

# Towards a Moderate Direct Perception Theory: Alfred Schutz's Phenomenological Theory of Interpersonal Understanding in the Light of the Contemporary Debate on Social Cognition

Alexis Emanuel Gros

University of Buenos Aires/ CONICET

---

**Abstract:** In this paper, I intend to show the relevance of Schutz's account of interpersonal understanding within the context of the contemporary social cognition debate. Currently, the research on the nature of everyday interpersonal understanding is taking place almost exclusively within the field of interdisciplinary cognitive science. Generally speaking, since the mid-nineties the so-called social cognition debate is dominated by two opposed theoretical outlooks which diverge concerning the ultimate mechanisms responsible for our understanding of Others, namely the theory-theory of mind (TT) and the simulation theory (ST). Yet, in the last couple of years, there is a phenomenological turn taking place in this debate. Thinkers like Zahavi, Gallagher and Overgaard, among others, return to classical phenomenological accounts of empathy—like those of Husserl, Stein, Scheler and Merleau-Ponty—to propose an alternative theoretical outlook on intersubjective understanding, namely the direct perception theory (DPT). However, this recuperation of classical phenomenological approaches to intersubjective comprehension is, to some extent, incomplete. Indeed, DPT supporters tend to neglect the valuable contributions that Schutz made to the study of this problem. This is quite curious, not only because Schutz's phenomenological theory of interpersonal understanding agrees, to some degree, with the main thesis of the direct perception theory, but also because it contains of insights that may be helpful to formulate a more solid and self-clarified version of it.

**Key Words:** interpersonal, social cognition, Other, phenomenological

*Introduction*<sup>1</sup>

Far from being a mere method of interpretive social sciences, the understanding of the Other [*Fremdverstehen*] constitutes a fundamental ontological feature of human life. Following the sociologist and philosopher Alfred Schutz (1962 [1954]: 57), *Verstehen* is actually “the way in which common-sense thinking finds its bearings within the social world and comes to terms with it”. Now, in light of the centrality and pervasiveness of interpersonal understanding in everyday social life, it is worth asking: How do we get to understand Others in our quotidianity? Which cognitive abilities and mechanisms come into play in our grasping of another’s mental states? In which degree are we able to know what our fellow-man is thinking, feeling or intending?<sup>2</sup> Certainly, the answer to these and similar questions is vital for human sciences at large and for interpretive social sciences in particular. This is documented by the manifold studies on this issue that have been conducted since the end of the nineteenth century within different disciplines and from the most diverse theoretical frameworks (cf. Lipps 1907; Simmel 1999 [1918]; Weber 1984 [1921]; Gurwitsch 1976 [1931]; Stein 1917, among others).

Currently, the research on the nature of everyday interpersonal understanding is taking place almost exclusively within the field of interdisciplinary cognitive science. Generally speaking, since the mid-nineties the so-called social cognition debate is dominated by two opposed theoretical outlooks which diverge concerning the ultimate mechanisms responsible for our understanding of Others, namely the theory-theory of mind (TT) and the simulation theory (ST) (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008: 171-172; Krueger, Overgaard 2012: 239-240; Maraffa 2014).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is a slightly modified version of the paper presented at the 2nd Conference of *The International Alfred Schutz Circle for Phenomenology and Interpretive Social Science*. I would like to thank Prof. Hisashi Nasu, Dr. Jochen Dreher, Dr. Andreas Götlich and Prof. Carlos Belvedere for the insightful comments on my work. I am in debt with Prof. Dan Zahavi who, at the *Copenhagen Summer School in Phenomenology and Philosophy of Mind 2012*, encouraged me to think about the relevance of Schutz’s account of intersubjectivity for the contemporary social cognition debate. I am also grateful to the anonymous reviewers of *Schutzian Research* for their comments and suggestions, and to Emma Caterinicchio for the English proofreading.

