantedness is not fully investigated, and retains a high degree of indeterminacy.

I cannot say whether this is the *necessary* consequence of the separation between sociology and phenomenology. But it is certain that Schutz indicates the *need* for "a philosophical analysis" to capture the world of daily life. A need that therefore regards the matter in hand (Schutz 1962a: 117). Only a philosophical (phenomenological) analysis enables us to explore the self-evidence of the natural attitude and highlight its characteristics. As Natanson underlines,

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[1] I analysed some aspects of this topic in my work *Il Soggetto e il sociale. Alfred Schütz e il mondo taken-for-granted* (Muzzetto 2006).

the phenomenology of the natural attitude is not «simply a methodology but an anatomy of man's existence with his fellow-man in the midst of everyday life, within what Husserl called the 'natural attitude'» (Natanson 1974: 35).

The need stressed by Schutz is disregarded by Berger and Luckmann. I therefore believe that Endress is more than justified in arguing that it is necessary to move beyond the different interpretations of the path opened by Schutz, in "protosociology" and "phenomenological sociology" (the author proposes a "phenomenologically based sociology" which takes full account of the complexity of Schutz's vision, something which is not captured by the two previous positions) (Endress 2005a: 4).

To return to the work of Berger and Luckmann, the first chapter, dedicated to the foundations of our knowledge of the world of everyday life, «is based on Schutz, as developed by Luckmann in *Die Structuren der Lebenswelt, in toto*» (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 219). It is specified that the considerations made in this chapter regard "the philosophical prolegomena", that are «in themselves, presociological» (ibid. 34). Considerations that represent the theory of finite provinces of meaning in a nutshell. It should be underlined that the authors report Schutz's ideas without any critical annotations, including the question of the natural attitude, and the belief that characterise it[2]. In these pages there is no significant departure from the ideas of Schutz.

The second chapter opens what Berger and Luckmann view as the more strictly sociological component. And in this case, though Schutz is the key frame of reference, their interpretation draws on various authors from Marx to Hegel, Durkheim, Weber, Mead, Plessner and Gehlen, to name a few of the main authors.

Given the relevance for the issue we are addressing I will refer to only two areas of the general theoretical framework.

a) The first regards the central aspect of Gehlen's philosophical anthropology.

In Gehlen's view, animals, including higher mammals, but with the exception of humans, have a environment that is common to the species. «The environment is structured by its own instinctual organization» (Gehlen 1983: 33); in other words it is the biological apparatus that determines the relationship with the environment (so the animal world is therefore a "closed", pre-given world).

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[2] «The reality of everyday life is taken-for-granted *as* reality. It does not require additional verification over and beyond its simple presence. It is simply *there*, as self-evident and compelling facticity. I *know* that it is real» (ibid. 37). In any case, the suspension of disbelief that characterizes the natural attitude «is so firm that to abandon it […], I have to make an extreme transition» (ibidem).

Man, on the other hand, is lacking when it comes to instinct: his instinct is not enough to give his conduct stability. The basis for stabilisation must therefore be sought in culture, which becomes a second nature. Man however remains «an as yet undefined animal, in some ways never really finished» (ibid. 43). Man and culture, man and world mutually complete each other. The result is a social order that is objectified, externalized and lastly internalized: this in a nutshell is the dialectical process of the construction of reality as Berger and Luckmann see it. Given the contingent nature of the construction of man's world, the latter is intrinsically precarious, as is his "reality", his belief in it, and its binding nature.

b) The second section consists of an "existentialist" reinterpretation of Durkheim's notion of anomie. Berger and Luckmann underline that "the use of certain perspectives on 'anxiety' (*Angst*) developed by existential philosophy makes it possible to place Durkheim's analysis of *anomie* in a broader anthropological frame of reference" (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 226-227).

So Gehlen's ideas (the notion of man as characterized by an instinctual deficit, and his consequent openness to the world) are combined with issues such as the fundamental insecurity of life - the negative and destructive aspects of existence. Hence the image of a social world that is not only inherently fragile, but also dominated by a fear of disintegration, chaos, anomie, and as a consequence, a constant search for *nomos*[3].

Both of the aforementioned points are related to the natural attitude. Although this is not directly considered, in Berger and Luckmann's interpretation, belief in the world is severely weakened. And therefore the whole theory of finite provinces of meaning is transformed.

It is no coincidence that the authors believe that symbolic universes serve not only to lend coherence to the social world as a whole and the biographies of the actors inside it, but also to ensure that the reality of the world of everyday life remains paramount, dominating that of the other finite provinces of meaning.

> We may now inquire further about the manner in which symbolic universes operate to legitimate individual biography and the institutional order. The operation is essentially the same in both cases. It is nomic, or ordering, in character. The symbolic universe provides order for the subjective apprehension of biographical experience. Experiences belonging to different spheres

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[3] Blin, after highlighting the "uncertain state" of the relationship between philosophy and sociology in the work of Berger and Luckmann, asserts that the work contains "a call for the construction of an existential phenomenological sociology" (Blin 1995: 106).

of reality are integrated by incorporation in the same, overarching universe of meaning. For example, the symbolic universe determines the significance of dreams within the reality of everyday life, re-establishing in each instance the paramount status of the latter and mitigating the shock that accompanies the passage from one reality to another. The provinces of meaning that would otherwise remain unintelligible enclaves within the reality of everyday life are thus ordered in terms of a hierarchy of realities, *ipso facto* becoming intelligible and less terrifying. This integration of the realities of marginal situations within the paramount reality of everyday life is of great importance, because these situations constitute the most acute threat to taken-for-granted, routinized existence in society. If one conceives of the latter as the 'daylight side' of human life, then the marginal situations constitute a 'night side' that keeps lurking ominously on the periphery of everyday consciousness. Just because the 'night side' has its own reality, often enough of a sinister kind, it is a constant threat to the taken-for-granted, matter-of-fact, 'sane' reality of life in society. The thought keeps suggesting itself (the 'insane' thought *par excellence*) that, perhaps, the bright reality of everyday life is but an illusion, to be swallowed up at any moment by the howling nightmares of the other, the night-side reality. Such thoughts of madness and terror are contained by ordering all conceivable realities within the same symbolic universe that encompasses the reality of everyday life - to wit, ordering them in such a way that the latter reality retains its paramount, definitive (if one wishes, its 'most real') quality. This nomic function of the symbolic universe for individual experience may be described quite simply by saying that it 'puts everything in its right place'. […] The symbolic universe allows one 'to return to reality' - namely, to the reality of everyday life (ibid. 115-116).

«The origins of a symbolic universe have their roots in the constitution of man. If man in society is a world-constructor, this is made possible by his constitutionally given world-openness, which already implies the conflict between order and chaos» (ibid. 121). «The legitimation of the institutional order is also faced with the ongoing necessity of keeping chaos at bay. *All* social reality is precarious. *All* societies are constructions in the face of chaos. The constant possibility of anomic terror is actualized whenever the legitimations that obscure the precariousness are threatened or collapse» (ibidem).

In this context, the belief that underpins the natural attitude can be understood as a "force" that sustains the daylight vision. But this force is limited. It is in constant struggle with the forces that belong to the night side, those marginal realities that constantly threaten to destroy the reality of everyday life. This vision seems to indicate the presence of an eternal conflict, similar

to that between Eros and Thanatos, between forces that strive to maintain the sense of everyday reality, and others intent on destroying it.

The weakening of the belief that belongs to the natural attitude is accompanied by more fragile borders, compared to Schutz's vision. For example, in Schutz's view the idea that the world is an illusion resides naturally in the provinces of philosophy, literature, and the imagination, but can only become part of the paramount reality in extreme situations. Within the confines of the world of everyday life, this idea would be a sign of madness.

There is no doubt that the symbolic universe performs the essential function of lending coherence to the vision of the social world and individuals' biographies. It undoubtedly represents an inescapable individual and collective point of reference for constructing a meaningful world. We are not concerned about the role of the symbolic universe, but the importance attributed to it. It appears to operate as if the natural attitude had restricted the importance of its influence. In the image provided by Berger and Luckmann, the fact that the nature of reality is given, in the first place, pre-predicatively remains in the background. As does the fact that the assumption that among the various provinces, the world of everyday life is the province of fundamental reality, is also given pre-predicatively. All of this is given with absolute certainty. A certainty that underpins the symbolic universe. There is undoubtedly a complex relationship between the characteristics of the natural attitude and symbolic forms of experience that cannot be avoided.

