2. SCHUTZ' S THEORY OF CONSTITUTION:
AN IDEALISM OF MEANING

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ABSTRACT. Alfred Schutz formulated his phenomenology with the aim of circumventing what he perceived to be the idealistic character of Husserl's theory of meaning constitution. Schutz contended that constitution for Husserl was idealistically creationistic in the sense that the meanings and very being of phenomena were merely the created products of the constitutive acts of consciousness itself. This article argues, however, that Schutz's theory of constitution is not without an idealistic character in that the meanings which consciousness constitutes and predicates to phenomena are simply created by consciousness itself. This argument is articulated through 1) a delineation of the basic principles of Schutz's phenomenology, 2) an explication of his theory of constitution, and finally, 3) an exposition of its idealistic character with, by way of contrast, a brief account of how and why Maurice Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology expunged all features of idealistic constitution.

Most anyone familiar with Edmund Husserl's work is also aware of the criticism that Husserl's theory of constitution is epistemologically idealistic. Though this criticism is even today a debated issue in Husserleian scholarship, it was levelled against Husserl's theory by certain of his colleagues and students. Notable among them is Alfred Schutz whose own phenomenological project was in large part designed to overcome what he perceived as the radically idealistic character of constitution in Husserl's phenomenology.

Schutz contended that Husserl's concept of constitution underwent a transformation in the course of its development. Originally, according to Schutz, "constitution meant clarification of the sense-structure of conscious life . . . tracing back all cogitata to intentional operations of on-going conscious life". But, this notion of constitution "changed from a clarification of the sense of being, into the foundation of the structure of being; it . . . changed from explication into creation". In other words, for Schutz, Husserl's concept of constitution devolved from being a means by which the meaning of the being of the phenomena of the life-world could be explained into the means by which the meaning and the very being of life-worldly phenomena are created.

However, although Schutz aimed to circumvent Husserl's creationistic approach, it will be argued in this article that Schutz's theory of constitution is not without an idealistic character. In particular, it will
be shown that Schutz's theory suffers from an idealism of meaning. This term "idealism of meaning" implies that for Schutz the meanings that consciousness constitutes and predicates to the phenomena of the life-world are merely intrasubjectively produced. The constituted meanings are simply the products of subjective consciousness itself and are not derived from or based upon meanings that consciousness receives from the objective, intersubjective life-world.

The articulation of this critical analysis of Schutz's theory of constitution will proceed according to the following topics. First of all, a general account of Schutz's peculiar program, his "constitutive phenomenology of the natural attitude", will be presented. Secondly, a detailed explication of Schutz's theory of constitution, his notion of the genesis of meaning, will be offered. And, finally, Schutz's theory will be exposed as proffering an idealism of meaning, a critical flaw because it is not consonant with his general descriptions of the ways in which human subjects know the life-world. In addition, within this last topic, certain brief, general statements regarding the overcoming of Schutz's idealism through the existential phenomenological approach of Maurice Merleau-Ponty will be indicated.

A. SCHUTZ'S CONSTITUTIVE PHENOMENOLOGY OF THE NATURAL ATTITUDE

A major, if not the predominate, goal of Schutz's constitutive phenomenology of the natural attitude was to ensure that his notion of constitution would not incorporate Husserl's creationism but would serve only as a conceptual framework for explicating the ways in which the meanings of life-worldly phenomena are correlated with the meaning-giving acts of a human subject. More simply stated, Schutz aimed to explain how and why, in terms of the conscious life of a subject, life-worldly phenomena have the meanings that they do.

The methodological program Schutz proposed in order to accomplish his aim involved a two step effort. In contrast to Husserl, Schutz in establishing his point of departure did not recommend the bracketing of the natural attitude, the attitude which accepts as given that the phenomena of the life-world have objective, and one might say, real being. Schutz emphasized that the objective being of what a subject ordinarily and naturally experiences as life-worldly phenomena should be "taken for granted".

What this refusal to perform an epoche entails for Schutzean investigators is that they should commence their inquiries from within the natural attitude. They should conduct empirically oriented studies of the ordinary, natural experiences of everyday life; differentiating the meanings of such experiences, classifying them, evaluating their complexity and significance. In fact, as Schutz had it, an investigator's operative epistemological perspective should be an ordinary empirical realism, a realism which is typically characteristic of the epistemological mind-sets of social scientists when they undertake their studies of social life.

