



UNIVERZITA
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BA Thesis Final Evaluation

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Zkušenostní typy u Alfreda Schütze: Mezi Husserlem a fenomenologickou sociologií

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General Description of the Work

This work develops a highly systematic and at times very refined assessment of Alfred Schütz's thought in relation to both Edmund Husserl and Max Weber (mainly), with special focus upon the problem of "experiential types" (as the sub-title explicitly states). The extent of the discussion, the knowledge of both primary and secondary sources displayed by the candidate, and his ability to move from one author's technicalities to another's and back go far beyond what one would expect from a bachelor thesis. The candidate often adopts a dynamic style: he starts off with Husserl, then he shows how Schütz reacts to him by further or differently elaborating upon his questions/issues.

The work could be ideally divided into three main parts: for the first two chapters somehow belong together and explore the two sides of the same coin, so to say. They are dedicated to the concept of essence (and the distinction between essence and matters of fact) and how it (and the distinction) is further articulated and complicated as we move to the so-called genetic phenomenology. Here, the candidate treats of various difficult problems such as the difference between essences and types and the methodologically thorny question of the relation between phenomenological reduction and the in-famous eidetic variation, as well as of important concepts such as those of horizon and apperception (from the genetic perspective) The Husserlian discussion is immediately followed by a thorough assessment of Schütz's own position vis-à-vis the essence and its difference from empirical types. With Chapter 3 (that inaugurates the second ideal part of the work), we go through a sort of transition phase, in which, I would say, the analysis of Schütz's understanding of the concept of "sense" paves the way for the final, and by far longest chapter, where the candidate addresses the problem of the constitution of "empirical types" within the context of a wider discussion of the *Lebenswelt* (and the problem of the possibility of sociology understood as a science of the life-world). It is here that, I would argue, all the novelty of Schütz's approach (in particular, his need for a more refined "categorical" apparatus) comes to full light. He finally appears

as a complex, rich figure who, to use the words of the candidate himself, moves (je rozkročený) between a phenomenological and a pragmatic view on categorization, between epistemology and phenomenology, the explanation of the structure of experience and the structure of action (p. 78).

The high level of the work notwithstanding, I would like to raise an objection about the structure of the work (*purely formal objection*). The thesis is long also because, from time to time, the candidate interpolates in the work *examples, diversions, of comparative/critical discussions* which are meant to illustrate, elaborate on or re-assert a certain point and/or argument made by the candidate during his interpretation of Schütz. For instance, §4.2 on A. Steinbock's reading of Husserl and the problem of normality/optimality is quite interesting and the candidate critically refers to Steinbock's reading as a sort of cornerstone to better highlight Schütz's position. But one might wonder whether this is really a necessary thing to do; in fact, even just a quick look at the pages discussed by the candidate (pp. 129ff.) show that Steinbock bases his reading both on a series of manuscripts which Schütz (I think) could not be familiar with and a peculiar combination of Freud and Merleau-Ponty. The context of his interpretation is so different from Schütz's that the reader might wonder whether this was really material to the candidate's argument. And if one can still make the case for regarding Steinbock's book as an important *sparring partner*, so to speak, it is difficult to avoid the sense of puzzlement when one approaches §4.8.3 on Foucault and Borges. A similar puzzlement applies to some of the examples used by the candidate in theory to illustrate, for instance, Weber's distinction between *Handeln* and *Verhalten* (p. 47). To clarify quickly this distinction the candidate recalls first an episode from Joyce's *Ulysses* and then mentions the case of "traffic" or car "accidents: "Chování se reinterpretuje jako sociální jednání a ze zabití se stává vražda." Of course, I am not denying that there is a difference between accidental killing and murder (this being characterized by the presence of an intention); what I do not get is why this should explain the *Handeln-Verhalten* distinction.

General Questions

The first ideal part of the work is dedicated mainly to Husserl, the question of essence and the issue of how essences can be distinguished from empirically types. The discussion is carried out, first, in the context of the so-called static phenomenology (*Ideas I*), then from a genetic perspective. All the questions I would like to address to the candidate bear precisely upon these two problems (and also, albeit partially, upon his skeptical reading of the method of eidetic variation).

(1) The first general question concerns the argument presented in §1.2.1 (*Podstata*). Here, it is said right at the outset that the discovery of the essence is "preceded" by two methodological steps: that

of the phenomenological reduction, and the eidetic variation (*Objevu podstat předchází dva olbřímí meditativní kroky: (1.) fenomenologická redukce a (2.) eidetická variace*) (p. 17). I am puzzled by two main facts here. One, that the candidate moves a little bit too freely between *Ideas... I* (where there is no method of eidetic variation yet) and the *Cartesian Meditations*. Two, that he claims that both the phenomenological reduction and the eidetic variation are required to discover essences. I am puzzled because this is true only if by *essences* we mean the essences phenomenology is about (consciousness and its many lived-experiences); by contrast, since Husserl recognizes the existence of eidetic sciences other than phenomenology (geometry, pure doctrine of colors, pure psychology, the ontology of the life-world), he would admit without further ado that the discovery of essences of which these other sciences treat does not need any phenomenological reduction. Which essences does the candidate actually mean here? How many different kinds of essence would Husserl accept?

(2) Another question concerns the candidate's understanding of the notion of essence (and eidetic knowledge in general) in light of the *bottle* example made, e.g., on page 25. On the one hand, the candidate rightly considers the experience of a bottle as exemplifying a *typological* experience; on the other hand, however, he seems to believe that (for Husserl) *this bottle* (hence, *the bottle as such*) would or could be the object of eidetic variation: I am assuming that this is what he means to say when he argues that, *contra Husserl*, Schütz does maintain that the eidetic variation “forgets” the *typological aspect* of my perception of this bottle. The candidate seems to believe, I say erroneously if this will turn out to be the case, that for Husserl *there would an essence (eidos) of the bottle as bottle, hence an a priori science of bottles (say, scientia ampullarum)*. Schütz is of course right, but for the simple reason that there is no eidetic science of bottles (not essence “bottle”): this is why the *typological aspect* needs to be forgotten by the eidetic variation.

(3) The final question I have is more marginal, and mainly concerning the texts selection. I would only like to know why, considering the candidate's ability to read German without problems, no single text from the intersubjectivity volumes (Husserliana XIII, XIV, and XV) is ever mentioned in the work. There, in fact, the candidate would find plenty of material of sociological nature.

(My) skepticism apart, this is an excellent work and needs to be recognized as such.

I would propose **1** as a final grade, taking for granted that the candidate will be able to address all my questions and concerns.

Prague, January 22nd 2024

Daniele De Santis