

Introduction

Michael Barber

Saint Louis University
michael.barber@slu.edu

This volume of *Schutzian Research* emerges from the seventh biennial meeting of The International Alfred Schutz Circle for Phenomenology and Interpretive Social Science, which was held in Vienna, Austria, on April 24–26, 2025, under the leadership of executive committee constituted by Michaela Pfadenhauer, Theresa Vollmer, Miriam Aistleitner, Tilo Grenz, and Christopher Schlembach. The conference was entitled: “Personalities, Pragmatic Affairs, and Playful Worlds: ‘On Multiple Realities’ 1945–2025.” In this volume, we publish the two keynote addresses, delivered by Professor Hubert Knoblauch, of the Institut für Soziologie at the Technische Universität Berlin, and Professor Sophie Loidolt of the Technische Universität Darmstadt. The other papers are linked to the conference in several ways.

Hubert Knoblauch’s essay “Schutz’s Transcendence of Social Collectivity and the Collective Forms of Communicative Action” provides a reinterpretation of Schutz’s idea of social collectivities as consisting merely of idealistic “meanings” by depicting them instead as distinctive provinces of meaning, much like the dyadic We-relationship. This relationship represents an example of a “collective objectivity,” which includes a pattern of embodied interaction that, as Knoblauch demonstrates, converges with Émile Durkheim’s approach to collectivities through “collective representations” and affective “collective effervescence.” Knoblauch enriches his theoretical discussion by intriguing examples of “collective effervescence,” including an ethnographic study of the applause, bodily movement, and speech rhythms occurring between Pope Francis and an audience in Krakow, Poland. Knoblauch effectively provides an original account of how Schutzian phenomenology, often mistakenly considered to be individualistic, can be understood and extended to explain affective-bodily enacted collectivities.

Sophie Loidolt, in “The Public Realm: An Absent Topic in Schütz’s Phenomenology?” begins by describing the public realm, as a life-world, an experiential

space of meaning characterized by a mode (e.g. sharing), setting (digital or discursive), order (normative norms), and a social formation. Loidolt then surveys Schutz's "The Well-Informed Citizen" for possible resources for developing an account of the public realm, in particular, relevances; types (person-in-the-street, expert, well-informed citizen), which constitute versions of the world; communicators, but in a much more complex world of social media; and social approval. She argues that to allow the person-in-the-street's version of the world to form and dominate public opinion in fact implies the loss of a public world. Finally, she raises questions about Schutz's well-informed citizen's perspective, which appears as the private outlook of a melancholy spectator, detached from a realm of public deliberation and action with others.

In "Reality between Fringe and Frame: Some Considerations on the Theory of Multiple Realities of William James and Alfred Schutz," Antonion Di Chiro clearly exposit the idea of multiple realities as they are presented in William James who emphasizes the plurality of beliefs and Alfred Schutz who stresses the plurality of meaning-systems. Realities are organized something like Goffmanian frameworks, and yet, Di Chiro argues, such realities are not fixed and unshakeable. Instead, subjects, as multidimensional selves, are able to inhabit several provinces of meaning at the same time, with one or more provinces unthematized, on the fringes or horizons of whatever province they are focally occupied with, as when one finds one's pragmatic everyday life haunted or illuminated by the ever-at-hand, previous evening's dreaming.

Malene Einsig Brodersen in "Out of Synch: A Schutzian Sudy of Space, Time, and Intersubjectivity in Seventh Grade Online Teaching" examines the effects on a Danish seventh-grade class by the resort to on-line teaching during the period of the COVID pandemic in 2021. Brodersen acknowledges that those effects were to a degree successful, but also resulted in forms of disconnection. In good Schutzian style, she examines the diverse points of views of both teachers and students. Teachers find the withdrawal of students from visual access (as when students turn off their cameras) frustrating and impeding the achievement of educational goals. Students, too, find themselves distracted, disappointed by the lack of interaction with other students, and more disengaged due to the lack of accountability to other students and teachers. Such accountability is key to educational flourishing. Interactions through eye-contact and nonverbal cues appear indispensable.

