

LESTER EMBREE (EDITOR)

Schutzian Social Science



CONTRIBUTIONS TO PHENOMENOLOGY

SCHUTZIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE

edited by

LESTER EMBREE

Center for Advanced
Research in Phenomenology,
Florida Atlantic University,
Boca Raton, FL, U.S.A.



19 30228

A-2280166



KLUWER ACADEMIC PUBLISHERS
DORDRECHT / BOSTON / LONDON

KATALOG

CONTRIBUTIONS TO PHENOMENOLOGY
IN COOPERATION WITH
THE CENTER FOR ADVANCED RESEARCH IN PHENOMENOLOGY

Volume 37

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Scope

The purpose of this series is to foster the development of phenomenological philosophy through creative research. Contemporary issues in philosophy, other disciplines and in culture generally, offer opportunities for the application of phenomenological methods that call for creative responses. Although the work of several generations of thinkers has provided phenomenology with many results with which to approach these challenges, a truly successful response to them will require building on this work with new analyses and methodological innovations.

A C.I.P. Catalogue record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN 0-7923-6003-6

Published by Kluwer Academic Publishers,
P.O. Box 17, 3300 AA Dordrecht, The Netherlands.

Sold and distributed in North, Central and South America
by Kluwer Academic Publishers,
101 Philip Drive, Norwell, MA 02061, U.S.A.

In all other countries, sold and distributed
by Kluwer Academic Publishers,
P.O. Box 322, 3300 AH Dordrecht, The Netherlands.

Printed on acid-free paper

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Printed in the Netherlands.

*For Evelyn the daughter and
Claudia the granddaughter of
Alfred and Ilse Schutz*

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Frontispiece

The Meaning Structure of the Social World¹

The writer plans to continue his studies of the philosophical foundations of the social sciences. This topic has been in the center of his interests since the publication of his book, *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt* (1932). In this book he tried to connect Max Weber's theoretical findings in the realm of the social sciences with the philosophical teaching of Edmund Husserl, the founder of Phenomenology. Thereupon Husserl invited the writer to become his personal assistant. Since his immigration to the U.S., the writer has published some thirty papers dealing with various approaches to the same central topic. He feels that his thinking has reached a point which requires systematic presentation and no longer permits monographic treatment.

The main topic to be elaborated can be stated in rather simple terms: It is the purpose of the social sciences to explain social reality by the scientific method which they have in common with all the other empirical sciences. They have, therefore, to develop a system of concepts and theory capable of grasping human reality in terms of everyday life. In this respect, however, the problem of the social sciences differs on an essential point from that of the natural sciences. The latter intentionally and systematically eliminate the human factor from their observational field, whereas the human world is the subject matter of the former. But this human world is different from the field of nature as studied by the natural scientist; it is from the outset meaningful to the human beings living their everyday lives within it. This is so because our common-sense thinking has pre-interpreted and pre-structurized the world. To be sure, its meaning structure is just taken for granted. It is unquestioned, but merely unquestioned until future notice. At any time it might become questionable. This social reality corresponds to Husserl's

¹Editor's Note: *The following text is the project description of a proposal for a sabbatical on which to visit the Husserl Archives in Louvain, Belgium and was prepared in 1958. It is Alfred Schutz's most mature concise statement of the focus of his work and thus amounts to an intellectual self-portrait that is suitable for use as a frontispiece to this volume. Ms. Evelyn Schutz Lang is thanked for the permission to edit and publish it here.* Lester Embree

notion of the "*Lebenswelt*" the description and elucidation of which by phenomenological techniques is the main theme of his later philosophy and dealt with mainly in still unpublished manuscripts preserved by the Husserl Archiv in Louvain.

It is the writer's conviction that any science of the human condition eager to grasp social reality has to be founded on the interpretation of the *Lebenswelt* by the human beings living within it. The scientific interpretation of this world is, as it were, an interpretation to the second degree, viz. a *scientific* interpretation of the common-sense interpretations in terms of which the social world is experienced by all of us who live and act within it.

The detailed phenomenological analysis of the structurization of the *Lebenswelt* will form the first part of the writer's project; based on this analysis, the problem of concept and theory formation in the social sciences will be investigated with the view to establish continuity between the meaning of the social world as experienced by man living within it and as the subject matter of the social sciences.