In an essay written many years later (1995), Berger and Luckmann confirm their vision of the fragility of the universe of life. In the essay that explores the crisis of modern man, the authors raise a preliminary issue: is this really a new crisis, as much of the literature appears to assert, or is it just a variation on the angst that grips man every time the order of the world begins to falter? And also: is this crisis not based on the eternal problem of meaning when faced with the inevitability of death and the fear that this meaning does not exist? (Berger and Luckmann 1995). Harbouring doubts about the nature of the crisis of modern man should have prompted an in-depth analysis of taken-for-granted knowledge, but this is not the case.

2. Berger's essay *The Problem of Multiple Realities: Alfred Schutz and Robert Musil* (1970) can be viewed as the most significant "implementation" of the model formulated in *The Social Construction*. I believe that there is a broad convergence between the visions that underpin the two works, although Berger's essay moves down the path that takes him further away from Schutz's theory.

It should be noted that the differences mentioned can be traced throughout Berger's work, and were present in works that pre-date the essay written with

Luckmann. *The Precarious Vision* (1961) presents the core of Berger's vision and, I would say, even traces of the deep concerns that inspire his thoughts[4].

Berger formulated his interpretation drawing on authors such as Weber, Mead and Cooley, and more generally the Chicago school, Goffman and his dramaturgical analysis, the sociology of knowledge, from Mannehein to Scheler, etc. A decisive role is played by elements from Heidegger and Sartre such as "inauthenticity" and "bad faith". These concepts are presented as enabling us to grasp the artificial nature - as construct, fabrication and manipulation - that lurks under the surface of the social world. The latter is a drama, not without comic or grotesque aspects: humans perform in the comedy of life, playing the roles or parts that society assigns them. But sociology is not the only prism that enables us to capture this unsettling characteristic of the social world. There are many social experiences which allow the actors of common sense to abandon their usual vision to capture deeper, less visible aspects of the world. This phenomenon is known as *alternation*[5]. Given its presence, despite the natural attitude's tendency to accept that the social world is the pre-given world, and is "real" in itself, the image of the social world is ultimately precarious.

In short: the social world constitutes itself as a reality that is as «self-evident and as solid as those of the natural cosmos. Very likely, society could not exist otherwise» (Berger 1976: 10-11). Nevertheless, the author believes that «this consciousness of what Alfred Schutz has called the 'world taken-for-granted' is not of such solidity that it cannot be breached. When such a breach occurs the world is transformed, takes on new dimensions and colors» (ibid. 11).

But why does this awareness that society is not a pre-given reality, external to man, and cogent, but merely a construct formulated by the actors themselves (i.e. the awareness that there are no "social laws" similar to natural laws, but only rules created by man) not translate into a moral stance against «the crimes committed in the name of that society?»[6].

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[4] The essay, which revolves around the issue of whether it is possible to be a Christian today, is not, according to the author, strictly scientific. We could describe it as a "sociologically informed" essay, as it draws on sociological theories and "material from the social sciences" (Berger 1976: 9).

[5] It is interesting to observe that, according to Fontana and Van de Water, something very similar to the notion of alternation can be found in Sartre. The experience of seeing the world "in different ways", the experience of nausea, enables Roquentin (a character in the novel La Nausée) to see "things in a different reality". By means of an optical displacement Roquentin experiences "a Husserlian *epoché* without the long preparation involved in Husserl, but occurring suddenly, by accident, and resulting in a vacuum feeling of terror, not one of reassurance, as in Husserl" (Fontana and Van de Water 1977: 106).

[6] For instance, why do we continue to accept the death penalty, and why do we continue to accept war, once we have understood that these are not caused by entities outside of ourselves?

Berger's response is that assuming "fiction as reality" can become a "moral alibi" and lead people into a state of "inauthenticity" (ibid. 84). The author does not mean to say that "bad faith", as conceived by Sartre, is responsible for the taken-for-grantedness of the social world. But that this characteristic is an intrinsic part of the taken-for-grantedness of the social world, and is therefore a function of taken-for-grantedness. «Bad faith means that society assists us in hiding our own actions from our awareness. The role becomes a moral alibi. It goes without saying that possibility is inherent in the most basic way in our social existence" (ibid. 89). This has another possible function. "Function which can be described by Heidegger's concept of 'das Man'» (ibid. 95). Heidegger believes that resorting to "social generalities" enables us to «evade confrontation with the reality of death» (ibidem). Death, and more generally anything negative, "the terror of our existence", is thus tamed by tracing it to the world of everyday life and the characteristics of the latter[7].

Therefore while on one hand the fact that the social world presents itself as something taken-for-granted is perhaps inevitable, on the other this phenomenon has significant consequences, such as offering alibis for human behaviour, and an antidote to the fear of death.

There is no need to recall that the concepts of bad faith and inauthenticity are not Schutz's[8]. The phenomenology of the natural attitude is radically descriptive. Taken-for-granted knowledge is viewed as an essential part of the natural attitude. There is no intention to explain how it functions as a form of self-deception. Or to prefigure the inauthenticity of *das Man* as conceived by Heidegger. (Anonymity is an essential feature of society, a trait associated with the typifying nature of consciousness).

The following quote shows the image of a world strongly characterized by the fear of dissolution, chaos and also by the need for *nomos*, which represents the urge to construct a taken-for-granted world. This image both enables us to grasp the affinity with existentialism, and introduces a theme that is also central to *The Social Construction*.

> One does not have to be an existentialist to perceive that existence lurks with
> terrors. Thrown into the world in one brief moment of consciousness, we are

[7] These aspects appear in various essays that refer to Schutz's work, as well as that of Berger and Luckmann. As if there were an evident continuity between the two, without noticeable differences. See in particular the essays by R. W. Maloy (Maloy 1977) and L. Baron (Baron 1983).
[8] As Natanson underlines, "without going into Heidegger, it might be said that for Schutz the anonymity of types and the entire dynamics of typification has an ontological ground fundamentally different from Heidegger's placement of the inauthentic '*Man*'" (Natanson 1974: 91). As for Sartre, in various essays Schutz expresses criticism that underlines his distance.

surrounded on all sides by mystery which includes our own destiny and the meaning of a universe not too obviously constructed for our comfort. From the first reassuring smile of the mother bending over a frightened infant, society provides us with structures in which we can live with a measure of ease and which announce to us every day that things are in order. Busying ourselves at the warm, well-lit spots of the marketplace we can forget the howling visions of the night. Existence is leaning over a bottomless abyss. Society is the Potemkin village that shelters the abyss from our fearful eyes.

It happens sometimes in the middle of the night that we wake up and cannot fall asleep again. It is in such hours that strange thoughts may come. Our own existence and identity suddenly cease to be matters of course, but highly doubtful fabrications in a world constantly threatened by nightmarish transformations. If we are what is regarded as sane, well-balanced individuals there are very definite ways of coping with such experiences. We tell ourselves very forcefully who we are. Nonsense, we tell ourselves, we have nothing to do with the faceless horrors of our dreams. There can be no question about our identity. We can promptly give name, address, profession, marital status. If necessary, we can wake up wife and children, who will laughingly confirm the identification. We can switch on the lights and walk around in our house. We call this process of recollection a coming back to reality. We would contend, however, that it is a very special reality that we come back to in this way. It is the daytime reality of society as taken-for-granted. And it certainly is reality. But let us not too easily dismiss the nighttime from the domain of the real. Names, addresses, professions, and wives have a way of disappearing. At the latest it will be in the confrontation with death that we will be thrown back into that night-time world where identities are questioned (Berger 1976: 97-98).

Various subsequent articles, also prior to *The Social Construction*, explore the nature of the social world as a construct. The theme of the institutions is a central point.

Le Mariage et la Construction de la Réalité (1964), written with Kellner, emphasizes the social function of marriage and the institutions in general. While Durkheim examined *anomie*, Berger believes it is more useful to draw attention to the opposite dimension, namely the nomic dimension. The latter is much more important than the former because it is within the socially created order, within this set of rules, «that our experience of life [...] gathers meaning»(Berger and Kellner 1964: 3). In this way "a coherent reality is constructed, preserved and if need be modified" (ibid. 4). «Reality shared as such by the members of a group and therefore taken-for-granted and lastly considered the only social reality, the world 'tout court', the only world that ordinary people can constitute» (ibid. 7).

