

The Reification of the Other as a Social Pathology: Traces of a Phenomenological Critical Theory in Alfred Schutz

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Abstract: The present paper constitutes an attempt to articulate, systematize, and further develop the implicit traces of a phenomenological critical theory that, according to Michael Barber's reading, are to be found in Schutz's thought. It is my contention that a good way to achieve this aim is by reading Schutz against the background of novel, phenomenologically and hermeneutically informed accounts of Critical Theory in the tradition of the Frankfurt School, such as Hartmut Rosa's. In order to achieve the stated objective, I will proceed in four steps. First (1), I will briefly reconstruct the mostly negative reception of phenomenology, the interpretive social sciences, and Schutz by both the Frankfurt School and contemporary critical social theory. Second (2), I will present Barber's alternative reading of Schutzian phenomenology as entailing an implicit ethics and a rudimentary critical theory based thereon. Third (3), I will sketch out Rosa's formal model of Critical Theory as an heuristic means for articulating Schutz's unspoken social-critical insights. Finally (4), establishing a dialogue between Barber's reading of Schutz and Rosa's account, I will provide a preliminary articulation of Schutz's rudimentary critical theory.

Keywords: Critical Theory, Alfred Schutz, Reification, Phenomenology, Other

*Introduction*¹

“Schutz’s phenomenology of discrimination unleashes a host of problems that set it en route toward critical theory.”

Michael Barber (2001: 122)

It may seem odd to speak of traces of a phenomenological critical theory² in Alfred Schutz’s work. And this at least for two reasons. On the one hand, the idea of a *phenomenological* critical theory of society appears as implausible in light of the Frankfurt School’s classical criticism of phenomenology as an acquiescent and even ideological philosophical tradition (cf., for instance, Adorno, 1990; Horkheimer, 1968a: 202 ff.; Habermas, 1981: 223 ff.). On the other hand, and perhaps most importantly, depicting Schutz as a *critical* theorist collides with the way in which his lifeworld analysis tends to be characterized in contemporary critical social theory, namely, as a merely descriptive and therefore uncritical micro-sociology that neglects the unjust, and even pathological, economic and power structures governing modern societies (cf., for example, Gardiner, 2001: 3 ff.; Bauman, 2009: 58; Habermas, 1981: 223).³

Rather than being an unjustified defamation, this widespread interpretation of Schutz finds some support in his own writings. Unlike approaches such

¹ The present paper obtained the Ilse Schutz Memorial Prize 2020, awarded by The International Alfred Schutz Circle for Phenomenology and Interpretive Social Science. It contains results of a wider research project on the contributions of Schutzian phenomenology to contemporary social theory conducted at the Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena under the financial support of the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung. I would like to thank Michael Barber, Andreas Göttlich, Jochen Dreher, Charlotte Nell, and an anonymous reviewer for their suggestions for improving the text.

² For a definition of the term “critical theory,” see section 3.1.

³ Arguably, in the last years there is an incipient rapprochement going on between phenomenology and critical social thought, and this in both directions. In this connection, however, Schutz’s work does not seem to play any role. On the one hand, some contemporary Critical Theorists in the tradition of the Frankfurt School, such as, for instance, Hartmut Rosa (2016), draw heavily on phenomenological insights (cf. Gros, 2019; Fuchs et al., 2018: 15). On the other hand, contemporary phenomenologists, such as Gail Weiss et al. (2020), attempt to show the potential of the phenomenological approach for the criticism of phenomena such as racism, colonialism, sexism, and ableism. Yet neither Rosa nor Weiss et al. consider that Schutzian phenomenology has something important to say in this matter. In *Resonanz: Eine Soziologie der Weltbeziehung*, Schutz is only mentioned once and *en passant*—Rosa (2016) mostly draws on Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Blumenberg, Waldenfels, Plessner, and Taylor. In turn, in the 2020 book *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology*, Schutz’s name does not even appear: the contributors of this edited volume focus on Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Levinas, Fanon, and De Beauvoir. It is likely that this neglect of Schutzian phenomenology is due, at least in part, to the strong criticism of his thought by contemporary critical social theory.

as Max Horkheimer's or Jürgen Habermas's (cf. Rosa, 2010: 51), Schutzian phenomenology does not *primarily* aim at offering a normative criticism of modern capitalist societies. As many experts agree (cf., for instance, Eberle, 1993: 66; Endreß, 2006: 340; Embree 2017), Schutz's theoretical project consists in an attempt to establish an epistemological foundation for the interpretive social sciences by *phenomenological* means. That is, by means of a *faithful description* of the fundamental and invariant structures of lifeworldly experience, a description which, in a Husserlian spirit, seeks to be "*free from presuppositions*" [*voraussetzungslos*] of both metaphysical and normative nature (cf. Hua III: § 24, 152; Hua XIX/ 1: § 7. My emphasis).

Furthermore, when it comes to defining the task of the social sciences *stricto sensu*, Schutz follows Max Weber's principle of "value-freedom" [*Werturteilsfreiheit*]. According to this postulate, which seems to be dominant in contemporary, mainstream social research (cf. Dörre et al., 2009: 10, 87 f.), social scientists must restrict themselves to "objectively" describing or explaining social reality, thereby systematically refraining from making ethical or political value-judgments about it (cf. Weber, 1988: 494; Barber, 2005: 175). Indeed, in a way that reminds one of Horkheimer's (1968b: 192 ff.) classical definition of the very antithesis of "Critical Theory," namely, "Traditional Theory," Schutz (2016: 11 ff.) claims that the "most urgent mission" of the social sciences consists in "simply apprehending and describing" the "given" "world of social facts" in an "unbiased" manner and in "organizing" and "analyzing" the empirical material by means of "honest logical-conceptual work."

Michael Barber is perhaps the Schutz scholar that contributed the most to contesting this reading of Schutzian phenomenology as one more of the many strains of uncritical, mainstream micro-sociology. To be sure, Barber (2001: 122 f.; 1991: 129 f.) neither denies Schutz's Weber-inspired normative abstinence nor the principally "epistemological" and descriptive-formalistic orientation of his social theoretical investigations. However, "searching for the spirit behind the letter of Schutz's writings," and arguing from a perspective informed by Kant's and Levinas's ethical philosophies, he offers an alternative picture of Schutzian phenomenology as entailing both an "*implicit ethics*" and a *critical-theoretical potential* based thereon (Barber, 1991: 130, 138).

Indeed, as opposed to the dominant reading, Barber does not interpret Schutz's effort to understand and describe the subjective experience of quotidian actors in a value-free manner as implying a nihilistic, or relativistic, position in ethical-political issues, let alone a conformist stance towards the social *status quo* (Barber, 2005: 233 ff.). Rather, he sees it as attesting to an ethical commitment that secretly governs Schutz's thought, namely, *a commitment to respecting and understanding the "subjective point of view of the*

Other” (Barber, 1991: 130, 135. My emphasis; 2001: 122 ff.; 2005: 233). What is more, according to Barber (2001: 125. My emphasis), this implicit ethics goes hand in hand with a *criticism of the “reification”⁴ of the alter ego in all its modalities*, i.e. of all the scientific and pre-scientific ways in which the Other’s subjectivity is systematically disregarded or marginalized.

The present paper constitutes an attempt to articulate, systematize, and further develop the implicit traces of a *phenomenological critical theory* that, according to Barber’s reading, are to be found in Schutz’s thought.⁵ It is my contention that a good way to achieve this aim is by reading Schutz against the background of novel, *phenomenologically and hermeneutically informed* accounts of Critical Theory in the tradition of the Frankfurt School, such as Hartmut Rosa’s. Distancing himself from the *patronizing* traits of classical accounts in this tradition, and drawing heavily on Axel Honneth, Rosa seeks to develop a *non-paternalistic* model of social criticism. That is, a version of Critical Theory that takes as its basis the experiential perspective of everyday actors, instead of hastily discarding it as an ideological form of false consciousness.

In order to achieve the stated objective, I will proceed in four steps. First (1), I will briefly reconstruct the mostly negative reception of phenomenology, the interpretive social sciences, and Schutz by both the Frankfurt School and contemporary critical social theory. Second (2), I will present Barber’s alternative reading of Schutzian phenomenology as entailing an implicit ethics and a rudimentary critical theory based thereon. Third (3), I will sketch out Rosa’s non-paternalistic version of Critical Theory as an heuristic means for articulating Schutz’s unspoken social-critical insights. Finally (4), establishing a dialogue between Barber’s reading of Schutz and Rosa’s account, I will provide a preliminary articulation of Schutz’s rudimentary critical theory.

1. Phenomenology, The Interpretive Social Sciences, and Schutz in the Eyes of the Frankfurt School and Contemporary Critical Social Theory

1.1. Adorno and Horkheimer on Phenomenology and The Interpretive Social Sciences

The founding fathers of Critical Theory of Society, Adorno and Horkheimer, level strong criticisms at the key figures of classical phenomenology: Edmund

⁴ I specify the way in which I use the concept of “reification of the Other” in the section 2.2.

⁵ It is not my intention here to reconstruct Alfred Schutz’s actual political views but, rather, to show, articulate, further develop, and even radicalize *some* critical theoretical intuitions implicit in his work. For an exhaustive analysis of Schutz’s political stance, see especially Embree (1999).