<sup>2</sup> When referring to the understanding of the Other, in this paper I use the verbs “to understand”, “to grasp”, “to seize” and “to know” in an equivalent way. In this, I follow Zahavi 2010; Gallagher, Zahavi 2008. As it will be stated later, this paper focuses on the problem of the understanding of the Other’s expressions [*Ausdrucksverstehen*], and not in the problem of understanding the Other’s motives [*Motivverstehen*].

<sup>3</sup> It is important to mention, however, that this clear-cut division is an oversimplification, not only because there exist hybrid positions combining both elements of TT and ST, but also because neither TT nor ST are theoretical monoliths, but rather “families of theories” (Maraffa 2014; Gallagher, Zahavi 2008: 172).

In general lines, TT advocates—such as Gopnik, Wellman (cf. Gopnik and Wellman 1992), Carruthers (cf. Carruthers 2009) and Baron-Cohen (cf. Baron-Cohen 1995)—claim that interpersonal comprehension is theoretical, that is to say, intellectual in nature. According to this view, in order to grasp another's mental life when only confronted with his bodily movements, we make an inference to best explanation based on a folk psychology, that is, a lay theory about the workings of human mind (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008: 172; Krueger and Overgaard 2012: 239; Maraffa 2014).<sup>4</sup>

On the contrary, ST defenders—like Goldman (cf. Goldman 2006), Gordon (cf. Gordon 1986) and Gallese (cf. Gallese 2009), among others—deny the intellectual character of intersubjective comprehension, maintaining that emotional and imaginative processes are at work when understanding Others. In broad outline, ST claims that in order to understand another's psychological states, we have to put ourselves in his “mental shoes”, that is, we have to use our own mind as a sort of simulation model (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008: 174; Krueger and Overgaard 2012: 239; Maraffa 2014).<sup>5</sup>

Yet, in the last couple of years, there is a phenomenological turn taking place within the social cognition debate. Thinkers like Dan Zahavi (2010), Shaun Gallagher (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008) and Soren Overgaard (2010; Krueger and Overgaard 2012), among others, return to classical phenomenological accounts of empathy—like those of Edmund Husserl, Edith Stein, Max Scheler and Maurice Merleau-Ponty—not only to criticize both TT and ST, but also to propose an alternative theoretical outlook on the nature of intersubjective understanding, namely the direct perception theory (DPT). Generally speaking, this theory maintains that we *directly perceive* another's mental states *in* his behavioral patterns without needing to deploy extra-perceptual cognitive mechanisms such as theoretical inference or simulation routines. To support this thesis, DPT followers usually refer to the following statement of Max Scheler (1954 [1923]: 301):

“We certainly believe ourselves to be acquainted with another person's joy in his laughter, with his sorrow and pain in his tears, with his shame in his blushing, with his entreaty in his outstretched hands, with his love in his look of affection, with his rage in the gnashing of his teeth, with his threats in the

<sup>4</sup> Theory-theorists are not unanimous concerning the character and origins of this naïve theory of mind. Some of them (Carruthers and Barron-Cohen, among others) claim that it is innate and modularized, whereas others (Gopnik, Wellman, among others) argue that it is acquired, deployed and corroborated in a similar way as scientific theories are (Maraffa, 2014; Gallagher, Zahavi 2008: 172).

<sup>5</sup> There are several discrepancies among ST defenders. Goldman's view coexists with positions like the one of Vittorio Gallese, who, drawing on the research on “mirror neurons”, claims that simulation takes place in a sub-personal level without the need of deploying conscious imagination (Gallagher, Zahavi 2008: 174-175).

clenching of his fist, and with the tenor of his thoughts in the sound of his words.”