Alfred Schutz
Professor of Philosophy and Sociology
The Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science
The New School for Social Research

Preface

This volume has been developed through a research symposium held in October 1997 under the sponsorship of the Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology, Inc. and Florida Atlantic University. Besides its chief purposes of advancing research on as well as in the spirit of the work of Alfred Schutz (1899-1959) and of laying foundations for the upcoming Schutz centennial year, it is also a “medical checkup,” one might say, concerning the state of research on the work of Schutz as well as research influenced by him a decade after some similar assessments, i.e., *Alfred Schutz: Neue Beiträge zur Rezeption seines Werkes*, ed. Elisabeth List and Ilja Srubar (Amsterdam: Rodolphi, 1988) and *Worldly Phenomenology: The Continuing Influence of Alfred Schutz on North American Human Science*, ed. Lester Embree (Washington, D.C.: Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology and University Press of America, 1988).

Much has changed during the past decade. First of all, a considerable quantity of new primary source material has become available, beginning with Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers*, Vol. IV, edd. Helmut Wagner, George Psathas, and Fred Kersten (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996), but also including “Positivist Philosophy and the Actual Approach of Interpretative Social Science: An Ineditum of Alfred Schutz from Spring 1953,” *Husserl Studies*, vol. 14, pp. 123-149, 1977, “The Sociology of Language” (1958), edited from his course notes by Fred Kersten, and “T.S. Eliot’s Theory of Culture” (1950), both forthcoming in *Human Studies*, and the seven inedita from an ethics institute of 1956 on “Barriers to Equality of Opportunity” in Chapter 12 of the present volume. Furthermore, an outline Schutz made for a lecture in 1955 has been used to combine scattered remarks into *Alfred Schutz’s “Sociological Aspect of Literature: Construction and Complementary Essays,”* ed. Lester Embree (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998).

Most importantly, the fifteen-volume *Alfred Schutz Werkausgabe* will appear at the rate of at least two volumes a year for the next six years. Volume V, *Theorie der Lebenswelt* appeared in 1998 and has two sub-volumes: “Die pragmatische Schichtung der Lebenswelt,” edited by Martin Endress and Ilja Srubar, and “Kommunikative Ordnung der Lebenswelt,” edited by Hubert Knoblauch and Hans-Georg Soeffner.

In addition, the Schutz nachlass is now accessible not only with the originals at the Beinecke Library at Yale University but also in microfilm and photocopy in the archival repository of the Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology, Inc. at The University of Memphis and

Waseda Daigaku Schutz Bunko, i.e., “The Alfred Schutz Archive in Memory of Alfred and Ilse Schutz” at Waseda University, as well as at the venerable Sozialwissenschaftliches Archiv Konstanz. Readers unfamiliar with developments in Japan might study the entry entitled “Sociology in Japan” by Hisashi Nasu in the *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology*, ed. Lester Embree *et al.* (Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997).

The burgeoning secondary literature has exceeded 1,400 items and is documented open-endedly on the website of the Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology (<http://www.flinet.com/~carp>) and recently represented most substantially by Daniel Cefaï, *Phénoménologie et sciences social: Alfred Schutz: Naissance d'une anthropologie philosophique* (Geneve: Librairie Droz, 1998).

And there is now also the annual Alfred Schutz Memorial Lecture conceived by George Psathas and sponsored by the American Philosophical Association and the Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology with the Society for Phenomenology in the Human Sciences at which Maurice Natanson, Ilja Srubar, Richard Zaner, Thomas Luckmann, and Fred Kersten have thus far spoken. Major coming events include centennial conferences planned for 1999 in Germany, Japan, and the United States and a new biography under preparation by Michael Barber.

What, briefly, of the contents of this volume? While *Worldly Phenomenology* was focused on the influence of Schutz just in North America, *Schutzian Social Science* is like the *Neue Beiträge* in having a more international focus, which now prominently includes Asia as well as Europe. The conference at which drafts of most of the chapters below were presented for collegial criticism was originally entitled “Alfred Schutz’s Theory of Social Science.” This title was part of an attempt at evoking reflections on methodological specifications of his general approach in particular disciplines and, in support of that attempt, some effort was also made to encourage reflections on Political Science rather than, as usual, Sociology. The focus of Schutz’s science theory is social science in general, which contrasts with historical science as well as with the naturalistic and formal types of science and which is as particularized by Ethnology, Economics, Linguistics, or Political Science, etc. as by Sociology. It is interesting to ponder what would have been produced if circumstances lead Schutz, who was trained in Economics and Law, to begin teaching Political Science rather than than Sociology at the New School, when he began expanding his repertoire beyond philoso-

phy; perhaps Hannah Arendt, Arnold Brecht, Leo Strauss, and others would have had to share some of the stage in that time and since!