Husserl, Max Scheler, and Martin Heidegger. Broadly speaking, both Horkheimer (1968a: 202 ff.; 219; 10 f.; 1968b: 139) and Adorno (1990) identify metaphysical, ahistorical, and non-dialectic traits in phenomenological philosophy and even characterize the latter as an ideological product, i.e., as a philosophical form of false consciousness that contributes to underpinning the unreasonable and pathological social conditions of capitalism (cf. Demmerling, 2013; Gehring, 2019; Türker, 2013).

Adorno's criticism of Husserl in *Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie: Studien über Husserl und die phänomenologischen Antinomien* can serve as an illustration of this reluctance towards phenomenology. Among many other things, in this book from 1956, the Frankfurt-born philosopher criticizes the "metaphysical" (Adorno, 1990: 13) nature of Husserl's thought, which he identifies in the latter's use of concepts such as "the absolute first" [*das absolut Erste*] (Ibid.: 1990: 30), "absolute origins" [*absolute Ursprünge*] (Ibid.: 12), "absolute immediacy" [*absolute Unmittelbarkeit*] (Ibid.: 279), and "purity" [*Reinheit*] (Ibid.: 92). And he also stresses the unspoken "reactionary" [*reaktionär*] political implications of phenomenology, depicting it as a "bourgeois" [*bürgerlich*] and "ideological" philosophy that reifies, and therefore affirms, the capitalist *status quo* (Adorno, 1990: 199, 202, 203; cf. Gehring, 2019: 478). As Adorno (1990: 203) writes with respect to Husserl's method of essence-intuition [*Wesensschau*]:

The affinity of so many of his [Husserl's] pupils to restorative tendencies suggests the suspicion, already expressed by Troeltsch, that the method of essence-intuition was from the beginning apt for ideological machinations, and that it gave a pretext to dressing up, in an unproven manner, assertions of content of every sort as eternal truths provided that they only rely on "being," namely, on the existence of institutional powers.

Although neither Adorno nor Horkheimer explicitly deal with Schutz's work, from their general disinclination to phenomenological philosophy it follows that they would have also received Schutzian phenomenology negatively. Arguably, the fact that the authors of *Dialektik der Aufklärung* also criticize the Weberian paradigm of interpretive social research makes this conjecture even more plausible (cf. IfS, 1958: 108-111; Horkheimer, 2002: 191).⁶

⁶ As is well known, since its emergence in the 1930s, the Frankfurt School has intended to amalgamate critical theoretical thinking with empirical social research (cf. Rosa et al., 2009: 175 ff.). To be sure, in their empirical studies, Horkheimer and Adorno combine quantitative with "qualitative" methods, such as content analysis and interviews (cf. Bonß, 2019). However, they do not understand qualitative empirical research in the Weberian, i.e. hermeneutical-comprehensive, sense (Ibid.), and, on occasions, they criticize the latter approach strongly (cf. IfS, 1956: 108-111). For an account of the Frankfurt School's "relationship of tension" with the

On the one hand, Horkheimer accuses the interpretive social sciences of being an instantiation of “Traditional Theory,” i.e. the very antithesis of “Critical Theory,” insofar as they restrict themselves to collecting and conceptually organizing empirical data in an uncritical manner –and this in spite of their sophisticated, hermeneutic-comprehensive methodology (Horkheimer, 1972: 191). On the other hand, Horkheimer and Adorno (ifS, 1956: 111) consider as “illusory” the interpretive social scientists’ attempt to understand and thereby explain all social phenomena as nothing but an outcome of individual, “meaningful” actions, since in capitalist, modern societies the social world is “to a great extent dominated by economic rules” over which everyday actors have no control whatsoever. Insofar as interpretive social researchers restrict themselves to studying small sectors of social reality, claim Adorno and Horkheimer (Ibid.: 108), they fail to acknowledge the way in which the latter are mediated, shaped, and even determined by the “total structure of society” [*gesellschaftliche Gesamtstruktur*].

1.2. Habermas on Husserl and Schutz

The early thought of the main representative of the second generation of the Frankfurt School, Jürgen Habermas, is strongly influenced by Heidegger (Demmerling, 2013: 374), and in his mature work, the phenomenological concept of “lifeworld” [*Lebenswelt*] plays a key role, although in a communication-theoretically transformed version (cf. Habermas, 1981: 192 ff.). Notwithstanding this, one can speak of a certain continuity between Habermas and Adorno and Horkheimer regarding the disinclination towards phenomenological philosophy (cf. Zahavi, 2007: 68).

To be sure, Habermas’s criticism of phenomenology is quite different from that of the founding fathers of Critical Theory. This can be easily observed in his reading of Husserl. In contrast to Adorno and Horkheimer, the author of *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* centers his critique of Husserlian phenomenology on its alleged failure to tackle a fundamental social-theoretical problem: the question of intersubjectivity (cf. Habermas, 1989: 35, 49, 56ff.). More precisely, Habermas (Ibid.: 35) claims that Husserl cannot handle this issue adequately because he remains prisoner of the solipsistic “limitations of the philosophy of consciousness [*Bewußtseinsphilosophie*].” These restrictions,

empirical social sciences in general and qualitative empirical research in particular, see Bonß (2019: 292 ff.). Most importantly, in their theoretical writings, Adorno and Horkheimer remain “closed” to hermeneutical approaches focused on the reconstruction of lifeworldly experience (Honneth, 1993: 208), and this because they tend to conceive prescientific self-interpretations as mere ideological products. As Honneth (Ibid.: 224) notes, this situation starts to change with Habermas: he “is the first to attempt to take up positively [...] the method of the understanding of meaning investigated by the hermeneutic tradition.”

so goes Habermas's (Ibid) argument, can only be surpassed by abandoning the latter in favor of a "communicative theory of society" that draws both on Mead and Wittgenstein.

What is more, in contradistinction to his predecessors, Habermas (1984: 408f.; 1981: 223ff.) offers an exhaustive criticism of Schutzian phenomenology.⁷ Among other things, he criticizes Schutz for endorsing an uncritical "methodological descriptivism" that does not go beyond articulating and "reformulating," by phenomenological-hermeneutical means, the "more or less trivial, everyday knowledge" of lay actors (Habermas, 1981: 223; 1985: 148). Thereby, claims Habermas (1981: 223), Schutzian phenomenology fails to achieve one of the most important tasks of social theory, namely, that of *explaining* the workings of social reality, since the latter is ultimately governed by macro-sociological processes operating behind the back of everyday subjects.

In line with this criticism, Habermas characterizes Schutzian phenomenology as a "culturalistic abridged interpretive sociology [*verstehende Soziologie*]" that endorses an untenable hermeneutical-idealistic account of social reality (Ibid.: 226). That is, he sees it as a one-sided social theoretical approach that commits the mistake of equating "society" [*Gesellschaft*] *in toto* with the cultural lifeworld as experienced by quotidian actors. In doing so, claims Habermas (Ibid.: 553; 1985: 377), Schutzian phenomenology cannot account for the *macro, systemic-structural* aspects of modern social reality, i.e., for the "internal systemic dynamic of economic development, of nation and state building" (Habermas, 1985: 553), which operate with a different logic from that of the lifeworld.

In other words, for Habermas (Ibid.: 228), Schutz neglects the fact that modern societies have a dual nature: they operate simultaneously as "lifeworld" and as "system." "[S]ocieties," claims the author of *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, "are *systemically stabilized* complexes of action of *socially integrated* groups" (Ibid.). This means that modern, capitalist social formations are characterized by having two simultaneous modalities of "integration," or, better said, of "coordination" of individual actions, namely, lifeworldly, "social integration" and "system integration" (Ibid.).

⁷ It should be noted that Habermas played a key role in the diffusion of Schutz's work in German Sociology. As Sebald (2018: 5) claims, Habermas's book *Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften* was the first German-speaking publication that discussed at length Schutzian phenomenology (cf. Habermas, 1982). In this influential book from 1967, the Düsseldorf-born thinker accepts Schutz's claim that sociology needs a hermeneutical-comprehensive methodology for grasping the immanent meaning structure of social reality (Sebald, 2018: 5 f.; Habermas, 1982: 7). However, arguing from the perspective of Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, he criticizes Schutz and his disciples for not overcoming the "limitations of the analysis of consciousness [*Bewußtseinsanalyse*]" (Habermas, 1982: 239; cf. Sebald, 2018: 5), which, in Habermas's view, are typical of the phenomenological approach in general (cf. Habermas, 1989: 35).

The first of these mechanisms is responsible for the “symbolic reproduction” of society, e.g., for the maintenance of its cultural worldview, and must be approached by using the theoretical model of the lifeworld (Habermas, 1981: 227 f.; 1985: 150 f.). The second one, in turn, warrants the anonymous “material reproduction” of society, i.e. the functioning of the bureaucratic State and of the capitalist market, and should be studied through the lens of system theory as developed by Parsons or Luhmann. That is, from the “external perspective of the observer,” utilizing the conceptual metaphor of the “self-regulating system” [*selbstgesteuertes System*] (Habermas, 1981: 227 f.; 1985: 150 f.).