A later essay, written with Kellner in 1965 (*Arnold Gehlen and the Theory of Institutions*), explores Gehlen's theory of institutions more directly[9]. The two authors return to the differences between the instinctual dimensions of humans and animals, and the consequences of these differences. These include man's instability. The latter must therefore ensure the stability of his conduct by means of "structures produced by himself", namely culture. But these structures must be continually reproduced. «Social institutions are the core of this process of cultural stabilization», producing a «'background' for human activity» (ibid. 112).

Another essay, also dated 1965, written with Pulberg, *Reification and the Sociological Critique of Consciousness*, represents a further step in the formulation of his vision of the construction of the social world: reification is a greater degree of stabilization of the social order.

3. Now we have clarified the background to the essay he then authored with Luckmann, we come to *The problem of multiple realities: Alfred Schutz and Robert Musil,* published in 1970. The essay, as we have already noted, moves further away from Schutz's theory, but in the direction already taken in *The Social Construction*[10].

In the essay on Schutz and Musil, the theory of finite provinces of meaning is the central focus of the analysis. In this case the analysis does not regard the world of everyday life in its structural, static characteristics. It concerns the processes under way in a period of epochal change[11] such as that of the col-

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[9] Institutions that constitute «the core of [the] […] process of cultural stabilization» (Berger and Kellner 1965: 112).

[10] Nasu recalls the interpretation of another phenomenon in which Berger moves away from Schutz's theoretical framework. Berger interprets the pluralization of social worlds (a phenomenon linked to post-modernity) from the perspective of finite provinces of meaning. But these are actually separate phenomena. There are a few similarities between social sub-worlds and provinces, but substantial differences prevail. The main difference highlighted by Nasu is that the sub-worlds are not the product of a particular tension of subjects' consciousness, but realities existing "out there". The cognitive style that characterizes each sub-world is part of each of them and has to be acquired by the actors. This implies that Berger's analysis is "*empirical factual*" and not "*eidetical*" (Nasu 1999).

[11] Berger begins the essay *Robert Musil and the Salvage of the Self* (1984) by saying that it is necessary to distinguish between the constant, anthropological characteristics of the self and the characteristics produced by specific historical changes in a given period. Unfortunately, he continues, the social sciences have not yet produced an adequate representation of the differences between the constant and variable characteristics. I think it is interesting to note that the consciousness of post-modern man represented in the essay on Musil's novel does not deviate significantly from the anthropological view of consciousness represented in *The Social Construction,* apart from accentuating the negative tendencies that have obviously been present since

lapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In Berger's words, «*The Man Without Qualities* contains perspectives of some interest for a phenomenology of the *Lebenswelt* and for the general problem of multiple realities». The imminent war and the end of the Habsburg empire symbolize the catastrophe of the traditional world, its order, its vision. This catastrophe brought about a change in the sense of reality itself. And with it, the disintegration of the subject itself. «What Musil attempted in his gigantic work was nothing less than a solution of the problem of reality from the perspective of modern consciousness» (ibid. 343). «Ulrich, 'the man without qualities', is deliberately presented by Musil as a prototype of modern man […], open to an indeterminate number of reality – and self – transformations» (Berger 1978: 363-364). A man, in short, who tends to replace the sense of reality with a sense of possibility. Musil has Ulrich say that «the sense of possibility could also be defined as the ability to conceive of everything there might be just as well, and to attach no more importance to what is than to what is not» (Musil 1972: 12). The sense of possibility implies not being firmly anchored to deeply rooted beliefs, and also a willingness to take on different points of view and inhabit worlds that are different from what is commonly viewed as the real world.

So Ulrich, with his sister Agate, attempts to build another world, a private world, a different reality ("the other condition"). The world of reality, as it is commonly understood, is devalued, hit by a "negative creed". Let's look at the essential characteristics of the negative creed according to Musil.

- It has to do with the importance of that fundamental trait of the natural attitude that Schutz calls "fundamental anxiety": "the weight of living, that secret melancholy of the knowledge that we all must die, that everything is so difficult and in all likelihood so futile" (Musil 1972: 713).
- The awareness of the relativity of all morals. "There is neither good nor bad, only faith or doubt" (ibid. 738).
- The fragmentation of the self. Any activity one performs relativizes the others.
- The impossibility of having certainties.
- The disenchanted vision of the world that follows the rise of the scientific perspective, the death of the holistic vision.
- The subject's detachment from the world. "There is no kind of mediation between what happens to us and what happens outside of us" (ibid. 719).
- The awareness of the absurdity and artificiality of the world, a world that controls its "normalcy" by sanctioning any other possibility. "Our civi-

time immemorial. In this way the fragility of the consciousness appears endemic. The crisis glimpsed on the horizon has finally come to pass.

lization is a temple of what, if left unchecked, would be called madness" (ibid. 743).
• The realization that the abandonment of the point of view of the given social world, the "inessential" world, makes new visions possible.

The crux of the novel, in terms of the theory of provinces of meaning, is the tendency to look for a new way of being in the other condition. In other words, the novel does not merely describe the characteristics of the crisis of meaning affecting the world of everyday life, but also narrates the attempt to replace it with a different reality, a mystical arena without a religious creed. The other condition is a world that combines irreconcilable, syncretic positions that, according to Musil, would only make sense for a different, more complex self than that hitherto conceived[12]. A world that defies anthropological logic and constants, that forges a mystical union between the self and the world[13].

When examining Berger's interpretation, we should bear in mind the difficulties involved in comparing the world of science with the world of fiction, two finite provinces of meaning that relate to the world of everyday life in different ways, and use different modes of expression[14]. Moreover, in addition to the general problems that this relationship entails, we should also consider the specific function that metaphor, allegory and simile play in the work of Musil[15].

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[12] Berger asserts that for Musil *The Man Without Qualities* represents an attempt to save the self, in response to Mach's assertion that the self cannot be saved. This does not contradict the idea expressed by Harrington, according to which the novel is a critique of the traditional concept of the self, an expressed by Descartes, Kant and Hegel (Harrington 2002).

[13] In other words, what looks like an incestuous relationship between Ulrich and Agate, as noted by Harrington, symbolizes some higher, ultimate, yet still elusive state of human togetherness and love, some utopian state of redemption that Musil famously calls 'the other condition' (*der andere Zustand*) (Harrington 2002: 67).

[14] For an interpretation of Musil's novel from the perspective of the relationship between literature and sociology, see in particular G. Sebald (2014).

[15] As Gargani claims, Musil intends to reject «any version of the world that claims to be unique, privileged and inexorable» (Gargani, 1982: 10). And oppose «*Zivilisation* (namely modern civilization based on the automatic causal mechanisms of the technological organisation of society): rejecting it by presenting an ethical and aesthetic alternative aimed at recovering that sense of motivation and responsibility that are gradually taken from men of their time» (ibid. 11). In Musil's work, therefore, metaphor, allegory and simile are not simple "semiotic devices", but «conceptual links of his literary project intended to provide 'contributions' to enable us to spiritually transcend the world» (ibid. 20). Musil believes it is impossible to express indescribable experiences by means of a direct, denoting language. Metaphor, analogy and simile succeed in «uniting in a sole meaning things and experiences that the language of one-sided rationality leaves in a state of scattered fragments» (ibid. 29). It is only through this language that Ulrich is able to express his idea of another condition, «a human condition where being here would

But in any case, it is only broadly speaking that Ulrich's position appears quixotic in the Schutzian sense. A more careful analysis shows a significant difference. As Endress maintains, "the other condition" does not belong to the Schutzian provinces, the life-world. The other condition is on "the other side of denied reality". «'The other condition' seeks to overcome the human condition or the very idea of existence» (Endress 2014: 170).

Endress shows the need to extend Schutz's framework in order to fully grasp the complexity of the different planes in Musil's novel. He suggests three levels of reflexivity where the theory of finite provinces of meaning can be articulated. Berger stops at the first of these levels, the descriptive level, which is incapable of grasping the wealth of meanings present in Musil's work. But, apart from this aspect, Endress emphasizes the presence of significant problems in Berger's perspective. Let's take the main ones: the concepts of everyday life-world and life-world are used indiscriminately; similarly the concept of multiple realities is used both as a "functional differentiation of society" and as "types of subjective constitution of meaning"; Berger uses the term "abolition of reality" much more frequently than the more Schutzian expression "interruption of reality" (ibid. 163).