The research of other researchers is of course not easy to influence. As things worked out, there is considerable emphasis on politics in half of the chapters, but most of the social-scientific essays are concerned not so much with reflection on Schutzian research in their author's various particular disciplines as with continuing Schutzian research on substantive problems arising in such particular perspectives, i.e., to practicing Schutzian social science, *which is far more important*, bread being essential to life, while knife sharpening is only extremely helpful. The title for this volume has accordingly evolved.

Further concerning the continuing Schutzian research in the social sciences, it must also be remarked that a most welcome new and "macro" perspective has emerged. While Schutz has often been taken—especially in the United States—to have reflected chiefly in a "micro" perspective on typical individuals in relation to others and only secondarily and in late essays to have been concerned with existential and voluntary in-groups and out-groups, now, for example, political groupings are investigated in Social Geography as relating to space differently in Late Modernity than in Pre-Modern times. The present writer first noticed this emergence in Ilja Srubar, "Phenomenological Analysis and its Contemporary Significance" (*Human Studies*, vol. 21 [1998], 121-139), where the transition from Socialist to Post-Socialist societies in central Europe is the focal case.

Otherwise and in a more traditional and critical-historical way, Schutzian thought is used in other chapters to account for the emergence of politics as a theme; it is related to the positions of his friends Eric Voegelin and Tomoo Otaka (the attempt to get a study of Schutz in relation to Max Scheler, his major source after Husserl, Bergson, and Weber, did not succeed, but his relation to Austrian Economics—missing from *Worldly Phenomenology*—is well covered); and his influences upon Maurice Natanson and, in a contrastive if not reactive way, upon Ethnomethodology are shown; as is also his ethical-political side, which has tended thus far to go under-recognized; there is the use of his multiple-realities analysis, which is a piece of phenomenological psychology, in sociology; and, finally, two essays do actually focus on the foundations of social science.

In sum, *Schutzian Social Science* contains critical historical and philosophical as well as substantive research in manifold social sciences and is

healthy and will continue to flourish. The patient should return in 2008 for her next check-up.

Besides the participants/contributors, let me take this opportunity to thank Professor John Drabinski and Edward Rackley, who were the William F. Dietrich Research Fellows in 1997-1999 and assisted me in organizing the research symposium and with the technical editing of this volume.

Lester Embree
Delray Beach, December 1998

Chapter 1

Regionalism and Political Society

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Abstract: Regionalism and Nationalism are transformative forces of the political landscape at the end of the 20th century. As we all know, they have a high potential of destruction. Why has traditional human geography—as the science of the regional—so little explanatory potential for these social processes? Here I offer some answers and suggest—drawing on the social philosophy of Alfred Schutz—a perspective giving social geography a greater problem-solving capacity in late-modernity.

Introduction

In a social-geographical perspective, today's most dramatic changes are happening on levels from the changing political maps to technological inventions in production, transport, and communication. The latter are responsible for the extraordinary new situation in which we live today: The globalization of nearly all domains of the everyday lives of most people. Both aspects, the constant changes of the political maps and the process of globalization, involve in various forms new aspects in the interrelations of "societies," "cultures" and "space."

The clarification of the society-space nexus was long discussed within human geography, especially in social and political geography merely as a problem of theoretical conceptualization. Today, in the last decade of the 20th century, it has become both a crucial sociological and a political problem. It is obvious that under these conditions social geography assumes a new specific political relevance for contemporary societies as well as a heightened theoretical significance for the social sciences.

On the everyday level more and more people are becoming aware that a significant number of social problems involve a spatial component in one or another form. Nationalism and regionalism are two forms with extraordinary importance. Both are expressions of a specific combination of "society" and

“space.” At the same time, both are part of the most problematic phenomena of the present.