Insofar as Schutz equates society as a whole with the lifeworld, suggests Habermas (1981: 227 f.; 1985: 150 f.), he neglects a fundamental aspect of the workings of modern social formations, namely, their material reproduction through anonymous systemic mechanisms of political and economic nature. But this is not all. Because of its failure to account for the systemic stabilization of society, Schutzian phenomenology is also not able to recognize the so-called “sociopathologies [*Sozialpathologien*] of modernity,” which, for Habermas (1981: 553), are provoked by the “colonialization of the lifeworld” [*Kolonialisierung der Lebenswelt*] by the systemic “imperatives” of “instrumental rationality” (Ibid.: 566; Habermas, 1984: 408).

Broadly speaking, inspired by both Marx and Weber, Habermas (1981: 566) defines the colonialization of the lifeworld as a progressive “reification” [*Verdinglichung*] of quotidian communicative interactions which follows from the illegitimate penetration of everyday *praxis* by the rigid systemic “imperatives” of the economic and political-administrative sub-systems. That is, as a process of “monetarization” [*Monetarisierung*] and “bureaucratization” [*Bürokratisierung*] of communicative action. As Habermas (Ibid.: 593) claims, this seemingly unstoppable colonizing process implies a “disruption” of the lifeworld, insofar as it precludes the successful symbolic reproduction of the latter, i.e., the impaired reproduction of culture, social relationships, and individual personality.

The thesis of internal colonization states that the subsystems of the economy and state become more and more complex as a consequence of capitalist growth, and penetrate ever deeper into the symbolic reproduction of the life world [...] [T]he systemic imperatives of autonomous subsystems penetrate into the lifeworld and, through monetarization and bureaucratization, force an assimilation of communicative action to formally organized domains of action—even in areas where the action-coordinating mechanism of reaching understanding is functionally necessary (Habermas, 1981: 539, 593; 1985: 367, 403).

What is more, according to Habermas (1984: 408 f.), besides being unable to account for the colonization of the lifeworld *qua* macro-sociological process, Schutzian phenomenology is also incapable of diagnosing it as a *social-pathological* phenomenon to be criticized. This is so, he says, because, unlike authors such as Hannah Arendt, Schutz does not operate with a normative standard of what constitutes “impaired intersubjectivity” [*unbeschädigte Intersubjektivität*] (Ibid.: 409). Put differently, in order to assess the penetration of the lifeworld by systemic imperatives as a social pathology, one must have a *normative-ethical* idea of how the former *should* look like, and Schutz does not possess one (Ibid.).

1.3. Bauman’s and Gardiner’s Criticism of Schutz

Partly, but not only, because of the Frankfurt School’s influence, in the field of contemporary critical social theory Schutz’s lifeworld analysis is also interpreted as an acquiescent, naïve, and sociologically one-sided approach, i.e., as an account incapable of serving as a basis for social critique. This can be illustrated by two examples, namely, the interpretations of Schutzian phenomenology by Zygmunt Bauman and Michael Gardiner.

In *Towards a Critical Sociology*, Bauman (2010: 58)⁸ reproaches Schutz for confining his social theoretical reflections to the epistemological plane, thereby refraining from engaging in a criticism of social reality. According to the Polish-British sociologist, Schutz’s theoretical project is to be understood as a “*critique of sociology, not of its object*” (Ibid. My emphasis), insofar as he only asks sociological thought “to be critical of its own knowledge of the object and of the way it has arrived at such knowledge” (Ibid.). More precisely, in this view, Schutz only offers an *epistemological* critique of positivistic and naturalistic approaches to social research.

By contrast, when it comes to normatively assessing social reality, claims Bauman (Ibid.), Schutz shows a conformist attitude. He “does not ask sociology to be critical of its object” and even “precludes a priori, by sheer methodological decision, the very possibility of the object-direct critique” (Ibid.). After being analyzed through the lens of Schutzian phenomenology, one reads in *Towards a Critical Sociology*, “social reality emerges intact and invincible,” that is, as an “unavoidable” and “overwhelming” fact (Ibid.: 59).

In turn, in his 2000 book *Critiques of Everyday Life*, Michael Gardiner (2000: 3 ff.) claims that Schutz’s social theory constitutes one of the many acquiescent and politically detached “mainstream microsociologies” that permeate the contemporary social-scientific landscape. According to Gardiner

⁸ Carlos Belvedere (cf. 2006: 9) briefly expounds Bauman’s criticism of Schutz in his book *Semejanza y comunidad*.

(Ibid.: 4 f.), just like symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology, Schutzian phenomenology is an uncritical, “covertly positivist” account that does not go beyond describing the everyday life from an allegedly objective, i.e. politically and ethically detached, point of view. In this sense, it neither follows “emancipatory” aims nor “really seeks to abandon the pretence to objectivity, scholarly detachment and nonpartisanship that has served to legitimate the social sciences for the last 150 years” (Ibid.: 3 ff.).

In addition, as Gardiner (Ibid.: 5) argues, because of their “ethnographic” nature, “interpretive microsociologies” such as Schutz’s remain in a dangerous “pseudo-concreteness” (Kosík in Ibid.: 7). That is to say, they systematically neglect the embeddedness of everyday practices in broader structural contexts of political-institutional domination and economic exploitation. Seen this way, Schutzian phenomenology fails to acknowledge that the quotidian lifeworld cannot be understood *per se*, i.e. without being analytically related to “wider sociohistorical developments” such as occidental modernity or capitalism (Ibid.: 7).

Last but not least, and as a corollary of the alleged macro-sociological deficits above-described, Gardiner (Ibid.) maintains that approaches such as Schutz’s necessarily fall into the “the illusion of immediate knowledge” (Bourdieu in Ibid.: 7), insofar as they do not analyze the manner in which “ideology,” in its many forms, structures, mediates, and permeates common-sense and quotidian consciousness. Schutzian phenomenology, one reads in *Critiques of Everyday Life*, simply ignores the fact that “lay members accounts of their situation are often partial and circumscribed, if not ‘false’” (Ibid.: 7).

2. An Implicit Ethics and a Rudimentary Critical Theory: Michael Barber’s Alternative Reading of Schutz

2.1. Barber’s Alternative Reading of Schutz

Michael Barber is perhaps the Schutz scholar that contributed the most to challenging this widespread picture of Schutzian phenomenology as one more of the many strains of uncritical, mainstream micro-sociology. To be sure, Barber (2001: 122, 123, 125; 1991: 129 ff.) neither denies Schutz’s Weber-inspired normative abstinence nor the principally “epistemological” and descriptive-formalistic orientation of his social theoretical reflections. He even reconstructs and analyzes at length the criticisms that two close friends of Schutz, Aron Gurwitsch (cf. Gurwitsch & Schutz, 1985) and Eric Voegelin (cf. Schütz & Voegelin, 2018), level against him for holding this politically and ethically uncommitted position (cf. Barber, 2004: 117 ff.; 2005).

In this sense, Michael Barber (1991: 129) has no problem whatsoever in conceding that writing “on Alfred Schutz’s ethics seems as anomalous as to write on Kant’s hedonism, Nietzsche’s religious convictions, or A.J. Ayer’s metaphysics.” Schutz, admits Barber (2001: 123), is not very interested in developing a systematic theoretical ethics to the point that he does not write any single paper particularly devoted to the topic. Instead, he voluntarily confines himself to the “epistemological plane,” i.e. to problems related to the philosophical foundations of the social sciences, “with the result that the ethical features of relationships are deemphasized” (Ibid.).

However, “searching for the spirit behind the letter of Schutz’s writings,” Barber (1991: 130, 138) offers an alternative picture of Schutzian phenomenology as entailing both an “*implicit ethics*” and a *critical-theoretical potential* based thereon. In what follows, I will sketch out Barber’s ethical reading of Schutz as set forth in two important texts, namely, “The Ethics behind the Absence of Ethics in Alfred Schutz’s Thought,” from 1991, and the 2001 book *Equality and Diversity: Phenomenological Investigations of Prejudice and Discrimination*.

Broadly speaking, Barber (2005: 233 ff.) does not interpret Schutz’s effort to understand and describe the subjective experience of quotidian actors in a value-free manner as implying a nihilistic, or relativistic, position in ethical-political issues, let alone a conformist stance towards the social *status quo*. Rather, he sees it as attesting to an unspoken ethics that secretly governs Schutz’s thought, namely, *a commitment to respecting the “subjective point of view of the Other” and taking it seriously* (Barber, 1991: 130, 135. My emphasis; cf. 2001: 122 ff.; 2005: 233). What is more, as Barber (2001: 125. My emphasis) claims, this implicit ethics goes hand in hand with a *criticism of the “reification” of the alter ego in all its modalities*, that is, of all the scientific and pre-scientific ways in which the Other’s subjectivity is systematically disregarded or marginalized.

2.2. An Operational Definition of the Term “Reification of the Other”

Before proceeding to articulate Barber’s position, it is necessary to specify the way in which I will use the expression “reification of the Other” in this paper. It is not my intention here to discuss the broad problem of “reification” in general, nor to enter into the classical and contemporary debates concerning the meaning, scope, and origins of the concept (cf., for instance, Honneth, 2005: 12 ff.; Berger & Pullberg, 1966; Berger & Luckmann, 1967: 89 ff.; 200 ff.; Lukács, 1970: 97-146). Generally speaking, the notion of “reification” [*Verdinglichung*], as its etymology indicates, is understood in social theory as the

ontologically or morally reprehensible⁹ “apprehension of human phenomena as if they were things” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967: 89; cf. Honneth, 2005: 15 ff.), and it mostly denotes the human being’s “oblivion” of the human(-made) character of the social world, i.e. its *dehumanization*, taking place especially, but not only, in modern capitalism (Berger & Luckmann, 1967: 89; Honneth, 2005: 9).