To these I would add another critical observation: Berger's interpretation significantly alters the Schutzian model. Let's see some examples. In Musil's novel the other condition is glimpsed through the cracks that open up in the "crumbling structures" in the world of everyday life (Berger 1978: 348). Cracks that are «points at which the 'epoché of the natural attitude' breaks down. These points then become possible transfer stations to the 'other condition', not yet identical with the latter, but potential occasions for its attainment. While differing greatly in their experiential content, all these transition points have in common a violent breakdown of the taken-for-granted routines of everyday life and, *ipso facto*, an intimation of novel and strange modes of being» (ibidem).

Berger recalls Ulrich's experience of being attacked at night, the powerful emotion of falling in love, his sexual experiences with Bonadea, "the violent aesthetic experiences" (music, theatre), religious experiences[16]. These inhabit the world of life as alien intrusions that Berger interprets as islands, enclaves. Alongside these the author recalls the criminal reality of Moosbrugger, «a reality that, unless negated, threatens the suspension of doubt on which all social order rests». «Moosbrugger foreshadows the interruption of everyday

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merely be the image of being there, and even the dream of one person in two bodies would lose its impossibility» (ibid. 28). Language therefore plays a particular "constructive" function.
[16] Berger points out that sexuality and sexual experiences play an important role for Musil «in terms of their efficacy in creating breaches in the structures of everyday reality». Sexuality and sexual experiences are seen as chaotic, Dionysian forces (ibid. 350).

reality by the collective crime of the coming war […]. Then, replicates on the level of public life the reality-shattering effect of sexual and aesthetic experience in the life of individuals» (ibid. 352-353).

But Berger's interpretation, according to which sexual experiences, musical experiences, experiences of violence can be viewed as enclaves, cracks which cause the abandonment of the epoché of the natural attitude, is debatable.

When it comes to war, violence crime and sex, their potential for destroying *the existing order* is undoubtedly clear. And it is also evident that this order is a constitutive feature of the world of everyday life. But the break with routine, and the existing social order, does not *automatically* mean the dissolution of the nucleus of the natural attitude, the belief in a pre-given reality.

Lastly, however, given the specific nature of the effects generated by the aforementioned experiences, these can be linked to an individual's biography. But how can we view this person as an emblem of modern man? Are these experiences that can be generalized as typical of a specific time in history, from a descriptive, rather than a highly symbolic point of view?

The images provided by Musil are a highly effective hyperbole that stresses the radical nature of the processes taking place; nonetheless these images cannot be acquired by sociology without translating them into its language. In my view Berger has not fulfilled this essential task.

I would like to clarify a key point. I do not mean to argue that the meanings that belong to a finite province of meaning should be viewed as constituted separately from other provinces. What I intend to say is that the meanings imply the relationship between provinces, but the way in which this relationship produces the meanings is a complex problem that we only have an approximate vision of. It seems to me that Berger simplifies the results of these relationships. In other words, an overly literal reading of the events in the novel, together with the idea of using finite provinces of meaning as a framework for interpreting the experiences narrated, leads Berger to formulate two ideas that are slightly forced. The first is an over-elastic use of Schutzian provinces, which are stretched to take in events. The second is that of simplifying the sense of events in a one-sided way.

Underlying the topics covered in this last part, there is a significant problem that has not yet been solved: that of the ways of structuring meaning (considering the classification of experiences into finite provinces of meaning, and assuming that the latter are not static ontological structures). Here we cannot tackle this issue, which is undoubtedly one of the core issues of the basis of Berger's analysis[17].

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[17] I will merely indicate a trace of the process. Schutz envisages a series of readings, from the most simplified image of reality to the that which comes closest to the complexity of reality.

However the concept of reality that emerges from Berger's analysis is not exactly the world of everyday life understood as the world of fundamental reality, as represented by Schutz. There is no doubt that this difference also stems from the fact that Berger uses the concepts of life-world and the world of everyday life interchangeably. But, beyond this inconsistency, the most radical consequence that I would like to focus on is the loss of Schutz's framework. The life-world, not distinguished from the world of everyday life that it is based on, ends up coinciding with a generic "existential" world. And the crisis evoked becomes a "crisis of meaning", variously described in many works, from Beckett to Ionesco's plays to Adamov, Genet[18], works that evoke images of the absurd, the void, the "catastrophe of meaning" (Bodei 1987: 33).

Interestingly, the aforementioned 1995 work by Berger and Luckmann, *Modernity, Pluralism and the Crisis of Meaning: The Orientation of Modern Man,* also formally accomplishes this step. The analysis, from the construction of meaning to its crisis, is no longer carried out using Schutz's framework of the finite provinces of meaning. This structure disappears. The crisis, broadly speaking, becomes a "crisis of meaning"[19]. A crisis that is ever latent in the modern world, ready to emerge if the protective barriers of the intermediate structures of the social world collapse.

Consciousness is seen as consisting of accumulated layers of experience. What is taken-for-granted occupies the bottom layer, the firm foundation that supports the layers in which meaning is less solid, beliefs more uncertain. The top layer is a layer of total uncertainty. The basic assumption of the paper is that in the post-modern world what is taken-for-granted gradually tends to shrink, and this process gradually takes in increasingly broad, decisive areas of life.

The simplest interpretation indicates the formulation of meaning in a single province. Devoting attention to one issue determines the main province where the meaning of that specific experience will be formed, and the articulation of consciousness in terms the field, topic and horizon (the other provinces are placed on the horizon of the main one). The system of relevance applied is that of the latter province. Schutz renders this basic interpretation progressively more complex. And he does this based on the assumption that we simultaneously inhabit different finite provinces of meaning with different degrees of our personality. It can be seen as a process in which one main theme produces "the apparent unification" of the activities involved (Schutz 1970: 1). Schutz also examines the way in which two themes flow into the consciousness in parallel, and each becomes the horizon of the other, and so on. Even the most comprehensive reading of the author remains unsatisfactory. Natanson's work on the functions of the enclave intended as possible structural arenas for the construction of meaning is of great interest (Natanson, 1986).

[18] Cfr. L. Goldmann 1971.

[19] It is true that Schutz and Husserl share the idea that real units are units of meaning. But that does not mean that the meaning and reality coincide.

In this essay too, Berger and Luckmann do not examine in detail the constitutive structure of the taken-for-granted. The two authors merely observe that taken-for-granted knowledge is non-problematic, obvious, self-evident knowledge. The taken-for-granted sphere is once more accepted without question[20].

M. Rogers claims that Berger and Luckmann are close to formulating an «explicit theory of taken-for-grantedness», which «links habitualization and institutionalization, objectivation and anonymization, and reality maintenance and mundane routines». They link these aspects to the typifications that are constituent elements of common sense knowledge. Nevertheless, «although they repeatedly note the taken-for-granted quality of everyday life, Berger and Luckmann do not thematize that matter for detailed treatment in and of itself. Their construction of what amounts to a sociological theory of taken-for-grantedness leaves unaddressed the one question such a theory must confront: what, precisely, is taken-for-grantedness? And, correspondingly, what is excluded from the taken-for-granted sectors of everyday experience? Sociologically, then, the nature and range of taken-for-grantedness in mundane life remain ambiguous» (ibid. 138).

Part II

1. In Husserl's work, the belief in the world that characterizes the natural attitude is presented as an absolute. «I find continually present and standing over against me the one spatio-temporal fact-world to which I myself belong, as of all other men found in it and related in the same way to it. This reality, as the word already tells us, I find to be out there, and also take it just as it gives itself to me as something that exists out there. All doubting and rejecting of the data of the natural world does not alter the general thesis of the natural attitude. The world as reality is always there; at the most it might be 'different' to what I assumed […] but in the sense of the general thesis, it remains a world that has its being out there» (Husserl 1965: 62). It is a world that is 'present-at-hand' (*vorhanden*) «in part crossed, in part surrounded by an obscurely intended horizon of indeterminate actuality» (ibid. 58).

This world is immediately and intuitively grasped by humans. In other words, the general thesis «does not consist in a particular act, in an explicit,

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[20] This critique does not intend to reiterate Bourdieu's point of view, according to which the stances of phenomenological sociology and ethnomethodology, without distinctions, would be naive: actors' taken-for-granted knowledge would be taken-for-granted. For a critique of Bourdieu see Endress (Endress 2005b).

predicative judgement about existence. Rather, it is something that endures permanently for the duration of the attitude, that is, for all of our natural life in a waking state». If I explicitly address, by means of a judgement, the world as it exists, I am in any case aware «of having predicatively grasped what, […] being 'present-at-hand', is already out there, not thematically or cogitatively or predicatively, in the original experience or what has been experienced» (ibid. 63).