Regionalist and nationalist discourses refer normally to the right of self-determination, which is a typical product of modernity. But *who or what* is the “self” in this case? Is it the same as what the French revolution established as having fundamental citizenship rights or is it perhaps something totally opposed to it? These discourses argue, that social entities like nations or ethnic groups can claim the same rights as subjects can. The rights of the modern subject, then, are being claimed for holistic constructions. These are based on a social constitution of reality in which *spatial categories* dominate the social categories. Consequently, nationalist and regionalist discourses postulate that social problems can be solved by changing the spatial bases of a society. But what are the social consequences of such spatial descriptions and discourses?

One important implication lies in the Janus-faced character of regionalist discourses: They are both forward and backward looking. Neither journalistic accounts of everyday politics from Bosnia-Herzegovina to Quebec, nor the human geographical worldview pay attention to this. With a more differentiated penetration of the society-space relation, it becomes obvious that the domination of spatial categories over social categories in the description and typification of social facts produces quite contradictory features: Regionalist accounts refer to pre-modern holistic units and yet claim rights of self-determination in the modern sense. Without any empirical justification a pre-modern non-subject takes the place of a (modern) subject. Modern rights are claimed for a spatially constructed social unit, and yet spatially defined social units do not make much sense anymore in a late-modern world characterized by the increasing globalization of social life.

The Janus-faced character lies therefore in the fact that a modern subject-centered right and authority is claimed for a pre-modern spatially constructed social unit.

I. Geography and Modernity

To a certain degree this problematic is also characteristic of traditional regional geography and all space-centered social and cultural research. They are on the one hand in the center of a modern worldview, but as soon they claim a scientific status with explanatory potential, they refer to a pre-mo-

dem ontology of the socio-cultural world. I will illustrate this thesis by drawing on Immanuel Kant's idea of geography based on his philosophy of enlightenment¹ and Alfred Hettner's interpretation of this account for the foundation of a scientific regional geography.²

At the turn of the 19th century Kant emphasized that regional-geographic knowledge is fundamental for an enlightened world view. Geographers can therefore claim that their work has strong implications for the emergence and the maintenance of modernity. But it is important to see that in Kant's view this judgement is only true for regional geography as a propaedeutic discipline for science, but not as a science claiming to offer spatial *explanations* of socio-cultural facts.

I will argue that in the turn from propaedeutic discipline to scientific discipline regional geography becomes entangled in similar contradictions to those which characterize nationalism and regionalism. While the propaedeutic version of geography promoted modernity in significant ways, the scientific version—the so-called new regional geography of the contemporary anglo-saxon debate included³—is deeply linked to a pre-modern ontology of the socio-cultural world. Therefore they together embody a similar contradictory relationship between the modern and the pre-modern as do regionalist and nationalistic discourses.

If we look at Kant's concept of geography, the first striking point is, that for him geography is important for enlightenment without having any potential for offering spatial explanations. This is primarily a result of his concept of space. For him "space is not an empirical concept which has been abstracted from outer experience. . . Space is necessarily representation, and

¹Immanuel Kant, *Physische Geographic*, ed. D.F. Th. Rink. Königsberg: Gobels und Unzer, 1802.

²Cf., Alfred Hettner, "Das Wesen und die Methoden der Geographie," *Geographische Zeitschrift* 11 (1905): 545-564, 615-629, 671-686; *Die Geographie. Ihre Geschichte, ihr Wesen und ihre Methoden*. Breslau: Ferdinand Hirt, 1927; "Das länderkundliche Schema," *Geographischer Anzeiger* 33 (1932): 40-43.

³Cf. Anne Gilbert, "The new regional geography in English and French-speaking countries," *Progress in Human Geography* 12 (1988): 208-228; Anne Bultimer, "Grasping the dynamism of Lifeworld," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 66 (1976): 277-297; Alan Pred, *Place, Practice and Structure*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986; Neil Smith, "Homeless/global: scaling places," in John Bird et al., eds., *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, global change*. London: Routledge, 1993, 87-119.

consequently is a priori.”⁴ Therefore, for him an a posteriori *empirical science* of space is not possible, because there is no such object as “space.” Only an a priori science of space is possible and that is geometry and cannot be geography.