As Axel Honneth (2005: 95) notes, reification is a complex phenomenon that can be divided into three “dimensions,” namely, a subjective one: *self-reification*, an objective one: *reification of the thing-world*, and an intersubjective one: *reification of other subjects*. In the present paper, I will only focus on the latter, namely, on the problem of the *reification of the Other*, which, according to Barber (cf. 2001: 120 f.), plays a key role in Schutz’s work. More precisely, my understanding of this term is based upon an, admittedly idiosyncratic, combination of insights from Barber (Ibid.), Nussbaum (1995: 249 ff.), Honneth (2005: 12 ff.), and Berger & Luckmann (1967: 89).

Generally speaking, I understand here the term “reification of the Other” as the objectionable action of “treating *as an object* what is not really an object, what is, in fact, a human being” (Nussbaum, 1995: 257), an action that causes suffering in the reified subject, insofar as it distorts her self-relationship and undermines her self-realization (cf. Honneth, 1992: 336; Barber, 1991: 135). To be sure, this definition operates with a notion of “humanity” that has clear Kantian resonances: treating the Other as an inert thing is *wrong* because she is a sentient, autonomous, and unique subjectivity with a personal dignity that calls for respect (Nussbaum, 1995: 257; cf. Barber, 2001: 123). And it also presupposes, in line with Honneth (1992: 336), that human beings need intersubjective “recognition” [*Anerkennung*] of their subjectivity in order to lead a good or accomplished life.

I think the best manner to specify this characterization is by interpreting it both *metaphorically* and *ex negativo*. Strictly speaking, even in contexts of radical reification, for instance, in cases of sexual slavery or genocide, human beings are not treated *literally just like* physical things –in fact, this is impossible. For this reason, a good way to define intersubjective reification is to characterize it *negatively*, as it were, as a form of intersubjective treatment that implies a partial or total “denial” of the Other’s human subjectivity (cf. Nussbaum, 1995: 257). In a sense, this “denial” or “oblivion of recognition” [*Anerkennungsvergessenheit*] (cf. Honneth, 2005: 82, 95 f.) is *analogous to* treating another person as a non-sentient, fungible, and heteronomous thing (cf. Nussbaum, 1995: 257). To use Nussbaum’s words, reifying the Other

⁹ For the distinction between an ontological and an ethical-moral criticism of reification, see Honneth (2005: 16 f.).

implies apprehending her as “something whose experience and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account” (Ibid.).

Arguably, the reification of the Other in contemporary societies comes in two fundamental forms, which are frequently related to each other (cf. Honneth, 2005: 100). On the one hand, it appears in the context of institutionalized practices of instrumentalization, commodification, and administrative-scientistic categorization and manipulation of human beings, which, according to Western Marxism, are intrinsic to the structure of capitalist social formations (cf. Honneth, 2005: 101; Lukács, 1970: 258 ff.). And on the other hand, it emerges as a consequence of phenomena related to discrimination, such as racism, xenophobia, sexism, homophobia, ableism, etc. (cf. Honneth, 2005: 102 f.; Nussbaum, 1995: 251).

It seems to me that “social typification” processes in the Schutzian sense of the term play a key role in both forms of intersubjective reification (cf., Barber, 2001: 120 f.; Honneth, 2005: 102).¹⁰ Indeed, both those who manipulate, instrumentalize, or commodify other persons and those who discriminate them have something in common: they neither attend to nor respect the subjective perspective of concrete Others but, rather, treat them as fungible exemplars of *objective types of persons* (Honneth, 2005: 102 f.). Differently put, in reification processes, the individual subjectivity of the Other, her intentionality, expressivity, identity, and autonomy are disregarded and even replaced, so to speak, by thing-like, anonymous typifications (cf. Berger & Luckmann, 1967: 91; Berger & Pullberg, 1966: 106).

“There is,” as Berger and Luckman (Ibid.) write concerning the reification of social roles, “a total identification of the individual with his socially assigned typification.” While in racism or sexism these “reifying typifications” [*verdinglichende Typisierungen*] (Honneth, 2005: 102 f.)¹¹ always have pejorative connotations –i.e. they are stereotypes or prejudices–, this is not necessarily the case in processes of administrative-scientistic categorization and manipulation of Others (cf. Ibid.: 101 ff.). For in modern capitalist societies, these processes tend to be conceived as neutral in ethical terms (cf. Ibid.; Lukács, 1970: 97-146).

2.3. “Equality and the Meaning Structure of the Social World” as a Key to Discerning Schutz’s Implicit Ethics

As said, Michael Barber offers an alternative picture of Schutzian phenomenology as entailing both an “*implicit ethics*” and a *critical-theoretical potential* based thereon. Arguably, in order to support this heterodox exegesis,

¹⁰ For an account of Schutz’s theory of typification, see Gros (2017).

¹¹ I use this term in a slightly different sense than Honneth.

he resorts to a twofold strategy (Barber, 1991: 134; 2001: 123). On the one hand, he reads the entire work of Schutz in light of one of the only passages in which he makes explicit value-judgments about social reality, namely, in light of his moral condemnation of intergroup discrimination in the 1955 paper “Equality and the Meaning Structure of the Social World” (CP II: 254 ff.). And on the other hand, he draws on ethical philosophical insights from Kant and Levinas in order to articulate and take further Schutz’s rudimentary normative position as expressed in that essay.

More precisely, Barber (1991: 134) argues that “Equality and the Meaning Structure of the Social World” constitutes a key text for detecting Schutz’s “ethical position.” There, the Austrian phenomenologist explicitly declares the ethical “wrongness” of discrimination, understood as a process in which a subject hastily imposes a social typification upon another, thereby “reifying,” i.e. disregarding, neglecting, distorting, suppressing, or even repressing, the latter’s experiential perspective (cf. Barber, 2001: 120). In Schutz’s view, “the racist” or discriminatory person “not only imposes a typification which the Other, from his subjective viewpoint, would appropriately find objectionable, but he also seems unconcerned about the Other’s reception of that typification” (Ibid.: 135).

As Barber (Ibid.) notes, one can observe Schutz’s fervent belief in the “immorality of discrimination” in view of his use of morally connoted terms, such as “degradation,” “oppression,” and even “alienation,” when describing discriminatory processes. To illustrate this, the American scholar quotes the following passage of “Equality and the Meaning Structure of the Social World”:

But if he is compelled to identify himself as a whole with that particular trait or characteristic which places him in terms of the imposed system of heterogeneous relevances into a social category he had never included as a relevant one in the definition of his private situation, then *he feels that he is no longer treated as a human being in his own right and freedom, but degraded to an interchangeable specimen of the typified class. He is alienated from himself, a mere representative of the typified traits and characteristics. He is deprived of his right to pursuit of happiness* (CP II: 256. My emphasis; Barber, 1991: 135).

In light of this normative criticism of discrimination, Barber (Ibid.: 135) deduces *ex negativo*, as it were, the implicit normative criterion that secretly underlies Schutzian phenomenology: “If this offense to the subjective point of view of the Other constitutes the moral wrongness of discrimination,” he writes, “then an implicit ethical principle provides the basis in light of which he [Schutz] recognizes such wrongness” (Ibid.). This unspoken ethical principle would be the following: “the subjective viewpoint of the Other ought to be taken seriously,” or, put differently, one has the moral obligation of doing justice to the Other (Barber, 2005: 233).

2.4. Reading Schutz from a Kantian-Levinasian Perspective

Taking this idea further, Barber (2001: 123) offers what he calls a “Kantian interpretation of Schutz.” According to this reading, just like Kant in his *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* and in the *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, Schutz seems to believe that one *must not* treat other human beings as mere objective things, that is, as mere means to an end. Rather, the Other is always “an end in himself or herself” or, to use Kant’s own terms, “the supreme limiting condition in the use of all means” (Kant in Barber, 2001: 123).

Interestingly enough, Barber (1991: 138; 2001: 123, 125) also suggests a Levinasian reading of Schutz’s ethical position. In this interpretation, for Schutz, the ethical obligation towards the Other does not follow from a categorical imperative understood as an abstract rule of conduct; rather it is phenomenologically embedded, so to speak, in our pre-predicative experience of other subjects. Like in Levinas’s phenomenological analysis of the encounter with the “face of the Other,” argues Barber (1991: 138), in Schutzian phenomenology the experience of another human being instantly and inevitably provokes the emergence of an ethical attitude, namely, the so-called “Thou-Attitude” [*Du-Einstellung*] (cf. Schutz, 2016: 228) –or, in case of reciprocity, the “tuning-in relationship” (cf. CP II: 162). If one follows this reading, in Schutz, as in Levinas (cf. 1988: 169), the very presence of the Other is immediately experienced by me as an ethical invocation or “demand”; more precisely, as an appeal to respect her subjective perspective.