But what do we mean by "real" in the natural attitude? Real, as Natanson underlines, «is 'what is given' [...]. Reality is an added predicate to immediate experience» (Natanson 1973: 22). Reality "is the 'fact-world'". A world that «has not origin or source; it is simply 'there' and always has been 'there' for all of us. 'There' is less a spatial than epistemological term» (ibid. 26).

Accepting the reality of the world, its givenness, is not based on having the opportunity to refer to evidence. Indeed, as pointed out by Natanson, the question of proving one's belief «does not arise in any fundamental way» (ibid. 24). Nevertheless, this belief is a certain belief: in this way it is like faith. Husserl says: «The existence of the world as a whole is that obvious truth that is never challenged [...] and that is the basis of every judgement. Our consciousness of the world is consciousness of the world of certain belief» (Husserl 1960: 25). Husserl refers to that set of «original beliefs that stand before any doubt, which all forms of doubt have to keep faith with in order to exist: we must all necessarily adhere to these, and without them we would not be capable of taking a single step, not only in everyday life but also in logical and scientific investigation. This belief system, that we are unable to genuinely doubt, even if we wanted to, is what we call 'common sense'» (Di Martino 2004: 165).

As Husserl sees it then, there is a foundation layer of pre-given, pre-judged certainties that form the basis of our judgements and make it possible for us to doubt: doubt is only possible within a framework of certainties. But how is this cornerstone of certainties structured: what does the world of original evidence include?

In the first place we need to specify that the world Husserl is talking about is not the exclusive product of that form of intentionality that is "representation", separate from desire, will, affection and various social dimensions; in other words, from the concrete life of the consciousness. According to Lévinas the exclusive emphasis on representation characterized only *Logical Investigations*[21]. Yet in *Ideas* Husserl had already adopted a stance "that would become

[21] In *Logical Investigations* Husserl argues that «the existing world that is shown to us has the same mode of existence as the object offered to the theoretical gaze. *The real world is the world of knowledge*. The characteristics, such as 'value', 'usual' etc. that are attributed to things are attributed by us, but do not represent the object as it exists» (Lévinas 2002: 76). There is a very clear distinction between the object itself and the attributes that are added to it.

central to phenomenology", and that can be summed up as "being is what we experience". "This idea requires us to include structures pertaining to *non-objectifying acts* in the characteristics of existence and forces us to envisage modes of existence which differ from those of the theoretical object" (Lévinas 2002: 59). As Husserl says in *Ideas*: the world «is before me not only as a world of things, but with the same immediacy, also as a world of values, a world of goods, a practical world. I find the physical things in front of me furnished with value-characteristics, like physical properties, beautiful and ugly, pleasant and unpleasant, agreeable and disagreeable, etc. Things immediately present themselves as objects of use, the 'table' with its 'books', the 'glass', the 'vase', the 'piano', etc. These value-characteristics and practical characteristics also belong constitutively to the objects as objects […]. And as for mere things, this also naturally applies to the humans and animals that surround me, with regard to their social characteristics. They are my 'friends' or 'enemies', my 'servants' or 'superiors', 'strangers' or 'relatives', etc.» (Husserl 1965: 59).

According to Lévinas the equivalence between objectifying acts and existential modes is sought rather than achieved in Husserl's work. But what is important for us is that the world of life does not stop at representation.

In *The Crisis* this aspect becomes more apparent: «The life-world is the spatio-temporal world of things as we experience them in our pre – and extra-scientific life, and as we know them to be experienceable beyond what is actually experienced. We have a world-horizon as a horizon of possible thing-experience. Things: that is stones, animals, plants, even human beings and human products; but everything here is subjective and relative, even though normally, in our experience and in the social group united with us in the community of life, we arrive at 'secure' facts» (Husserl 1983: 166). Husserl therefore maintains that concrete experience takes place in a historical and cultural world, I would say within one's group, with its own worldview. Nevertheless, even taking this into account, we can arrive at «a truth concerning objects that is unconditionally valid for all subjects, from which, in spite of relativity», everyone agrees («normal Europeans, normal Hindus, normal Chinese people agree, etc.»). «The life-world», Husserl concludes, «despite its relativity, has its own *general structure*. This general structure, to which everything that exists relatively is bound, is not itself relative. We can attend to it in its generality and, with sufficient care, fix it once and for all in a way that is equally accessible to all» (ibid. 167).

So, to simplify, we can say that in Husserl's work there are two levels of *Lebenswelt*[22]: a changeable historical-cultural level «that embraces the certainties

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[22] Chung-Chi Yu, taking up the work of Waldenfels, sees in the *Krisis* three versions of *Lebenswelt*: «1. the concrete life world; 2. a relative specific world such as a vocational world or a

that apply to me as a man of a certain era and a certain culture», and a basic nucleus, an «invariant structure that is implied not by our way of life but all forms of life in general» (Spinicci 2000: 126).

From this perspective, the problem arises whether there is logical compatibility between these levels or an incurable aporia[23]. Husserl shows great certainty when asserting the existence of an arena of "perceptive immediacy", that is universally and tacitly shared, and on which different worlds are built.

Husserl also believes that the presence of different visions of the world does not affect the degree of belief we have in its existence. He does not explicitly address this issue. But he does not seem to deviate from the idea that belief in the world remains in any case a certain belief.

We can therefore say that for Husserl the "form of belief" changes, but the "certainty of the world" remains (Spinicci: 128).

2. While for Husserl our "first contact" with the world is by means of perception, for Schutz it occurs through *working*[24]. «Basically, the everyday life-world, which is based on the *Wirkwelt*, constitutes the core of the Lifeworld, which contains many 'sub-universes' or 'finite provinces of meaning'» (Yu 1999: 163)[25].

certain cultural world; 3. a world-nucleus of nature to be distilled by abstraction, namely, the world of straightforward intersubjective perception […]. This world is composed of the world of space-time and natural objects, which are not yet culturally interpreted and reconstructed» (Yu 2004: 178). The latter world remains the same for all, above and beyond cultural differences; it remains "the universal ground for all different lifeworlds". A world that, as Waldenfels asserts, is "given first" (ibid. 181). Chung-Chi Yu also recalls that in recent debate on Husserl, the notions of "homeworld" and "alienworld" emerged.

[23] Chung-Chi Yu believes that the attempt to reconcile cultural worlds and the basic perceptual world, based on the idea of foundation, leads Husserl into aporias, and a "confused" theory (Yu 2004).

[24] Natanson underlines the continuity between perception and working. In Husserl's work perception should not be seen as «the *factuality* of vision. If it is at all correct to speak of a 'metaphor' of vision as dominant in phenomenology, the metaphor should be understood as a nuanced indication of intuition, not as feeling but as 'a mental seeing'. Accordingly, action is as central to Husserlian *seeing* as any other aspect of the spectrum of perception. It is the narrowing of perception which Schutz rejects; it is the enlargement of perception which he advances» (Natanson 1986: 17).

[25] Yu's statement sums up the evolution of Schutz's thought and avoids creating misunderstandings. The expressions life-world, world of everyday life, and working world are used interchangeably, as synonyms. It should be recalled that in the 1936 essay that represented the pragmatic shift/turning point, Schutz highlights the basic nature of working (Wirken). And in the 1945 essay on multiple realities, working is defined as the "prevalent form of spontaneity" of the everyday life-world, its distinctive trait. And in the same article the everyday life-world

Moreover in Schutz, "from the beginning" the everyday life-world is an "intersubjective world of culture". Schutz criticises Husserl's view of "pure perception" (letter to Gurwitsch dated 13 October 1954): «traditional phenomenology, including Husserl, is naive in the sense that it analyzes perception as the central paradigm without taking account of the fact that perception is after all a phenomenon of the life-world and thus implicitly presupposes the appresentative structures that lead to the constitution of the life-world» (Schutz and Gurwitsch 1989: 235).