If “space” were an object, that is to say, an appropriate research object of an empirical science such as geography, then we should be able to indicate the place of space in the physical world. But this is impossible. Space does not exist as a material object or as a consistent theoretical object. It is—that is my thesis—rather a formal and classificatory concept, a frame of reference for the physical components of actions and a grammar for problems and possibilities related to the performance of action in the physical world. As already mentioned, “space” is not an empirical concept because there is no such thing as space. It is a formal frame of reference because it does not refer to any specific concept of material object. It is “classificatory” because it enables us to describe a certain order of material objects with respect to their specific dimensions.

If one accepts this stipulation, then the question has to be raised, how did geography come to be defined as “spatial science”? We can trace this categorical mistake back to Alfred Hettner’s misunderstanding of Kant. For Kant geography was a descriptive or taxonomic discipline. Kant used the word “chorographic,” meaning descriptive, to qualify geography. Hettner transformed this into “chorologic,” which refers to explanation rather than description.⁵ Since explanatory force was the cornerstone of Kant’s definition of science, Hettner’s “mistake” made it possible to describe geography as a science: the science of space. Berry,⁶ Bunge,⁷ Bartels,⁸ and others walked to the end of this dark street. Bartels, the most famous German geographer of recent decades, finally attempted to formulate the aim of geography as the discovery of spatial laws.

⁴Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1956; *Critique of Pure Reason*, trs. Norman Kemp Smith. New York: St. Martin, 1969, 68.

⁵Cf., Alfred Hettner, *Die Geographie*, op. cit., 115f, 127ff.

⁶Brian J.L. Berry and D.F. Marble, *Spatial Analysis*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1968.

⁷William Bunge, “Theoretical Geography,” *Lund Studies in Geography* Volume I (1973).

⁸Dietrich Bartels, *Zur wissenschaftstheoretischen Grundlegung einer Geographie des Menschen*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1968; Dietrich Bartels, ed., *Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeographie*. Köln/Berlin: Kiepenueuer & Witsch, 1970.

II. From "Space" to Action

Yet if we reject Hettner's misinterpretation and all that followed from it, this does not mean we have to accept Kant's definition of geography. I believe it is more than just a propaedeutic discipline and that it can have explanatory potential. But I am also convinced that to define and maintain the idea of geography as a social science, the central role accorded to space has to be replaced. I would argue that "action" should replace "space" as the key concept of geographical research. Before I can discuss this, I will first analyze in some detail the interrelationship of "body," "space," and "action" in a social geography based on the phenomenology of Alfred Schutz.

Today, in the so called new regional geography, "space" and "place" were and are still the unquestioned key "objects" for most geographers and many "geographical imaginations" of the world.⁹ Pickles criticizes the objectivation of "space" and understands phenomenology as a method which seeks to clarify those concepts.¹⁰ On the basis of Heidegger's existential phenomenology he elaborates a perspective in which not "space" but "spatiality" can be the object of theoretization and empirical research. For Pickles an "ontology of spatiality" is needed to determine what must be the case if there can be anything like spatial and environmental behavior. For him, the aim of social geography shall be the appropriate interpretation of "human spatiality."

Starting out from Heidegger's premises that the spatial ordering of entities occurs through man's activities, we can understand that the spatiality of entities "ready-to-hand" always belongs to a place within the "equipmental" context of a particular activity.¹¹ It is important to point out, that, also according to Heidegger,¹² space and time do not serve only as parameters. Both are constitutive rather for Dasein. "space" (*Raum*) is the result of "*räumen*" (clearing away) and therefore has an existence of its own. However, neither is "space" part of the subject, nor does the subject observe the world "as if" the world were in a Newtonian (container) space. The

⁹Derek Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1994.

¹⁰John Pickles, *Phenomenology, Science, and Geography: Spatiality and the Human Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

¹¹Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trs. Macquarrie and Robinson. New York: Harper and Row, 1962.

¹²Martin Heidegger, "The Nature of Language," in *On the Way to Language*, trs. Peter D. Hertz. New York: Harper and Row, 1971.

subject for Heidegger is rather spatial and “spatializes” the world through his mode of being.