The second step in Schutz's program is the description of the operations of consciousness itself and articulation of the ways in which those operations are correlated with a human subject's natural experiences of the life-world. Once again, however, Schutz does not suggest that this step should involve the bracketing of the objective being of
the phenomena of the life-world; it does not require the reduction of being to the constitutive operations of consciousness. What this step does entail for investigators is that after having completed their empirically oriented study of an experience or set of experiences, they then should attempt to explain how or why, in terms of the operations of consciousness, that experience or set of experiences has the meaning it does.4

In essence, for Schutz, inquiry into the operations of consciousness provides the foundation, the ultimate explanatory basis, for any sort of social scientific study. Indeed, Schutz's insistence that the empirical social sciences will find their foundations in a constitutive phenomenology of the natural attitude reflects his firm conviction that it is eminently possible to explain the meanings of ordinary social experiences by describing the operations of consciousness which are correlated with them.

B. THE GENESIS OF MEANING

True to the methodology of his constitutive phenomenology of the natural attitude, Schutz initiated his analysis of constitution from within the natural attitude and focused on describing the natural, ordinary ways in which the life-world becomes meaningful for human subjects. On this level Schutz observed that subjects are influenced by their experiences of the life-world. The meanings that they know are affected by various meanings which they experientially assimilate from the life-world.

Schutz elaborated this claim by introducing the concept, "stock of knowledge". This stock has two forms, a "subjective" stock and an "objective", "social" stock.6 The objective, social stock is the knowledge in the life-world; the knowledge which is maintained by the human community and is handed down to individual subjects as they grow and mature. The subjective stock is the knowledge of the life-world which subjects develop for themselves. Through assimilating meanings from the social stock, individual subjects, according to their unique biographical experiences, form their own personal knowledge of the life-world. This stock of knowledge, or "scheme of reference" is the epistemic framework through which the individual knows the life-world.7 However, because any subjective stock is "socially delimited and determined"8 by meanings which have been transmitted from the social stock, a subjective stock is not ineluctably intrasubjective but has a fundamental intersubjective character.

Schutz devoted much effort to detailing how a subjective stock is socially derived. He proposed that subjects assimilate life-worldly meanings in terms of meaning-types. That is, when assimilating the meaning of an experience, a subject forms that meaning into a "typical" meaning-context.9 For example, a subject can have the experience of a dog and be told by a fellow subject that what he or she is experiencing is a "dog". The subject then articulates the experience as a meaning-type, and after such articulation, the type becomes sedimented in the subject's stock of knowledge. Later, this type, "dog", can be recalled by the subject if he or she should encounter another phenomenon that is four-footed, wags its tail, barks, etc.10
Meaning-types, then, are the socially derived meaning-contexts, the meaning-structures of referential orientation, through which subjects know the life-world. The subjective stock is filled with these types and is constantly growing with the addition of more and more types. Moreover, because it is through such types that subjects know the life-world, there is, according to Schutz, nothing like "isolated" knowledge of the life-world. Once a subjective stock begins to grow, that stock becomes a subject's operative world-view, and consequently at no time are normal functioning subjects without a meaning-context through which they can interpret the life-world. The life-world is always known on the basis of socially derived types which subjects have articulated for themselves and have become sedimented in their stocks of knowledge.

With his descriptions of the socially derived subjective stock of knowledge, Schutz completed his analysis of the genesis of meaning on the level of ordinary, natural experience. He then proceeds to describe the way in which the operations of consciousness are correlated to the ordinary ways in which the life-world is known as meaningful.

Schutz maintained that consciousness itself is a temporal process, a durée of inner time. This temporal process is characterized by two levels, pre-reflective and reflective consciousness. Pre-reflective (or pre-predicative) consciousness is a "passive" consciousness in the senses that it is an impressional consciousness and that while in it subjects are immersed in a flow of duration and are not at all conscious of themselves as living-in that flow. Furthermore, in pre-reflective consciousness subjects have no meaningful awareness of their ongoing experiences of the life-world. In pre-reflective consciousness a subject lives through "only undifferentiated experiences that melt into one another in a flowing continuum" and such undifferentiated, non-discrete experiences are not meaningful for the subject since meanings have not been predicated to them.

Reflective consciousness, on the other hand, is an "active" consciousness which predicates meaning to the experiences of pre-reflective consciousness. In reflective consciousness subjects become conscious of themselves as experiencing. A subject "turns back against" the ongoing temporal stream of pre-reflective consciousness and reflectively focuses upon what has been already experienced. This "turning back" involves an "act of attention" in which a subject attends to an experience which is flowing past, singles it out and then reflectively and, it can be said, recollectively constitutes the meaning of that experience.