Just as Levinas finds ethical obligation emerging from the experience of the face of the Other prior to all theorizing, so Schutz, I believe, would take his clue from the social reality prior to all theorizing, in the Other whose unsettling presence immediately evokes from me an Other-orientation, distinct from any stance toward things. Schutz would have to develop the summons to ethical responsibility experienced within that Other-orientation which precedes all communication, all speech, and all theorizing. I think Schutz would concur with Levinas that every response made and every discourse instituted take place with reference to that demand, appeal, summons, already there –even should one ignore or deny or seek to obliterate that appeal (Barber, 1991: 138).

2.5. Against the Marginalizing Dangers of Outsider Interpretations and Moral Universalizations: Social-Scientific Value-Freedom as an “Ethical Epoché”

On the basis of this ethical reading, Barber (2005: 233) argues that, *paradoxically*, Schutz’s moral abstinence, reflected in his endorsement of Weberian social-scientific value-freedom, is for him a methodological instrument at the

service of realizing the “ethical project of understanding the Other.” It is a sort of ethical *epoché* in the Husserlian sense of the term. As is well known, Husserl’s transcendental *epoché* liberates the philosophical gaze from ontological assumptions concerning reality, thereby allowing for a faithful phenomenological analysis of its manner of givenness (cf. Hua III: §§ 31, 32); analogously, Schutz’s “bracketing” of ethical-political judgments, and prejudices, regarding the Other enables an unbiased understanding of her subjective point of view.

Interestingly, Barber (1991: 131 ff.) supports this paradoxical interpretation of moral abstinence as an ethical stance by referring to Schutz’s analysis of the “ethnocentrism” and “central myths” typical of the insider perspective of cultural groups. “Schutz’s leanness towards ethics,” one reads in *Equality and Diversity*, “can be traced to a suspicion about how ethical principles and theory serve the interests of in-groups’ intent of buttressing their ‘central myths’” (Barber, 2001: 122).

Schutz (cf. CP II: 244) borrows the notion of “ethnocentrism” from William Sumner and uses it to depict a narcissistic tendency which is intrinsic to *all* in-groups: each cultural group, says Schutz (cf. Ibid.), tends to *universalize* its own *particular* customs, ethics, and morals, i.e., its “folkways,” and, therefore, is prone to *ethically condemning* other groups and persons with different cultures for acting *wrongly* or *incorrectly* (Barber, 1991: 131 ff.). As to the concept of “central myths,” which Schutz (cf. CP II: 245) takes from R. M. MacIver, it refers to the fact that in-groups tend to underpin and justify their own worldviews by resorting to *allegedly universally valid*, moral, religious or theoretical “legitimations” (Barber, 1991: 131 ff.).

On the basis of the latter two concepts, says Barber (Ibid.), Schutz acknowledges the marginalizing tendencies of “ethical generalizations” embodied in all “universal” religions, moral codes, and ethical philosophies. These ethical universalizations preclude an adequate understanding of the experiential perspective of other persons and cultures, since they do away too hastily with the alterity of the Other. If someone is not like me or like us, she is immediately *reified* or *stigmatized*, i.e., socially typified as an abnormal or abject subject, or even as a non-subject, who does not deserve to be comprehended, let alone respected in her particularity.¹² To use Barber’s (1991: 132 ff.) words:

¹² In this sense, Schutz seems to follow Nietzsche’s account of the close link that exists between power and moral: “Although Schutz never makes explicit his relationship to Nietzsche, he has appreciated, as did Nietzsche, how moral systems exercise power while concealing it beneath the cloak of virtue” (Barber, 1991: 134). Interestingly enough, Barber (Ibid.) also characterizes Schutz “as something of a post-modernist philosopher before his time, tracing the seemingly insuperable interpretive fissures between groups and standing over against modernist optimism about universal reason exemplified in Gurwitsch’s essay on nihilism.”

As sustaining components of ethnocentric worldviews, moral codes and their theoretical elaborations can become instruments of exclusion [...] Ethical universalizations, such as universal definitions of what kind of equality ought to exist, run the danger of excluding contrary opinion, overlooking conflicts of interpretation, self-encapsulating an in-group within itself, and further exiling an out group.

2.6. The Critique of the Social Scientific and Pre-Scientific Reification of the Other: Two Modes of Manifestation of Schutz's Ethical Position

Arguably, Barber identifies two different, but closely related, modes of manifestation of Schutz's ethical commitment. Each of them is related to the critique of one specific modality of "reification" of the Other. On the one hand (1), Barber claims that Schutz's epistemological project can be understood *in toto* as an "ethical" enterprise, insofar as it criticizes the reification of the Other in the social sciences as a result of both naturalistic objectivism and ethical-political universalizations. (2) On the other hand, he suggests that in Schutz one can find *the rudiments of a phenomenological critical theory* centered on the criticism of all forms of everyday sociality that imply the "reification of the Other" (Barber, 2001: 120 f.). It could be argued that the first mode of manifestation (1) is founded upon the second one (2), since Schutz (cf., for instance, CP I: 34 f.) conceives the social-scientific understanding of the Other as a sophisticated derivative, as it were, of the pre-scientific understanding of the Other.

(1) For Barber (1991: 136; 2001: 124), Schutz's theoretical project, i.e. his effort to establish a phenomenological foundation for the interpretive social sciences, can be interpreted *as a whole* as an "ethical" enterprise. In this reading, the Schutzian epistemological program follows from a strong normative criticism of the different forms in which the social sciences "reify" the experiential viewpoint of the everyday subject. Put differently, it constitutes an attempt to rehabilitate and "do interpretive justice to" (Barber, 2005: 233) the "forgotten man' of the social sciences": the "social actor" (CP II: 7):

[T]he guiding motive of Schutz's phenomenology and his approach to the social sciences, namely, to allow the subjective meaning of the Other to be seen and not suppressed, establishes an agenda on an empirical, social-scientific plane that would be perfectly consistent with a paralleling version of Kantian ethics (Barber, 2001: 124).

Against this background, Barber (Ibid.: 123) reconsiders Schutz's phenomenologically-hermeneutically informed criticism of the manifold forms of naturalism and objectivism in the social sciences. If one follows this reading, for Schutz, naturalistic social scientists such as behaviorists, for instance,

commit not only a categorical mistake but also an ethical violation, so to speak, when they equate the ontological structure of the natural world with that of the socio-cultural lifeworld. In doing so, they neglect the ethical fact that the latter is not merely composed by inert objects but also populated by meaning-conferring human beings that have subjective perspectives to be respected: “a central doctrine in Schutz’s philosophy of social science is that agents interpreting their worlds cannot be understood if approached as objects who do not confer meanings on their worlds” (Ibid.; cf. CP I: 5).

From this perspective, thus, Schutz (cf. CP I: 5) thinks that in order to do justice to the ethical fact of the alterity of the Other, the social sciences must completely reform their epistemological foundations. “The fact that the social scientist must deal with another’s subjective viewpoint which does not coincide with his own entails a major restructuring of science itself” (Barber, 1991: 137). In this light, the Schutzian effort to establish a phenomenological foundation for social-scientific research appears as an ethical enterprise.

Indeed, as Barber (2001: 111; 1991: 136) argues, Schutz’s phenomenological analyses of the structures of the lifeworld provide the social scientists with a rich set of categories for adequately identifying and reconstructing the “subjective meaning” of the social actor *qua* Other of the social scientist. Or, better said, for rescuing her point of view from the anonymity to which it is condemned not only by social-scientific naturalistic objectivism but also by ethical-political generalizations:

It could be said that Schutz’s basis for the social sciences, his phenomenology of the social world, provides the categories, such as meaning, action, in order-to and because motives, typifications, relevances, by which one can give an account of the subjective (in the sense of ‘opposed to the observers’) meaning of the actor. One could summarize Schutz’s entire phenomenology as an effort to make it possible that the meaning of the Other can be seen at all, that the hidden subjectivity of the Other can be revealed (Barber, 2001: 111).

(2) As said above, authors such as Bauman (2010: 58) believe that Schutzian Phenomenology is *not a critical social theory* because it merely provides an epistemological “critique of sociology” *qua* science *but does not criticize the subject matter of the latter*, namely, social reality. As against this reading, Barber (2001: 122) maintains that in Schutz one finds an implicit and rudimentary critical theory in a sense akin to that of Critical Theory of Society or contemporary critical social theory. “Schutz’s phenomenology of discrimination,” one reads in *Equality and Diversity*, “unleashes a host of problems that set it en route toward critical theory” (Ibid.).

More precisely, in Barber’s reading, this proto-critical theory focuses on the criticism of modes of everyday sociality which imply the “reification” of the Other, that is, treating her as a mere thing, as an entity without a subjective

point of view (Barber, 2001: 120 f.; cf. CP I: 189). On this account, thus, Schutzian phenomenology would entail a critique of those processes of “social typification” characterized by being neither *responsive* nor *adequate* to the Other’s subjective perspective (Barber, 2001: 120 f.). Among these reifying modes of sociality, underpinned by macro-sociocultural structures, are racial discrimination and certain forms of rationalized administration of human beings (Ibid.; cf. CP II: 257 f.).