Consequently, the assertion was made in geography that human spatiality has to be part of a spatial theory. The future of social and human geography will depend—that was and is still largely the argument—on the nature of the research program that develops from this incorporation. Therefore human geography should be understood as a human science of human spatiality. But is empirical investigation of “spatiality” possible in spatial categories and can “spatiality” be the “object” of a spatial theory? Would it not be more accurate to link “spatiality” methodologically to man’s activities/actions instead of “space”? Nevertheless, spatial theory would not be the core of the geographers’ interest anymore. This is the position that follows the principles of constitutive phenomenology.¹³

Husserl’s and Schutz’s constitutive phenomenology make it possible to start from the hypothesis that what geographers describe as spatial problems are in fact problems of certain types of actions,¹⁴ actions with somatic involvement and where material things are constituted. The fact that the self experiences the body primarily in movement also means that it experiences the body only *in*, and not *as*, a functional context.

The experience of movement is necessarily reinterpreted as an experience of space and opens up access to the world of extension. With the experience of all the spatial character of one’s own body the spatiality of things is also discovered. The constitution of the material world and of “space” is thus bound up with the experiencing, moving, and acting “I.” Apart from the experience of the spatiality of the physical-material world, the subject also experiences the qualities of the various objects in relation to his/her own body, verifying them with correspondent meanings for her/his actions.

For social-geographical analysis, the “body” can in Schutz’s terms be seen consequently as a functional link between inner processes and movements directed toward the outer world. On the one hand, the body in the physical world becomes a medium of expression for intentional consciousness. On the other hand, the spatial dimension is mediated and incorporated *via* the

¹³See Benno Werlen, “Social Geography,” in Lester Embree, et al., eds., *Encyclopedia of Phenomenology*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Publishers, 1997, 646-650.

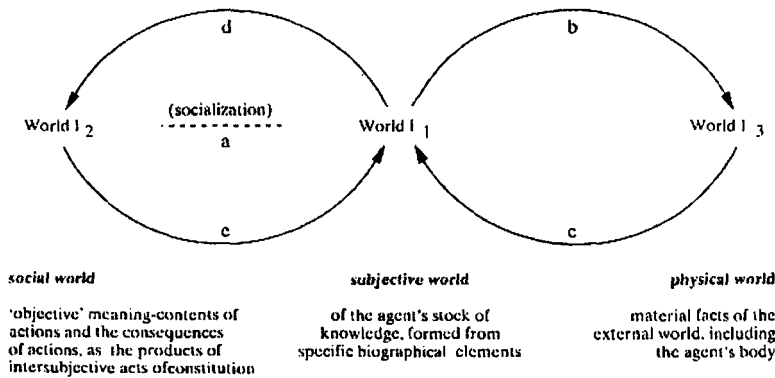
¹⁴See Edmund Husserl, *Ding und Raum. Vorlesungen 1907*. Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973 and Alfred Schutz, *Life Forms and Meaning Structures*, trs. Helmut R. Wagner. London: Routledge, 1982.

“body,” especially in face-to-face situations. Thus, the physical or geographical location of the body affects the nature of pure duration and thereby this location affects, as Schutz puts it in referring to Bergson, memory-endowed duration. Therefore, the function of the body is to mediate between duration and the homogenous space-time world of extension.

Furthermore, the body is crucial for the constituting processes and intersubjectivity. If a subject is learning intersubjectively valid rules of interpretation that exist within a certain socio-cultural world, then it is necessary for him/her to verify his or her interpretations and evaluations. This means that the constitution and application of intersubjective meaning-contexts depend on the possibilities of testing the validity of allocations of meaning. The attainment of certainty about intersubjectively valid constitutions of meaning is possible above all in the immediate face-to-face situation.

Here the bodies of the actors face each other directly as fields of expression of the consciousness of ego and alter ego. This makes it possible to support communication through subtle bodily gestures, thus limiting the number of misinterpretations. Accordingly, co-presence is the prerequisite condition of the ontological and interpretative security on which both the more abstract and the more anonymous allocations of meaning are based. To demonstrate the key role of the body for ontological security, it is helpful to reconstruct the interrelation of subjective, socio-cultural, and physical realms in the epistemology of the subjective perspective.¹⁵

Fig. 1: Three-world-model in an action-centered perspective



¹⁵See Benno Werlen, *Gesellschaft, Handlung, und Raum. Grundlagen handlungstheoretischer Sozialgeographie*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1988; *Society, Action, and Space. An Alternative Human Geography*, trs. Gayna Walls. London: Routledge, 1993, 52-91.