It is, then, only with the constitutive acts of reflective consciousness that a life-worldly experience has meaning for a subject. When living-in pre-reflective consciousness subjects are lost in their experiences; they live-in a "meaning-less" world. In reflective consciousness subjects constitute the meaning of their experiences. A subject reflectively thematizes a moment in the ongoing stream of pre-reflective consciousness and constitutes the meaning of that moment. This constitution is the condition for the emergence of meaning. A meaningful awareness of the life-world arises only through reflective constitutive acts, only when a subject reflectively predicates meanings to experiences which have been lived-through.
C. SCHUTZ'S IDEALISM OF MEANING

It is due to Schutz's views on the operations of consciousness that his theory of meaning-constitution does not correlate with his descriptions of the natural ways in which subjects know the life-world and does suffer from an idealism of meaning. Schutz persistently averred that meaning arises only on the reflective level of consciousness. He was most clear in emphasizing that an awareness of meaning is not present in pre-reflective consciousness—when living in pre-reflective consciousness a subject lives in a meaning-less world. But, in describing ordinary experience, Schutz did maintain that a subject "learns" social meanings; the meaning-types a subject forms are in some way transmitted to the subject from the life-world. Now, if Schutz's descriptions of meaning constitution were to correlate with those of ordinary experiences, it must be asked, on which level of consciousness does a subject assimilate meaning from the life-world?

Since the pre-reflective level is a passive, impressional consciousness, one might assume that it is through the passivity of this consciousness that meanings are given to a subject from the life-world. However, with Schutz's insistence that meaning emerges only with reflective acts of constitution, this assumption would be unwarranted. One could not legitimately assume that meaning is assimilated by and somehow present in pre-reflective consciousness when Schutz did so frequently and definitively affirm that pre-reflective consciousness is bereft of any awareness of meaning.

It is precisely because of his failure to account for a way in which consciousness receives meaning from the life-world that Schutz's theory of constitution does advance an idealism of meaning. Since Schutz did not allow for a way in which the meanings that reflection constitutes have an objective basis in that they are derived from assimilated social, life-worldly meanings, all constituted meaning for Schutz is then merely intrasubjectively produced. Although Schutz, with his refusal of an epoche, did apparently overcome Husserl's radical creationistic idealism, all meaning for Schutz does remain a created product of subjective consciousness itself without being derived from or based upon objective, social meanings.

In order to have been successful in expunging all traces of idealism from his phenomenology and in correlating his theory of constitution with his descriptions of the socially derived subjective stock of knowledge, Schutz would have had to have developed a description of pre-reflective consciousness which would have allowed for the reception of meaning from the social world. Schutz would have had to have acknowledged that there is an awareness of meaning already present within pre-reflective consciousness; an awareness that is imposed upon a subject by the social world and is the formative basis for the meaning that reflection constitutes. However, although Schutz did not admit such a passive awareness of meaning, Merleau-Ponty in his existential phenomenology did do so, and, accordingly, his theory of constitution erases all marks of idealism.

Like Schutz, Merleau-Ponty eschewed a Husserlean type epoche. And, again, like Schutz, Merleau-Ponty differentiated two levels of consciousness. The pre-reflective level for Merleau-Ponty is also a passive, impressional awareness; an awareness which is embodied in that it oc-
curs on the level of bodily sense perceptions. Reflective consciousness is, as Schutz also had it, an active consciousness, the consciousness which constitutes meaning.\textsuperscript{25}

However, unlike Schutz, Merleau-Ponty with his emphasis on perception affirmed that pre-reflective consciousness is a meaningful awareness of the life-world. The meaning in this awareness is meaning which is imposed upon, given to perceptual experience from the life-world.\textsuperscript{26} It is an awareness of meaning which is "already-there" (déjà là) in pre-reflective consciousness even before reflective consciousness emerges. And, when reflection does arise, its meaning-constituting acts are functions of the already present pre-reflective awareness of meaning.\textsuperscript{27} In other words, the meanings that reflection constitutes have their foundations in those meanings that are given to pre-reflective awareness. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty frequently stresses that reflection does not create meanings but only thematizes, articulates those meanings present in pre-reflective awareness.

Though there are many more facets to Merleau-Ponty's theory of constitution, one can even with this brief, very synoptic account recognize that his theory does allow for the kind of epistemological realism that Schutz strove for in his attempt to circumvent Husserl's radical idealism. Moreover, with Merleau-Ponty's theory, it becomes evident that the constitutive phenomenology of the natural attitude which Schutz proposed finds its successful completion. The act of meaning-constitution is fully stripped of creationistic traits and does become a means by which the correlation between the meanings of life-worldly phenomena and the operations of consciousness can be explained.

\section*{ENDNOTES}

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\item CPIII, 83-4.
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"... the empirical social sciences will find their true foundation not in transcendental phenomenology, but in the constitutive phenomenology of the natural attitude". CPI, 149.

SLW, 243-4.

CPI, 7.

"Because an individual is born into an historical social world, his biographical situation is, from the beginning, socially delimited and determined by social givens that find specific expressions. From the beginning, subjective structures of relevance are developed in situations which are intersubjective, or at least they are mediately put into socially determinate meaning-contexts." SLW, 243.

See, SLW, 230.