Schutz's criticism of the "naivety" of viewing perception as a fundamental paradigm, combined with the idea that the everyday life-world is a world of culture "from the beginning", indicates a position that is clearly different to that of Husserl. Yet Yu believes that there is a well-founded reason to believe that in Schutz the issue of "foundation" leads to an ambiguous vision of the everyday life-world. To sum up Yu's argument in two points.

a) The problem analyzed by Yu emerges, in the first place, from an exchange of letters between Gurwitsch and Schutz (3 September 1954, 13 October 1954). Schutz sets out to indicate the differences between his stance and that of Husserl, with regard to both the existence of a basic level of perception, and in relation to the vision of how culture takes shape in the everyday life-world. He agrees with Gurwitsch on a critical interpretation of Husserl's position regarding the level of perception, but not with the way in which Gurwitsch interprets Schutz's vision of the constitution of culture. Gurwitsch offers the following scheme: if we view an element in the outside world, a material element, in terms of the apperceptive order, we remain on a pre-cultural level (the object is therefore seen in terms of its material characteristics), while if we view a material element in terms of the appresentative order, it becomes a cultural object.

Schutz stresses that Gurwitsch's interpretation lacks the crucial role played by the social context: «The contents of the bag of a primitive witch doctor, or a cyclotron is only considered to be a *cultural object* by the 'expert'». And he adds: «all schemata contained in the appresentative state of affairs are socially conditioned, have to be learned» (ibid. 237).

Yu believes that this view actually brings Schutz closer to Husserl: for Schutz too there appears to be a basic perceptual layer (the pure experience) of the everyday life-world. Because this layer is what remains if the beholder, who does not belong to the culture of the cultural object in question, is not

is taken as the basic province for the finite provinces of meaning, and the life-world. So if the everyday life-world is the paramount reality, working lies at the heart of it. Yet even the author himself does not always respect this distinction.

capable of decoding its meaning. As there is no appresentation, what remains is what emerges from apperception.

b) The second point concerns the possible existence of universal symbolic meanings. This would contradict the existence of worlds that are culturally different "from the beginning". In *Symbol, Reality and Society*, Schutz devotes a few pages, in very general terms, to the issue of the relationship between symbols and the human condition: «there are first sets of appresentational references which are universal and can be used for symbolization because they are rooted in the human condition» (Schutz 1962c: 332). And further on he attempts to show examples of how «universal symbols originate in the general human condition» (ibid. 334).

Chung-Chi Yu asks: «If cultural difference is a consequent interpretation of lifeworld, then how is the universal symbolism integrated into his lifeworld notion? Are they compatible? Does Schutz want to argue that there exists *the* grounding lifeworld, rather than many concrete lifeworlds?» (Yu 1999: 172).

He therefore asserts that Schutz's statements are somewhat ambiguous. I am inclined to think that Schutz did not express himself clearly, rather than that his stance is a contradictory one.

Point one. I think the answer Schutz gives Gurwitsch is markedly incomplete. And it is this incompleteness that produces the ambiguity indicated by Yu. We must remember the basic premise of Schutz's argument: perception is a phenomenon of the world of everyday life, therefore a derivative phenomenon, not an original phenomenon (as Husserl believes). In other words, perception is a phenomenon that implies the prior existence of appresentative relationships, therefore a culture. There is no shadow of a contradiction in this argument. I therefore find it very unlikely that Schutz would immediately reintroduce the idea of a perceptual base layer that precedes culture, and is external to it, just a few lines after denying its existence. When Gurwitsch gives his version of appresentative relationships, Schutz says: «I fear, my friend, that you are here the victim of tracing all experiences back to perception» (Schutz and Gurwitsch 1989: 236). Schutz by no means asserts that the native who does not interpret the cyclotron in line with the meaning "of the expert" uses a universal appercettive scheme. He argues that, in order for an appresentative scheme to exist, it must be interpreted as such by an actor. And also that the appresentative order does is not a private element, belonging to an individual actor. Its existence implies the social dimension[26]. Let's go back

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[26] Not to mention the fact that the idea of "pure experience" would be in stark contrast to the whole of Schutz's methodological and epistemological stance. One thing that springs to mind is his acceptance of Whitehead's critique of the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness" (there is no such thing as simple, pure facts, only interpreted facts). And his acceptance of Scheler's

to the native who cannot interpret the identity of the object as a cyclotron. Schutz argues that this actor can not grasp the presence of the expert's appresentative order. But since the Viennese sociologist does not say anything more about the behaviour of this actor, it seems logical to believe that he thinks the actor perceives the object using the schemes of his *own* culture, probably with its scheme of appercettive order.

Point two. Yu highlights in Schutz's writing the contradiction arising from the existence of culturally different worlds and universal symbols. I think that Schutz means that there exist symbols that can be constituted through appresentative relationships themselves. Which does not mean that they have the same meaning; the latter is always given by the entire cultural model in question. I think we can assume that Schutz, despite the uniqueness of the models (and, more generally, of any meaning), accepts the possibility that different models can be compared. And therefore, despite the diversity of meaning, the possibility to grasp the existence of appresentative relationships that arise from the human condition itself. Thomason believes that Schutz's epistemological stance can be viewed as moderate constructionism ("methodological constructionist"), therefore different from the radical constructionism of Garfinkel, Cicourel, etc.[27]. Schutz's position cannot be reconciled with radical relativism, namely the belief that cultural models are immeasurable, and cannot be compared.

I think we can conclude that the distance between Husserl and Schutz I mentioned at the beginning of the paragraph remains. Which begs the question as to whether this distance also signals different ways of understanding the issue of belief in a pre-given world.

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criticism of the possible existence of a "natural" basis common to all men (which led Scheler to propose the concept of a "relatively natural conception of the world", that Schutz endorses using Scheler's argument).

[27] Garfinkel, when describing the epistemological positions of Parsons and Schutz, sums them up as "correspondence theory" and "congruence theory". With regard to congruence theory, Garfinkel says «Rather than there being a world of concrete objects which a theory cuts this way and that, the (congruence) view holds that the cake is constituted in the very act of cutting. No cutting, no cake». And: «The object is conceived as never appearing except through its schema. *The schema of specifications is precisely the object itself*» (H. Garfinkel, *A comparison of Decisions Made on "Four Pre-Theoretical" Problems by Talcott Parsons and Alfred Schutz*, quoted in B. C. Thomason 1982: 60). Schutz responds (letter of 19-1-1954): «I am not so sure whether there are really such fundamental differences between our 'decisions' as you assume to prevail […]. I do not fully grasp the basic difference between what you call the correspondence and congruence theory» (Thomason 1982: 63). The entire correspondence between the two authors was most recently revived by Psathas (Psathas 2009).

3. In the first part of the essay I repeatedly criticised Berger and Luckmann for modifying Schutz's theory on the crucial node of belief in the everyday life-world.

Vaitkus believes that this aspect of Schutz's theory is poorly developed. Indeed he asserts that this is the «most important and largely neglected side of Schutz's work». Schutz, «in a number of sketchy remarks never worked out, clearly and indisputably points to the foundational importance of the subjective actor's faith or belief in the world of the natural attitude» (Vaitkus 2005: 112). A faith that can also break down in various circumstances.

In my view this argument is contrived. I think it is more correct to say that Schutz highlights the basic characteristics of the phenomenon, without covering it exhaustively. It is a broad topic that is narrowly analysed by the authors, despite being in great use currently.

Let's take a quick look at the main points dealt with by Schutz.

We said earlier that in Husserl's work the certainty of the world is never questioned, beyond the existence of culture, something which is hinted at, but not analysed. Schutz's work takes a different view: culture is an intrinsic component of the everyday life-world. A world that Schutz's 1945 essay on multiple realities sketches.

The main characteristic of the natural attitude is that of assuming that the everyday life-world is absolutely real – a world that existed before we were born, perceived and interpreted by others, our predecessors. This world is not perceived as a disorganized set of shapes, lights, sounds, etc., but as a structured world. We have a pragmatic interest in it: it is both the arena and object of our actions. *Working* is its characteristic hub. The everyday life-world is structured in terms of space and time, and also according to its social structure. "Fundamental anxiety" has a decisive influence on the lives of actors: on the organization of their plans, and the anxieties and fears deriving from it. Anxieties and fears that «are essential elements of its reality but [they] do not refer to our belief in it. On the contrary, it is characteristic of the natural attitude that it takes the world and its objects for granted until counterproof imposes itself. As long as the once established scheme of reference, the system of our and other people's warranted experiences works, as long as the actions and operations performed under its guidance yield the desired results, we trust these experiences. We are not interested in finding out whether this world really does exist or whether it is merely a coherent system of consistent appearances. We have no reason to cast any doubt upon our warranted experiences which, so we believe, give us things as they really are. It needs a special motivation, such as the irruption of a 'strange' experience not subsumable under the stock of knowledge at hand or inconsistent with it, to make us revise our former beliefs» (Schutz 1962b: 228).