If we begin to look at the world from an “action-centered perspective,” and discard space as a starting point in itself, we focus on the embodied subject, the corporeality of the actor, in the context of specific subjective, socio-cultural, and material conditions. We begin from a perspective that emphasizes subjective agency as the only source of action and hence of change, at the same as it stresses that the social and material world shapes the social actions that produce it.

But the fact that the social world is produced and reproduced by social actions means that it is these actions, rather than “space,” that are constitutive of that world. A concept of “space” can only provide a pattern of reference by means of which problematic and/or relevant material entities that bear on action can be reconstituted and localized. Given that the subject is embodied, these material patterns are of course significant in most actions. But since they are not the only significant factor in action, actions cannot be explained by them.

The socially constructed frame of actions is not a “spatial” cause; it is the product of actions. This means that it is insufficient to proceed from the assertion that “space” or even materiality already have a meaning “in themselves,” a meaning that is constitutive of social facts. Materiality becomes meaningful in the performance of actions with certain intentions and under certain social (and subjective) conditions.

III. Action and Modernity

The subject- and action-centered view of the world reflects modernity, the modern or enlightened understanding of reality. Kant’s philosophy is one of its key elements forming a central part of modern science and consequent life-forms. In this view, any form and version of a “space-centered” description, understanding, and explanation runs counter to the basic principles of modern and late-modern life forms.

This is not only scientifically problematic, but—as regionalist and nationalist discourses and movements illustrate—also has disturbing political consequences. Our contemporary life forms are deeply penetrated by modern standards of thinking and acting. Any social science wishing to produce empirically valid knowledge about this world has to take this into account in respect both of its object of study and its methodology. The center of its interest has therefore to concentrate on the knowing and acting subject.

In contrast to this, traditional space-centered human geography tries to localize immaterial social and mental entities in the physical world. But this localization is in fact impossible, because these entities have a different ontological status. In the physical world, only extended material entities can be localized. Immaterial entities cannot. The formal and classificatory concepts of space (longitude, latitude, etc.) are not adapted to social and mental, subjective phenomena.

If we accept that actions always have at least a subjective, socio-cultural, and physical component, it should now be clear that spatial categories can only grasp the last of these components. Every attempt to grasp the immaterial subjective and socio-cultural worlds of intentions, norms, values, etc. in spatial categories is accordingly reductionist and denies the centrality of the subject in the late-modern world.

Because of the globalization tendencies in late-modern societies regional knowledge is probably more important than ever. But scientific claims in proper terms can no longer be linked to the science of space or the science of regional facts. An ontologically adequate research conception of geography needs to respect the knowing and acting subject.

This leads geography from the science of the spatial and regional to a science of the regionalizing implications of knowing and acting subjects. Therefore, regional geography has to be complemented with a social geography that explores the everyday regionalizations of lifeworlds respecting the standards of social scientific research.

The remaining question is why traditional space-centered geography could persist until today and even attain a very strong position in the catalogue of scientific disciplines. A space-centered account of socio-cultural facts can—despite its epistemological shortcomings—reach a certain approximation of everyday realities. But this is only possible under certain very specific conditions. These exist, when socio-cultural practices are deeply interrelated with the spatio-temporal dimensions of the material basis of human actions.

This condition is characteristic—this is my hypothesis—of traditional life forms but not for modern and late-modern life forms. Because of this, spatial descriptions are not only losing their power empirically, but they are becoming more and more problematic politically. An accurate geographical account of the contemporary world with any capacity for enlightenment requires a new conceptual framework. I will now first develop the basis to make this proposition clearer and then elaborate in a

more precise way the implicit politically problematic dimension of traditional geography with respect to late modern life forms.

IV. Traditional Regional and Late-modern Globalized Societies

The most important spatio-temporal characteristics of traditional, pre-modern life forms and societies—in an ideal typical form—are summarized in Figure 2. *Stability over time* or *embeddedness* in a temporal respect is founded in the domination of traditions. Traditions interrelate the past with the future and are the central frame of reference for action orientation and legitimation in daily praxis. They set narrow bounds for individual decisions. Social relations are predominantly ruled by kinship-, tribe- or rank relations. Clearly defined social positions are attributed to persons depending on birth, age, and sex.