In more specific terms, Barber employs the term reification, to my knowledge, absent in Schutz’s work, as depicting a form of social relation that implies “disregarding the subjective viewpoint of the Other” (Ibid.: 121). However, as the American scholar claims, Schutz does not consider *all* forms of typification as ethically wrong: reification takes place only when a person typifies another “without paying sufficient attention” to her subjective viewpoint *qua* Other (Ibid.). Against this background, Barber redefines the concept of reification, originally meaning “turning the Other into an object,” as the use of “inadequate types or typifications from an objective point of view without sufficient responsiveness to the subjective meaning of the Other” (Ibid.: 120).

In this connection, Barber (2001: 120 ff.) seems to give special importance to the Schutzian reading of Sartre (CP I: 202 f.). Schutz (Ibid.) criticizes the latter’s negativist and pessimistic analysis of intersubjectivity in *L’être et le néant* for ontologizing, or absolutizing, a possible but not necessary feature of sociality: the reification of the alter ego (cf. Sartre, 1984: 252-303).¹³ However, the Sartrean analysis of the alienating consequences of the Other’s reifying look seems to be, in Barber’s view, the model for Schutz’s account of reification (cf. Barber, 1991: 135; CP II: 256 f.). Indeed, similarly to Sartre’s “observed” subject, Schutz’s reified individual “feels that he is no longer treated as a human being in his own right and freedom, but degraded to an interchangeable specimen of the typified class. He is alienated from himself, a mere representative of the typified traits and characteristics” (CP II: 256). In this sense, Barber (2001: 120) claims that “Schutz’s depiction of intersubjectivity can also accommodate the reification central to the thought of Sartre and Beauvoir.”

Inversely, Barber (2001: 123; 1991: 139) also sees in Schutzian phenomenology an implicit normative approval of the so-called “tuning-in relationship,” or “We-relationship” [*Wir-Beziehung*], which can be defined as a *reciprocal* and *responsive* mode of pre-linguistic interaction that constitutes the ontologically and ontogenetically primary form of human intersubjectivity (cf. CP I: 17; CP II: 175; CP III: 82). According to Schutz (cf., for instance, CP I: 202), this fundamental mode of interaction, peculiar to face-to-face encounters,

¹³ In “Sartre’s Theory of the Alter Ego,” Schutz (CP I: 203) writes: “Either the Other looks at me and alienates my liberty, or I assimilate and seize the liberty of the Other. [...]. [M]utual interaction in freedom has no place within Sartre’s philosophy.”

implies a “mutual interaction of co-performing subjectivities” that presupposes, at least in a minimal sense, mutual respect and responsiveness to the Otherness of the Other (Barber, 2001: 123; 1991: 139).¹⁴ As Barber (2001: 123 f.; 1991: 139) claims, Schutz’s account of the “tuning-in relationship” can be easily interpreted as an *ethical* form of intersubjectivity akin, at least to some extent, to the one described by Levinas (cf. 1988: 168 f.) and, in different terms, by Kant:

In Schutz’s account of the Other-orientation, the very presence of the Other evokes an alteration of one’s orientation, an attitudinal reconfiguration that would seem to involve not only the cognitive adjustments that Schutz discusses but also the ethical dimensions exposed by Emmanuel Levinas [...] Here, the Other is given as a co-performing subject irreducible to the Sartrean *en soi* –as an end in himself or herself, if Kantian terminology would be permitted (Barber, 2001: 123).

3. Immanent Critique and Macro-Sociological Sensibility: Hartmut Rosa’s Model of Critical Theory as a Heuristic Means for Articulating Schutz’s Critical Intuitions

3.1. Critical Theory or critical theory?

Experts agree that the concept “critical theory” can be used in two ways, namely, in a narrow and a broad sense (for instance, Allen, 2016: xi f.; Bohmann, 2005; Keucheyan, 2013: 1; Rosa et al. 2009: 251). When used in the narrow sense, the term is normally written in capital letters and denotes the mostly German tradition of the Frankfurt School, i.e. the so-called *Kritische Theorie*, represented by authors such as Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, Jürgen Habermas, and Axel Honneth. Inscribed in the tradition of Western Marxism, Frankfurt Critical Theorists reject the principle of social scientific value-freedom and, from the perspective of an “emancipatory interest,” focus their efforts on identifying, explaining, and calling into question the “social pathologies” of modern capitalism (cf. Honneth, 1994b: 41ff.; Rosa, 2012: 270ff.; Habermas, 1971: 310 f.; Horkheimer, 1972: 246).

By contrast, in the English-speaking world the term “critical theory” is generally written in lowercase, and sometimes in plural, and utilized in a much broader meaning, namely, as an umbrella term that encompasses *all* theoretical approaches that criticize conditions of domination, injustice or socially produced suffering in modern societies (Allen, 2016: xi f.; Bohmann, 2005; Rosa et al., 2009: 250). Used in this second sense, the concept designates a wide spectrum of accounts arising from different traditions, such as structuralism,

¹⁴ In a 1961 paper, Richard Zaner (1961: 90 f.) offers a similar interpretation of the “We-relationship” as an ethical relationship.

poststructuralism, psychoanalysis, existentialism, anarchism, different sorts of Marxism, and even some positions within phenomenology. As Amy Allen (2016: xi) writes, “[i]n a more capacious usage ‘critical theory’ refers to any political inflected form of cultural, social, or political theory that has critical, progressive, or emancipatory aims.”

Importantly, while “Critical Theory,” at least in its traditional form, mostly turns its attention to a classical, Marx- and Weber-inspired, criticism of the misdevelopments of modern capitalism –i.e. alienation, reification, bureaucratization, monetarization, commodification, the dominance of instrumental rationality, etc.– (cf., for instance, Habermas, 1981: 566), other classical and contemporary “critical theories” put the focus on the critical assessment of inequalities and injustices linked to racism, sexism, and colonialism (cf. Allen, 2016: xi; Rosa et al. 2009: 251; Weiss et al., 2020: xiii). As experts agree, classical Critical Theorists like Adorno or Habermas do not pay the necessary attention to the latter issues or discuss them only marginally (cf. Allen, 2016: xii; Rosa et al. 2009: 253; Fraser, 1985).

In the last decades, however, new approaches in Critical Theory, such as Honneth’s, Rahel Jaeggi’s, and Hartmut Rosa’s, have established a fluid dialogue with gender, race, and postcolonial theories, showing that the tradition of the Frankfurt School can offer broad theoretical models for social criticism that combine the assessment of the “classical” pathologies of modern capitalist societies with that of issues related to identity politics (cf. Rosa et al. 2009: 250 f.; Honneth, 2003: 10 f.; Fraser & Honneth, 2003; Fraser & Jaeggi, 2018; Allen, 2016: xii).

Strictly speaking, my attempt in this paper is to articulate a Schutzian critical theory in the broader meaning of the term, i.e., a phenomenological critical theory that besides being able to accommodate different forms of “social pathologies” in contemporary societies, is not necessary tied to the Frankfurt School. However, I will do so by reading Schutz’s thought from the perspective of a novel approach within this tradition, namely, Hartmut Rosa’s. And this because I think Critical Theory, especially, but not only, in its contemporary form, offers something other critical theoretical traditions do not: a systematic definition of what social criticism is and an exhaustive treatment of the complex theoretical problems involved therein (cf., for instance, Jaeggi & Wesche, 2013).¹⁵

¹⁵ Classically, Horkheimer (1972), Adorno (1969), and Habermas (1971: 310 ff.) provide accounts of the features and tasks of social criticism. One can argue that, since Habermas, the definition of social critique and the discussion about its “normative foundations,” i.e. the question as to how to justify the critique of society, have become the central problems of contemporary Critical Theory, while issues related to a theory of modern society [*Gesellschaftstheorie*] have lost some relevance (Rosa et al., 2009: 251). This becomes apparent in the works of Honneth (cf. 1994a) and some of his followers (for instance, Jaeggi, 2014: 251-321; Celikates, 2009; Jaeggi & Wesche, 2013).

3.2. The Fourth Generation of the Frankfurt School, Hartmut Rosa, and the Rapprochement with Phenomenology and the Interpretive Social Sciences

As I suggested in the Introduction, I think a good way to achieve the aim of articulating, systematizing, and further developing the traces of a *phenomenological critical theory* in Schutz's thought is by utilizing Rosa's novel, phenomenologically and hermeneutically informed Critical Theory as a heuristic means. I will devote the present section of this paper to briefly reconstruct Rosa's Honneth-inspired account of an immanent normative critique of society, paying special attention to its three core concepts, namely, "social pathology" [*soziale Pathologie*], "normative criterion" [*normativer Maßstab*], and "inner-worldly transcendence" [*innerweltliche Transzendenz*], and to the author's emphasis on the importance of having macro-sociological sensibility.

Along with Rahel Jaeggi and Robin Celikates, Hartmut Rosa is among the main representatives of the fourth generation of the Frankfurt School. Following and further developing Axel Honneth's ideas, the key figure of the third wave of this intellectual tradition, these thinkers make efforts towards developing *non-paternalistic* modalities of social criticism, i.e., models of social critique that distance themselves from the *patronizing* traits typical to the classical versions of Critical Theory (cf. Celikates, 2009; Boltanski and Honneth, 2009). Instead of systematically underestimating, and therefore discarding, the self-interpretations and experiences of everyday subjects as ideological forms of false consciousness, Jaeggi (cf. 2013; 2005), Celikates (cf. 2009), and Rosa (cf. 2010; 2012; 2016) take the experiential-interpretive perspective of quotidian actors seriously and even make it the pivotal point of social criticism.