See, SLW, 229-33. In these pages Schutz offers a detailed analysis of how a similarity factor is operative in knowing the life-world through socially derived meaning-types.

"... my stock of knowledge of the social world consists of typifications..." SLW, 77.

"The total content of my experience, or all of my perceptions of the world in the broadest sense, is then brought together in the total context of my experience. This total context grows with every new experience. At every moment there is a growing core of accumulated experience." Alfred Schutz, The Phenomenology of the Social World, trans. George Walsh and Frederick Lehnert (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967), 76-7 (hereafter, PSW).

"There is no such thing as an isolated experience. Any experience is experience within a context. Any present experience receives its meaning from the sum total of past experiences which led to the present one and is also connected by more or less empty anticipation to future experiences. The occurrence of which may or may not fulfill those expectations". A. Schutz, Reflections on the Problem of Relevance, ed. R. Zaner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 16 (hereafter, RPR). Also, "The social stock of knowledge transmitted to the individual relieves him of the necessity of 'independently' solving a whole series of important everyday occurrences". SLW, 198.

See, SLW, 235-38.

See, PSW, 45-7; SLW, 52ff.

In a footnote in RPR Richard Zaner offers a very pithy definition of what Schutz means by the pre-reflective/pre-predicative level of consciousness. "The term pre-predicative describes those subjective processes of consciousness (Erlebnisse) that are not characterized by the presence of the ego (in which the ego does not 'live' or is not 'busied' in its 'respects')--i.e., the term is synonymous with the sphere of passivity". RPR, 16.

"If we simply live immersed in the flow of duration, we encounter only undifferentiated experiences that melt into one another." PSW, 51.
Also, "Indeed, when I immerse myself in my stream of consciousness, in my duration, I do not find clearly differentiated experiences at all. At one moment an experience waxes, then it wanes. Meanwhile something new grows out of what was something old and then gives place to something still newer". PSW, 47. See also, CPI, 172.

PSW, 47.

19 Schutz was very explicit in his claim that the meaning of an experience is constituted only by a reflective act which is an attending to what has already flowed by in the temporal stream of pre-reflective consciousness. Quoting a series of passages on this point will further clarify Schutz's position: "The reflective glance singles out an elapsed lived experience and constitutes it as meaningful". PSW, 71. "... the meaning of a lived experience can be reduced to a turning of the attention to an already elapsed experience, in the course of which the latter is lifted out of the stream of consciousness and identified as an experience constituted in such and such a way and no other". PSW, 215. "Because the concept of meaningful experience always presupposes that the experience of which meaning is predicated is a discrete one, it now becomes quite apparent that only a past experience can be called meaningful, that is, one that is present to the retrospective glance as already finished and one with". PSW, 52. "... meaning is a certain way of directing one's gaze at an item of one's experience. This item is thus 'selected out' and rendered discrete by a reflexive act. Meaning indicates therefore a peculiar attitude on the part of the Ego toward the flow of its own duration." PSW, 42.

"It is misleading to say that experiences have meaning. Meaning does not lie in the experience. Rather, those experiences are meaningful which are grasped reflectively. The meaning is the way in which the Ego regards its experience. The meaning lies in the attitude of the Ego toward that part of its stream of consciousness which has already flowed by, toward its 'elapsed duration.'" SLW, 69-70.

21 "Meaning is not a quality of certain lived experiences emerging distinctively in the stream of consciousness. It is rather the result of my explication of past lived experiences which are grasped from an actual now and from an actually valid reference scheme. As long as I am engaged in lived-experiences and directed toward the objects that are intended in them, the experiences have no sense for me". SLW, 15-6. Also, "It is ... incorrect to say that my lived experiences are meaningful merely in virtue of their being experienced or lived-through ... It would be trivial at the very least to say that the unreflected-upon Here and Now is meaningful". PSW, 70. "Only from the point of view of the retrospective glance do there exist discrete experiences. Only the already experienced is meaningful, not that which is being experienced." PSW, 52.

22 "The larger part of the stock of knowledge is ... learned." SLW, 244.

23 Without delineating all of the differences between Schutz's phenomenology and existential phenomenology in general, it is worthwhile to note that Schutz is often located as being merely on the fringes of existential phenomenology. Schutz clearly departed from Husserlean transcendentalism as existential phenomenology also does, but Schutz's the-


25 Merleau-Ponty’s characterization of the two levels of consciousness are found throughout his works. In PP, The Phenomenology of Perception, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), Merleau-Ponty refers to the pre-reflective level as the "pre-personal" level (254) and the "unreflective" level (213, 240). The reflective level is also called the "personal" level (215, 254). In VI, 42-9, he employs the terms "passivity" and "activity" to differentiate the two levels.

26 "Bodily experience forces us to acknowledge an imposition of meaning which is not the work of a constituting consciousness . . .." PP, 14. See also, PP, 326.