Donovan Barba-Reynosa examines how high-school teachers develop their own identity by integrating the stock of knowledge they acquired in previous professional work with their new roles as teachers. His essay, "A Schützian Approach to the Development of the Stock of Knowledge and Identity of High School Teachers: A Phenomenological Study in Guadalajara, Mexico," based on a series of in-depth interviews of teachers within

different institutions, explains such identity formation. Teachers integrate knowledges within a single stock of knowledge, open themselves to a broader expanse of previously unexamined knowledge, and master new skills. Barba-Reynosa's essay opens up future possible directions for the improvement of teacher education.

Michael Hanke's essay "Multiple Realities and Politics: The Way of the Cosmion from Voegelin to Schutz" demonstrates an interesting intellectual interchange between Schutz and his friend Eric Voegelin that began when Voegelin suggested that his idea of the "cosmion," a political unit that constitutes a little world of its own, could be one of the multiple realities that Schutz described in his essay "On Multiple Realities." Later, in his essay on symbolism, Schutz takes up Voegelin's idea and demonstrates how a cosmion constitutes a kind of multiple reality which communicates its ideology through symbols. Hanke concludes his discussion by offering a few concrete contemporary examples of Schutz's thesis. This essay shows how communication through correspondence with colleagues honed Schutz's philosophical insights.

In his essay "Easter Breakfast—A Wealth of Flavors, A Wealth of Relationships: A Case Study," Krzysztof Konecki discusses the experiential and interactional dimensions of the traditional Polish Easter breakfast on the basis of self-reports from fourteen graduate students trained in self-observation. Focusing on the experience of taste, Konecki provides a holistic analysis of such dimensions as the polythic process of tasting, the temporality of the meal (protentions, aroma as "the promise" of taste, and the order of dishes), personal and social memories, the inclusion of all the other senses in tasting, sensory "knowledge," moods and emotional responses, environmental linkages (e.g., the coterminous blooming of spring), cultural traditions, and intersubjective involvements (observing each other tasting horseradish or verbal communication)—all of which make the breakfast itself a performative experience.

Valerie Bentz, James Marlatt, and W.P. Michl in their "Deathworlds as a Paramount Reality: Transformative Phenomenology as a Diagnostic Antidote" explain the concept of deathworlds as systems of relevance and institutional structures that impact humans and other life forms and destroy meaning, coherence, we-relationships, and intersubjectivity—all of which are fundamental for the life-world in Schutz's phenomenology. As an antidote to deathworlds, the authors explain "transformative phenomenology," an applied social phenomenological methodology centered on self-reflection and somatic and hermeneutic elements to foster personal and social transformation. W. P. Michl provides a first-person account of how she was able to use transformative phenomenological protocols in combination with an array of Schutz's lifeworld concepts to reveal the deathworld of intimate partner abuse, free her from its grip, and effect thereby personal transformation.

In “At the Cinema with Alfred Schutz: On Provinces of Meaning and their Medial Aspects,” Ekkehard Coenen explores a neglected topic in Schutz, the media, and, in particular, the cinema, on which has grown up a rather large body of literature and discussion that Coenen exhibits mastery over. Coenen discusses the cinema as a province of meaning that embodies the six features of a cognitive style and that facilitates boundary crossings beyond one’s current biographical, temporal, spatial, or social limitations. Coenen describes the relationship between movie-goer and film producer as a “tuning-in,” in which they partake of a quasi-simultaneity as the movie polythetically unfolds. Films, which depend on a welter of structural and material elements that constitute a *dispositif*, an interplay of technologies, such as those that made possible Plato’s cave, shape viewers who are so affectively and corporeally immersed in them that their bodies become “surrogate bodies” carrying the impact and meaning of the movie in their own flesh. Those attending a movie together also interact bodily with each other such that they in common feel pain or are tricked, frightened, embarrassed, or aroused by what appears in the movie.