Arguably, it is precisely because of this anti-paternalistic reorientation in the way of conceiving and conducting social critique that contemporary Critical Theorists are much more open than their predecessors to dialogue with phenomenology and the interpretive social sciences. Indeed, in the latter paradigms the fourth generation of the Frankfurt School sees a means for adequately reconstructing and assessing the lived experience and self-interpretations of everyday social agents. In my view, this rapprochement on the part of Critical Theory with these theoretical-methodological perspectives starts with Honneth's radicalization of Habermas's approach, finding its most consummated expression in Rosa's novel "sociology of our relationships to the world" [*Soziologie der Weltbeziehungen*] (cf. Rosa, 2016; 2012; cf. Fuchs et al., 2018: 15).

As I have argued elsewhere (cf. Gros, 2019), Rosa's *Soziologie der Weltbeziehung* can be interpreted as a form of "*phenomenological critical theory*." And this not only because it centers around the critical assessment of the lifeworldly experience and action of everyday subjects, or, to put it more precisely, of their quotidian

“relationships to the world,” but also because it draws on phenomenological insights from authors such as Charles Taylor, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl, Hans Blumenberg, Helmuth Plessner, Emmanuel Levinas, and Bernhard Waldenfels.

3.3. The Two Main Features of Rosa’s Model of Critical Theory

I would like now to sketch out the main lines of Rosa’s account of Critical Theory as presented in two books: *Alienation and Acceleration* (Rosa, 2010) and *Weltbeziehungen im Zeitalter der Beschleunigung* (Rosa, 2012). In my view, not only because of its *phenomenological* inspiration but also because of its formal character, brevity, and pregnancy, this account can serve as a useful heuristic means for articulating and systematizing Schutz’s rudimentary critical theory. Broadly speaking, Rosa (2010: 51ff.; 2012: 271ff.) distinguishes two main features or fundamental intuitions of social criticism in the tradition of the Frankfurt School.

First (1), explicitly following Honneth (1994a; 1994b: 41ff.), he argues that Critical Theory of Society is characterized by providing an *immanent normative-ethical critique of modern social formations*. For Rosa (2012: 270 ff.), this means that Critical Theorists attempt to diagnose “*social pathologies*” –alienation, reification, loss of meaning, etc.– against the background of “*normative criteria*” that must follow the so-called postulate of “*inner-worldly transcendence*.” That is, in light of ethical-normative standards that *are not external but rather immanent to the experiential-interpretive point of view of everyday actors*.

Second (2), based on a classical insight from Adorno and Horkheimer (cf. IfS, 1956: 16, 22, 23) and Habermas (cf. 1981: 226), Rosa (2010: 54; 2012: 273) suggests that in order for Critical Theorists to be able to identify, understand, and explain such social pathologies, they must possess a developed *macro-sociological sensitivity*. That is to say, an account of modern, capitalist “society” [*Gesellschaft*] as a “total social formation” [*Gesamtformation*] whose workings are ultimately governed by systemic or structural mechanisms. And this because, for Critical Theory, all social misdevelopments experienced at the micro-level of social life are ultimately provoked by the latter macro-processes (Rosa, 2010: 54; 2012: 273).

(1) Rosa (2010: 51; 2012: 270) maintains that the main objective of Critical theory lies in the identification of “social pathologies” in modern, capitalist societies. That is, in the diagnosis of social “disorders” [*Störungen*] or “misdevelopments” [*Fehlentwicklungen*], such as alienation, reification, commodification, lack of meaning, depersonalization, etc. “I would like to follow Axel Honneth,” writes Rosa (2010: 51) in *Alienation and Acceleration*,

“in the suggestion that the identification of social pathologies is an overriding goal not just of Critical Theory, but of social philosophy in general.”

Also in line with the former director of the *Institut für Sozialforschung*, Rosa (2010: 51, 67) argues that the sort of criticism endorsed by Critical Theorists is *not functionalist but, rather, ethical-normative*. As its name suggests, a functionalist social critique focuses on the diagnosis of systemic malfunctions or dysfunctionalities that put in jeopardy the material or symbolic “reproduction” of a society. That is, it restricts itself to asserting that a societal formation “*won’t work* in the long run” (Ibid.: 67). Examples of this kind of social criticism are Marx’s claim that the contradictions of capitalism necessarily result in profound economic crises, and Rosa’s own analysis of the “de-synchronization” among social spheres caused by late-modern social acceleration (Ibid.: 67, 69).

By contrast, *normative-ethical* social criticism does not claim that a certain social order *does not function* but, rather, that is “*falsch*,” i.e., *wrong* or *incorrect* in ethical terms (Ibid: 68). More precisely, according to Rosa (Ibid.; 2012: 270, 288), ethical-normative social criticism considers as pathological those socio-cultural conditions that preclude human beings from achieving “happiness” [*Glück*], that is, a “good” or “succeeded life” [*gutes/ gelingendes Leben*], thereby causing them different forms of social “suffering” [*Leiden*] (cf. Honneth, 1994b: 9, 52 ff.). In Rosa’s (2012: 288) own terms: “Critique takes here the identification of social structures and practices that systematically hinder the realization of a good life.”

Following Honneth (cf. 1994b: 50, 52 ff.), Rosa (2012: 270; 2010: 52) claims that Critical Theorists cannot refrain from resorting to “substantive normative criteria” when performing this kind of social criticism. For, just like medical diagnosis relies on a conception of human health –it is indeed impossible to diagnose a disease without operating with a “clinical idea of healthiness” (Honneth, 1994b: 50, 52 ff.)–, Critical Theory cannot identify social pathologies without utilizing an, either implicit or explicit, “ethical representation of social normality” (Ibid.: 50, 52 ff.). As Rosa (2012: 270) in line with Honneth (cf. 1994b: 52 ff.) argues, the criterion of social normality in light of which Critical Theorists assess the healthiness of society, as it were, is the idea of a societal order that enables human beings to lead a happy, good or impaired life.

Rosa (2010: 52 f.; 2012: 270) also takes up the Honnethian *immanent* approach to social critique, which in Honneth’s work principally follows from his commitment to the left Hegelian roots of the Frankfurt School (cf. Honneth, 1994b: 80), and radicalizes it by resorting to insights from both post-metaphysical thinking and communitarism. According to the author of *Resonanz*, nowadays, in the beginning of the 21st century, it is untenable to

criticize a social formation in light of universalistic and/or metaphysical norms *external* to the everyday experience and knowledge of social actors (Rosa, 2010: 52; 2012: 271). That is to say, against the background of essentialist ethical criteria allegedly “discovered,” so to speak, by means of philosophical reflection, speculation or deduction.

For Hartmut Rosa (2010: 52; 2012: 271), thus, a contemporary version of Critical Theory cannot have its normative foundation in metaphysically connoted principles such as the “true” or “authentic” human nature. And this not only because of the difficulties involved in philosophically proving or justifying, from a post-metaphysical perspective, the validity of such transcendental norms. But also, and most importantly, because of the potential despotic implications of this “platonic” sort of social criticism. Indeed, *external*, i.e. universalistic and/or metaphysically founded, forms of critique harbor the danger of paternalism and authoritarianism, insofar as they systematically neglect and underestimate the normative “self-interpretation” of everyday social actors, i.e. the *doxa*, asserting the superiority of the elitist normative knowledge of the critic or *episteme*. In this sense, for Rosa (2012: 52), “norms which are applied for judging social institutions and structures [...] cannot be taken from some a-historical, extra-social standpoint.”

For all these reasons, Rosa (2010: 53; 2012: 270) argues that the normative criteria of social critique must be “immanent” to everyday social reality, i.e. that they have to comply with what Honneth calls the principle of “inner-worldly transcendence.” Broadly speaking, this postulate implies that “the normative basis of critique must be anchored [*verankert*], as it were, in the everyday and life experience of social actors” (Rosa, 2012: 270); more specifically, in the “emancipatory interest” already existing in pre-scientific, quotidian social reality (Honneth, 1994b: 80). To put it in Rosa’s terms (2010: 53), thus, Critical Theorists have to link their critical diagnosis not only to the “sensitiveness” of everyday subjects to social pathologies and to their experiences of “suffering” but also to their intuitions and conceptions of what constitutes a “good” life and a “good” social order.

(2) Furthermore, drawing upon a crucial insight from Adorno and Horkheimer (IfS, 1956: 16, 22, 23) and Habermas (cf. 1981: 226), Rosa (2010: 54; 2012: 273) emphasizes that Critical Theory endorses a *holistic* and *structural* account of social reality, insofar as it understands modern society [*Gesellschaft*] as a total and integrated “social formation.” That is to say, as a “*Gesamtformation*” governed by macro-structural or systemic “laws” and “developments” of economic, cultural, and political character, e.g., institutionalized forms of power asymmetries, hegemonic cultural patterns, such as different forms of racism and discrimination, capitalism as an

established economic system, all-encompassing processes of rationalization, bureaucratization, and social acceleration, etc. According to Critical Theorists, these macro-social phenomena are ultimately responsible for causing social pathologies such as alienation, reification, and lack of meaning.