So in the everyday life-world epistemological problems do not arise. In this world it is not possible to raise the question of the real or apparent nature of the world. Nor is radical, Cartesian doubt conceivable. Doubt may only arise on certain points and moreover there is always a reason for it: there has to be an experience that appears "strange" compared to the knowledge at our disposal.

The 1945 essay on the topic of the natural attitude adds an important concept: «the *epoché* of the natural attitude». Just as phenomenology makes use of a special technique, the phenomenological *epoché*, «a device to overcome the natural attitude by radicalizing the Cartesian method of philosophical doubt», Schutz believes we can assert that man «within the natural attitude also uses a specific *epoché* […]. He does not suspend belief in the outer world and its objects, but on the contrary, he suspends doubt in its existence» (Schutz 1962b: 229).

Why this shift of emphasis from the presence of certainty to the absence of doubt? Reeder, commenting on a letter Schutz wrote to Kauffman in the same year (September 1945), on the same subject, argues that the author wants «to provide an account at the level of phenomenological psychology» (Reeder 2009: 105). And from the point of view of phenomenological psychology, experiencing something as real maintains an element of doubt. So Schutz interprets faith in the world as a total suspension of doubt. The work of Spiegelberg quoted in the note regards this issue[28], and Schutz references this to support the plausibility of his argument. Wagner asserts that Schutz «welcomed Spiegelberg's 'analysis of dubitability and dubiousness with respect to reality'. In the context of his own essay he accepted it as an expression of the 'Cartesian method of philosophical doubt' as applied to the 'naïve realism' of man in the natural stance» (Wagner 1983: 176).

While as Schutz recalls, the concept of reality in the world of science, refers «to apophantic judgment, which, through constant critique, is consciously brought to approximation of evident self-givenness», in the natural attitude

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[28] Spiegelberg distinguishes between subjectival reality and non-subjectival reality. The first regards the arena formed by «all phenomena *as such* are presented to us simultaneously and with full adequacy, whether more or less clear in their trans-phenomenal references». This subjectival reality is characterised by three aspects: «our own existence as that of a believing being, our acts of believing and the thing believed in so far as it is believed». This arena is only a «fragment of our supposed total of reality» (Spiegelberg 1968: 89-90). After making this distinction Spiegelberg underlines the dubitable nature of experience: «Certainly everything non-subjectival, including its reality, remains dubitable in principle. Nothing even stands in the way of doubting the whole subjective sphere, though such a doubt would have no reasonable chance of confirmation, and consequently would be essentially unjustified, whereas in non-subjectival reality there always is the theoretical possibility of its proving justified» (ibid. 99).

the concept of reality «is not gained through judgement». What appears is taken as real «in the way in which it appears». It is taken as «something given, taken-for-granted (*Fragloses)*, something beyond doubt. […] This attitude is the limit (*limes*) of all possible attitudes of doubt, which start from here and in different strata progressively constitute the various other spheres of reality» (letter by Schutz 17-9-1945 in Reeder 2009: 104-105). This interpretation of the concept of *epoché*, Schutz adds, is incompatible with Husserl's use of it.

Reeder believes that Schutz wants to highlight the lack of conscious judgement in the acceptance of the reality of the world of everyday life, which is «pre-judgemental (and in fact often pre-linguistic, speaking phenomenologically)». Moreover, Schutz's concept of *epoché*, which differs not only from that of Husserl, but also from the philosophical tradition, aims to emphasize «the very doubtlessness of the naive attitude's acceptance of reality» (ibid. 105).

The essay *Symbol, Reality and Society*, that Schutz views as a sort of completion of his 1945 essay, indicates the nature of signs and symbols, as constituent elements of appresentative relationships. So, while for James the paramount reality is constituted by the "subuniverses of senses" and "of physical things", for Schutz the paramount reality of the world of everyday life «includes not only the physical objects, facts, and events within our actual and potential reach perceived as such in the mere apperceptual scheme, but also appresentational references of a lower order by which the physical objects of nature are transformed into sociocultural objects» (Schutz 1962c: 341).

4. We said earlier that in Schutz the everyday life-world is an intersubjective world of culture. All cultural models include a set of cultural interpretations, systems of relevance, typifications. These include «all the peculiar valuations, institutions, and systems of orientation and guidance (such as the folkways, mores, laws, habits, customs, etiquette, fashions) which […] characterize, if not constitute, any social group at a given moment in its history» (Schutz 1976a: 92). This model is the bearer of a vision of the world that is socially shared, socially approved and socially distributed. As Schutz says: «Any member born or reared within the group accepts the ready-made standardized scheme of the cultural pattern handed down to him by ancestors, teachers, and authorities as an unquestioned and unquestionable guide in all the situations which normally occur within the social world. The knowledge correlated to the cultural pattern carries its evidence in itself – or, rather, it is taken-for-granted in the absence of evidence to the contrary. It is a knowledge of trustworthy *recipes* for interpreting the social world and for handling things […]. The recipe works, on the one hand, as a precept for actions and thus serves as a scheme of expression […]. On the other hand, the recipe serves as a scheme of interpretation […]. Thus it is the function of the cultural pattern

to eliminate troublesome inquiries by offering ready-made directions for use, to replace truth hard to attain by comfortable truisms, and substitute the self-explanatory for the questionable. This 'thinking as usual', as we may call it, corresponds to Max Scheler's idea of the 'relatively natural conception of the world' (*relativ natürliche Weltanschauung)*» (ibid. 95).

This is the key point: cultural models are infused with the natural attitude; models that have a pervasive presence in the lives of individuals, in their socialization, and are accepted as if their validity was self-evident. Self-evidence that remains so until proven otherwise.

Scheler argues that it is absolutely wrong to think of the existence of a "natural vision of the world", namely a basic worldview, common to all people in all times and places. A view which would imply the existence of a mythical "natural state" of the human race. «*There is absolutely not one, constant* vision of the natural world 'by man' [...]», says Scheler: «The diversity of the image of the world infuses the categorical structures of the information/data itself». He adds: «O. Spengler rightly […] expresses it in the same terms I used in 1914: 'Kant's table of categories is the table of categories of European thought'». Structural changes naturally take place over very long periods of time (Scheler 1976: 123). The sociology of knowledge must therefore introduce the concept of a "relatively natural conception of the world". This would include everything that in a given group is «generally 'taken-for-granted', every object and idea […] which is generally believed and felt *not to need or call for a justification*» (ibidem).

Schutz takes on Scheler's idea. He underlines that the addition of the term *relative* «should distinguish this concept from the idea of a general State of Nature as assumed by Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and the ancient and modern theoreticians of a Right of Nature» (Schutz 1976b: 228). And thus he likens the relatively natural conception of the world to the ideas of Sumner, Voegelin, MacIver and Lynton. The latter share the idea that each group views its own vision of the world as central (ethnocentrism, founding myth, etc.), right, correct and obvious as the perspective from which to see the world and themselves. While the world view of external groups is seen as foreign, strange, questionable - not "natural".

We can say that the same argument we applied to Husserl also applies to Schutz (and even more so): the difference in the contents of cultural models coexists with the certainty of the world. The "form of belief" changes, but not the "certainty of the world".

5. Schutz provides a very general overview of the phenomenon of taken-for-grantedness, sketching its main structural features. In *Reflections on the Problem of Relevance*, in the short essay *Relevance: Knowledge on Hand and in Hand*, but

above all in *The Structures of the Life-World* he develops the distinction between on hand knowledge, in hand knowledge, and at hand knowledge[29]. In hand knowledge can be viewed as an intermediate form between the other two[30]. Let's take a look at on hand knowledge and at hand knowledge.