Fig. 2: Ideal-type of traditional life forms and regional societies

- 1 Traditions intertwine past, present, and future.
- 2 Kinship organizes and stabilizes social relations over time.
- 3 Birth, age, and sex determine social positions.
- 4 Face-to-face situations dominate communication.
- 5 Small amount of interregional communication.
- 6 The local village constitutes the familiar life context.

Traditional life forms are temporally and spatially embedded

Narrow *spatial limitations*, or “embeddedness” in a spatial sense,¹⁶ lies in the technical standards of transportation and communication. The dominant importance of walking and the limited significance of writing restrict social and cultural expressions to the local and regional level. Face-to-face interaction is nearly the only possible situation for communication. In addition, production processes have to respect natural condi-

¹⁶Anthony Giddens, *Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990.

tions because of the low level of technical development. Economies are consequently highly adapted to the prevailing physical conditions.

In addition—as many anthropological studies teach us—temporal, spatial and socio-cultural aspects of everyday praxis are closely bound together. For traditional life forms, it is not only important to realize certain activities at a certain time, but also in a certain place, and sometimes even with a certain spatial orientation. In this way, social regulations and activity patterns are reproduced and enforced by spatio-temporal commitments.

The unity of socio-cultural and spatio-temporal dimensions of activities becomes the basis for extremely powerful reification processes. In this way, for example, *places* of worship are identified with the act of worship. Only in this way it is possible to claim, that somebody who puts his or her feet on a certain place is desecrating the *place*.

But this can only appear as a meaningful phrase if no distinction is made between significance and place. Or to put it another way: only when the significance is seen as a quality of the place and not as a product of the subject's constitution process, only then is it possible to talk about desecrating *places*. Exactly on the basis of this process of reification "space" and "time" are enriched, are filled up with specific meanings. Signification appears as a quality of things, deeply rooted in them and embedded in the territory of a given culture.

This characteristic is not typical of *late modern life forms*. Here traditions are not in the center of daily social praxis.¹⁷ Social orientations and social actions need discursive justification and legitimation. The dominant life context is not the local village. It is rather the global village or rather globalized societies. Life conditions are founded in a representation of the world in which reification is replaced by rational constructions. The subsequent late-modern societies, cultures and economies are no longer spatially and temporally embedded. They are rather—in Giddens' stipulation—"disembedded."¹⁸ See Figure 3.

¹⁷See Anthony Giddens, *Consequences of Modernity*, op. cit., and also his *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991. Also, Benno Werlen, *Sozialgeographie alltäglicher Regionalisierungen. Band 1: Zur Ontologie von Gesellschaft und Raum*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1995, 105-134.

¹⁸See Anthony Giddens, *Consequences of Modernity*, op. cit.

Temporal stability is—because of the decreasing importance of tradition—replaced by constant social transformation. Late-modern everyday actions are not dominated by local traditions. It is rather routines which sustain ontological security. For individual decisions a wide field of possibilities stays open. Social relations are not basically regulated by kinship. Instead globally observable cultures, life styles, and life forms—very often linked to a specific generation—become much more important. A person's social position is determined by production and valued work and not by birth, age, and, following the principles of enlightenment, also not by sex or race.

The spatial clustering and embeddedness of traditional social life forms is replaced by global interconnections and disembedding mechanisms. The actual and potential reach of actors is stretched to a global dimension. The most important disembedding mechanisms are money, writing, and technical artefacts. Means of transportation enable a high level of mobility. Together with individual freedom of movement, this produces a mixing of formerly locally fixed cultures. This multi-cultural mixing is combined with global communication systems and enables a diffusion of information and information storing not dependant on the corporeal presence of the actors. Face-to-face interaction is not inexistent. But the most substantial part of communication is mediated.

Fig. 3: Ideal-type of late-modern life forms and the globalized societies

- 1 Everyday routines sustain ontological security.
- 2 Globally observable cultures, life forms, and life styles.
- 3 Production and valued work determine social positions.
- 4 Abstract systems (money, writing, and expert systems) enable mediated social relations over enormous distances.
- 5 World-wide communication systems.
- 6 Global village as anonymous context of experience.

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