Now, if I understand Rosa (cf. 2010: 54; 2012: 273) correctly, seeing social reality this way entails by no means underestimating or neglecting micro-social phenomena but, rather, showing *macro-sociological sensitivity* in the analysis of the latter –something that, by contrast, (neo-)liberal, radical individualistic and certain poststructuralist and deconstructivist outlooks fail to do (Rosa, 2010: 54; 2012: 274). Put differently, conceiving society in a holistic and structural manner implies understanding that (inter)subjective, everyday experience and action are always-already mediated, pre-formed and influenced by the above-mentioned macro-social structures and processes (cf. IfS, 1956: 109). On this account, thus, one of the main tasks of social criticism in the tradition of the Frankfurt School consists precisely in identifying and critically analyzing the latter.

4. The Reification of the Other as a Social Pathology: How would a Schutzian Critical Theory look like?

The purpose of this last section, which will serve as a conclusion for this paper, is to offer a preliminary articulation and systematization of Schutz's implicit and rudimentary social-critical insights. Or, put differently, to provide a provisional answer to the question as to how a Schutzian critical theory would look like. In order to achieve this aim, I will attempt to read Barber's ethical interpretation of Schutz, as sketched out in the second section, against the background of Rosa's model of Critical Theory, presented in the third section. I will present these final reflections in the form of seven concise theses.

(1) To start with, it seems clear that, just like Rosa's account, a Schutzian critical theory would provide an *ethical-normative*, and not a functionalist, modality of social criticism. Indeed, if one follows Barber's reading, a Schutzian approach to critique would not be interested in assessing the proper "functioning" of the social system, as it were, but rather in evaluating the *ethical correctness or wrongness* of the prevalent forms of sociality.

(2) Further, as an ethical-normative form of social criticism, a Schutzian critical theory would assess the "healthiness" of a socio-cultural formation in light of an *ethical criterion*. This criterion, it seems to me, would be what Barber calls the commitment to respecting and understanding the "subjective point of view of the Other," which, far from being an abstract norm, is anchored and embodied in our everyday "tuning-in relationships." In order to better articulate this normative standard implicit in Schutz's thought it might

be especially fruitful to establish a dialogue between it and Honneth's account of recognition (cf. Honneth, 1992; 2003).¹⁶ Recurring to Rosa's conception of "resonant," or "responsive," relationships to the world could also be helpful in this connection (cf. Rosa, 2016; Gros, 2019).

(3) Like Rosa's approach, a Schutzian critical theory would also be centered on the criticism of *social pathologies*, that is, of social phenomena that do not comply with the above-mentioned normative standard. From a Schutzian perspective, the reification of the Other in its different forms, understood as a form of "negative" intersubjectivity (cf. Jaeggi, 2006), would be the *fundamental* social misdevelopment to be criticized. Here, also, Honneth's and Rosa's critical-theoretical accounts of "reification" may be useful for explicating and further developing Schutz's intuitions on reifying typifications (Honneth, 2005; Rosa, 2016: 307).

(4) Of course, from Schutz's criticism of the reifying character of "outsider" interpretations and ethical universalizations, it follows that a Schutzian critical theory would reject all forms of *external* social critique. Instead, it would heartily endorse the so-called principle of "immanent transcendence." In view of Schutz's sensitivity to the subjective perspective of quotidian actors, it goes without saying that a Schutzian criticism of society would be anchored in their experiences of suffering and intuitions of a good life.

(5) If one takes the principle of "immanent transcendence" seriously, then, in my view, a Schutzian critical theory would have to endorse an ethical-philosophical position more akin to Levinas's than to Kant's. For, as I said above, in Levinas (cf. 1988: 169) the ethical obligation towards the Other does not follow from an abstract maxim, as in Kant, but, rather, is phenomenologically embedded in our pre-predicative experience of the Other's subjectivity. However, as Barber (1991: 139) correctly notes, Levinas's radically asymmetrical and non-reciprocal account of the relation to the Other (cf. Levinas, 1988: 171) is not easily "compatible" with Schutz's conception of the tuning-in relationship, understood as a "mutual interaction of co-performing subjectivities." This is a problem to be further studied.

(6) As it is the case with the tradition of Critical Theory (cf. Rosa et al., 2009: 175 ff.), it seems to me that a Schutzian critical theory would be informed by empirical social research. In contrast to the classical representatives of the Frankfurt School such as Adorno (cf. Bonß: 2019: 292 ff.), however, a Schutzian approach to social critique would recur to the phenomenology-based and value-neutral version of interpretative sociology envisioned by Schutz. Indeed, as Rosa

¹⁶ Schutz (cf. CP III: 82) seems to agree with Honneth's (2005: 53) claim that intersubjective recognition ontologically and ontogenetically precedes intersubjective reification. In this sense, one can argue that, from a Schutzian perspective, reification is always an "oblivion" of a previous recognition of the Other. This theoretical convergence between the authors should be further explored.

(cf. 2010: 52 f.) himself suggests, in order to develop a non-paternalistic critique of society, it is necessary to *empirically* know and understand the subjective point of view of everyday actors, i.e., their suffering, fears, and concerns, as well as their ethical and political convictions. I think the Schutzian approach to interpretive sociology is perfect for this task. This could be the point of convergence between Schutz's ethical-epistemological reform of the social sciences and his normative criticism of prescientific forms of reification.

(7) Although it would focus on the critical analysis of "positive" and "negative" forms of everyday intersubjectivity (cf. Jaeggi, 2006), a Schutzian approach to social criticism would possess macro-sociological sensitivity in Rosa's sense. That is, it would acknowledge that the many forms of reification of the Other in everyday life are underpinned, encouraged, and legitimated by unjust macro-structures of social, economic, and cultural nature. In this sense, I think a Schutzian critical theory would be in line with one of the key insights of the novel approach of "critical phenomenology," namely, with the claim that "power relations" and "structural, political, and institutional inequalities" play a crucial role in structuring our quotidian experience (Weiss et al., 2020: xiv).

In view of Schutz's analysis of the dramatic socio-pathological effects of intergroup discrimination in cases in which the reifying group exercises political and institutional control over the reified one, it becomes apparent that he had such macro-sociological sensitivity (cf. CP II: 257).¹⁷ As a matter of fact, an exhaustive reading of Schutz's work shows that he recognized the existence and workings of *imposed* macro-structures in modern societies, that is, of "politically, economically, and socially imposed relevances beyond our control" (CP II: 71), such as "rationalization" processes in the Weberian sense (Ibid.: 129). And it also reveals that he acknowledged at least some of their unequal, unjust, and pathological features (cf., for instance, Ibid: 129, 255, 269).¹⁸

¹⁷ In "Equality and the Meaning Structure of the Social World," Schutz (CP II: 257) offers some examples of institutional discrimination and its harmful effects on individual subjects: "persons who believed themselves to be good Germans and had severed all allegiance to Judaism found themselves declared Jews by Hitler's Nuremberg laws and treated as such on the ground of a grandparent's origin, a fact up to that time entirely irrelevant. Refugees from Europe, who believed they had found a haven in the United States, discovered themselves placed, after Pearl Harbor, in the category of enemy aliens, by reason of the very nationality they wanted to abandon. A change in rules or definitions established by a Senatorial committee turns loyal civil servants into security risks."

¹⁸ Following Weber, in "The Problem of Rationality in the Social World" Schutz (CP II: 71) describes the rationalization processes taking place in modern societies: "If we want to do so, we may interpret this process of progressive typification also as one of rationalization. At least it is envisaged by one of the several meanings Max Weber attributes to the term 'rationalization' when he speaks of the 'disenchantment of the world' (*Entzauberung der Welt*). This term means the transformation of an uncontrollable and unintelligible world into an organization which we can understand and therefore master, and in the framework of which prediction

In this sense, it is false to claim, as many critics of Schutz do (cf. Habermas, 1981: 226 f.; Gardiner, 2000: 7), that the macro-sociological dimension of social reality is absent in Schutzian phenomenology (cf. Belvedere & Gros, 2019). However, it is true that it remains, to say it phenomenologically, in the *horizon* or *margin* of his social-theoretical attention (cf., for instance, CP II: 121). For this reason, further work is required to carve out and take further the macro-sociological implications of a Schutzian Critical Theory, especially concerning the two main macro-social sources of the reification of the Other in contemporary societies: the processes of commodification and rational-instrumental practices typical of modern capitalist societies and the socio-cultural structures underpinning racial and sexist discrimination (cf. Honneth, 2005: 100). In this sense, a Schutzian Critical Theory would profit from a dialogue with contemporary “theory of society” [*Gesellschaftstheorie*], that is, with the empirically-founded, theoretical analysis of the fundamental structures, tendencies, and features of late-modern social formations (cf. Rosa et al., 2020; Gros, 2020).¹⁹

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becomes possible.” In “The Well-Informed Citizen,” in turn, one finds critical remarks regarding the loss of subjective autonomy provoked by modern rationalization: “We are less and less masters in our own right to define what is, and what is not, relevant to us. Politically, economically, and socially imposed relevances beyond our control have to be taken into account by us as they are” (Ibid.: 129).

¹⁹ For a first attempt to establish such a dialogue, see Gros (in press).

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