On hand knowledge

This form of "knowledge" regards the universal characteristics of experience, the basic, «fundamental structures of experience of the life-world. […] These fundamental structures do not enter into the grip of consciousness in the natural attitude, as a core of experience. But they are a condition of every experience of the life-world and enter into the horizon of experience» (Schutz and Luckmann 1973: 104). These structures are not perceived as real «on the basis of social interaction and internalization», but «on the basis of universal idealizations» (Rogers 1981: 134). This "knowledge" can never become problematic or the focus of attention in the world of everyday life. Or be articulated as a specific form of knowledge. Its characteristics are therefore invariant and always present in every relatively natural vision of the world. Mary Rogers believes that, phenomenologically speaking, this "knowledge" should be understood as "what is given", and distinguished from "what is taken" (ibidem).

Elements that belong to on hand knowledge include epistemic constants, metaphysical constants and situational constants.

a) Epistemic constants. To recall the general thesis of the existence of the alter ego, the general thesis of the reciprocity of perspectives (idealization of the interchangeability of standpoints, idealization of the congruency of the system of relevances) the thesis of the world (general thesis of the natural attitude), the idealizations connected to the pre-given nature of existence and persistence of the world, and the repeatability of actions, "and so on and so forth", and "I can do it again", etc.[31].

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[29] «Not only does Schutz delineate what is '*on* hand' (Heidegger's *Vorhandenheit*) and what is '*at* hand' (*Zuhandenheit*), – says Zaner – but his analysis shows the necessity for a further sphere-viz. '*in* hand' (which is of several kinds)» (Zaner, note 12, in Schutz 1970: 145).

[30] As Schutz says: «Among the habitual knowledge stored away some elements are merely at hand […]. Others, […], are more permanently present, are more frequently used: the business of living does not permit us to let them entirely out of grip, and to keep them neutralized and dormant. We may say that these elements of our knowledge are not only *at* hand but *in* hand» (Schutz 1996: 69).

[31] There are other idealizations beyond those mentioned. Cicourel's interpretative procedures, for example, can be viewed as idealizations (Cicourel 1974).

b) Metaphysical constants. These relate to the "knowledge" that we are born from parents, «that the world into which we are born has a history, that the world has already been interpreted by others, that communication with other human beings is possible, etc.» (Rogers 1981: 145).

c) Situational constants. Each person, at each moment in his or her life, lives in a given situation, to which his or her stock of knowledge is related genetically, structurally and functionally. The situation is necessarily limited, by the ontological structure of the world, as well as by the transcendence of time and the physicality of subjects. This limitation gives rise to the spatial, temporal and social organization of experience. These therefore represent the limits of the human condition and also «the conditions of possibility of all human experience in the world - their necessary horizon» (Zaccaï-Reyners 1996: 42).

- Spatial arrangement. Among the various objects present in the world there is a privileged object: my body. This is the "vehicle" for my movements in the outside world. It is not a «fragment of space; on the contrary, space would not exist for me at all if I had no body» (Schutz 1970: 173). The body can therefore be seen as the zero point: a system of spatial (and temporal) coordinates, according to which I organise the space into left and right, above and below, etc. I divide the world into the world currently within my range, the world within a reachable range and the world where my reach can be restored. It should be added that «I *am* my body and sense perceptions, I *am* my hand grasping this or that object. My body is the form in which my self manifests itself in the outer world» (ibid. 172).
- Temporal arrangement. The transcendence of the time of the world "has various subjective correlates". I experience the necessary, imposed nature of time in my expectations. The passing of my inner time, as I get older, and in the irreversibility of events. In *working*, my inner time intersects with cosmic time and social time. And in *working*, present, past and future come together. In the passage of time I also experience my finitude.
- Social arrangement. "All experiences have a social dimension". In this way «the Other is given to me immediately as a fellow-man in the we-relation, while the mediate experiences of the social world are graduated according to degrees of anonymity and are arranged in experiences of the contemporary world, the world of predecessors, and the world of successors» (Schutz and Luckmann 1973: 104).

At hand knowledge

This type of knowledge regards culturally variable aspects of experience; aspects that occupy the field and issue of consciousness and do not remain on

the horizon, in the shadows of consciousness. It is a form of knowledge acquired through actions, interactions, processes of socialization. It especially concerns the contents of the cultural model of one's social group. It settles in the stock of available knowledge in varying degrees of clarity, depth, familiarity, habitualization and belief. It is structured into typifications with various degrees of generality and anonymity. It is the basic "raw material" that makes up the relatively natural conception of the world. It is a form of knowledge that is no longer problematic and that requires no further investigation. It is "neutralized", but can be reactivated if «typically the same or like experiences turn up in the future» (Schutz 1996: 68). So, while it is taken-for-granted, it can always be critiqued: it is always possible to doubt it.

At hand knowledge requires on hand knowledge. The latter, as we have seen, determines the scope of the former[32].

Concluding remarks

In the first part of the paper we pointed out the discrepancies between Berger and Luckmann's analysis and Schutz's ideas. *The Social Construction of Reality*, while explicitly referencing the theoretical model of the Viennese sociologist, markedly departs from it, especially in the way it interprets the natural attitude. This divergence is accentuated in various essays by Berger. Belief in the reality of the world of everyday life appears to be tinged by uncertainties and fears; cracks caused by looming negative forces, "night-time forces" that threaten to destroy it.

The second part of the essay examined the main characteristics of the natural attitude, in particular the issue of belief in the reality of the world of everyday life in the work of Husserl and Schutz. The aim was to capture traces in the works of the two authors that might have led to the image of reality described by Berger and Luckmann as characterised by an endemic fragility. And to highlight, in a more analytically complete fashion, the vision of the natural attitude from which they depart.

In Husserl's work, belief in the *Lebenswelt* is a sure belief. The presence of culture gives rise to the issue of the co-existence of differentiated basic worlds

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[32] It should be added that there is actually no gap between the two forms of knowledge. There is an intermediate level, a form of habitual knowledge, routine knowledge that, as it were, is grounded in on hand knowledge, while part of it moves gradually (from skills to knowledge of recipes) towards at hand knowledge. There is no clear dividing line between «certain fundamental elements of the stock of knowledge and certain provinces of habitual knowledge» (Schutz and Luckmann 1973: 105-106).

and a common level of "pure perception". In any case, from Husserl's point of view, there is no doubt about the persistence of the general thesis of the natural attitude. The contents of this belief in the world can differ, but not the certainty, the faith in its pre-givenness.

Schutz shifts the focus of attention from transcendental phenomenology to the phenomenology of the natural attitude. This shift in focus enables us to concentrate our analysis of the world of everyday life on the social and cultural aspects, from its basic level, that of *working*. These analyses yield the fundamental traits of the natural attitude. Traits that make up the general structure of a theory of what is taken-for-granted.

Schutz by no means exhausted the analysis of the huge field that emerged from his reflections. The author provided a basic framework, the structural characteristics of the forms of knowledge of common sense.

He highlighted three ideal types of knowledge: on hand knowledge, in hand knowledge, and at hand knowledge. The latter basically represents the specific contents of cultural models. It is the result of interactions and is acquired in processes of socialization. This kind of knowledge can be questioned in problematic situations. We can also add that it is subject to constant change. So in this sphere processes of crisis are always latent. But this is not the only form of knowledge that characterizes the world of everyday life. There is the point of reference represented by on hand knowledge. This kind of knowledge is not learned "directly" in processes of socialization, but formed through idealizations. It is, so to speak, "given". It is the bedrock that supports everything else. It represents an unshakeable certainty, a belief which cannot be questioned in the world of everyday life. This is an essential point. It cannot be disregarded without an argument that shows the way in which it can be neutralised, its theoretical irrelevance.

What remains poorly investigated is the relationship between the two forms of knowledge. The separation between them is an analytical one. The world of everyday life is an interweaving of the two forms of knowledge. This aspect is what Schutz fails to cover adequately.

Many writers, while dealing with the world of everyday life (in various interpretations), do not accept the division of forms of knowledge present in Schutz's work. Nor do they develop their own complete theory of the phenomenon of taken-for-grantedness. These include authors such as Mead and Goffman and some closer to Schutz's thinking, like Garfinkel[33], Cicourel, and, as we have seen, Berger and Luckmann. In the work of the latter, the fact that

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[33] M. Rogers shows how in Garfinkel «the unquestioned and the unquestionable are […] aggregated in an implicit characterization of taken-for-grantedness» (Rogers 1981: 137).

their theoretical framework lacks an analysis of taken-for-grantedness is what then leads to their excessive emphasis on the fragility of the world of everyday life. The resulting picture oversimplifies the complexity of the phenomenon.

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