DPT advocates have the merit of bringing again to the fore long-forgotten phenomenological insights in the nature of social cognition, showing their topicality in light of current empirical researches within the fields of developmental psychology and neurosciences. Without denying this merit, however, it should be noted that this recuperation of classical phenomenological approaches to intersubjective comprehension is, to an extent, incomplete. Indeed, DPT supporters tend to neglect the valuable contributions that Alfred Schutz made to the study of this problem. This is quite curious, not only because Schutz’s phenomenological theory of interpersonal understanding agrees in some ways, with the main thesis of the direct perception theory, but also because it contains a set of insights that may be helpful to formulate a more solid and self-clarified version of it.<sup>6</sup>

In this paper, I intend to show the relevance of Schutz’s account of interpersonal understanding within the context of the phenomenological turn which is taking place nowadays in the social cognition debate. In order to do this, first (1) I briefly examine the main lines of the DPT. And secondly (2), I present the similarities and discrepancies between the DPT and Schutz’s phenomenological account of *Fremdverstehen*, showing subsequently how one of the many Schutzian conceptual distinctions can help to enhance the former.<sup>7</sup>

### 1. DPT’s phenomenological criticism of TT and ST

It could be argued that DPT’s positive account of social cognition logically follows from its well-built *phenomenological* criticism of the two dominant theoretical outlooks within the contemporary social cognition debate. Accordingly, in order to briefly present the main lines of DPT, it is necessary to reconstruct this criticism. For DPT defenders, although TT and ST appear to be emphatically opposed to each other, they actually share two closely linked claims (cf. Zahavi 2010: 286). Both maintain, whether explicitly or not, that (1) the only thing we can actually perceive of the Other is his bodily

<sup>6</sup> As far as I know, Zahavi 2010 is the only DPT advocate who acknowledges the relevance of Schutz’s account of interpersonal understanding for the contemporary social cognition debate.

<sup>7</sup> In order to avoid misunderstandings, it must be noted from the outset that this paper does not aim to provide an exhaustive account of Schutz’s Theory of intersubjective understanding, mainly developed in the chapters III and IV of *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt* (Schutz 1967 [1932]: 97-215; Schütz 2004 [1932]: 139-285). Such a task exceeds the scope of this short paper, which merely intends to show the relevance of some aspects of the Schutzian approach to *Fremdverstehen* within the context of the contemporary social cognition debate.

behavior, whereas his psychological life always remains hidden to us; and from there, they draw the conclusion that (2) we necessarily have to resort to extra-perceptual mechanisms—such as theoretical inference or imaginative simulation—in order to figure out what is happening inside his mind.

Concerning the first claim (1), DPT supporters criticize both TT and ST for taking as starting point an extremely impoverished conception of what is experientially given (Zahavi and Gallagher, 2008: 184). Rather than appearing as a mere physical thing—that is, as a *Körper*, in Husserl's words—Other's body is always given to us as a lived or animated body—a *Leib* in Husserlian terms—that is, as a body that *expresses* the mental life of the Other (Overgaard 2010: 265). To put it differently, when in presence of another's bodily behavior, we are confronted neither with “the kind of body described by physiology” (Zahavi and Gallagher, 2008: 183) nor with a pure disembodied psyche; rather, we experience what Scheler (1954 [1923]: 265) calls an “expressive unity [*Ausdruckseinheit*]”, that is, an *integral whole* which embraces together the mental and the physical. It is on the basis of this phenomenologically informed conception of the given that DPT supporters can claim that, to an extent, we *directly see* the intentions, emotions and feelings of our fellow-men *in* their bodily behavior.

As to the second statement (2), DPT defenders maintain that there is no phenomenological proof to support the claim that we employ extra-perceptual mechanisms such as simulation routines or theoretical inferences when understanding Others. If we phenomenologically reflect upon our first-person experience of understanding Others, we won't find any evidence of us performing such complicated routines (Zahavi and Gallagher 2008: 176). Our everyday interactions are simply too fast and changeable to involve conscious use of either lay theories or simulation processes.

This *phenomenological* criticism, thus, refutes ST and TT's common assumption that everyday social cognition is a two-stage process in which we, first, perceive a mere physiological meaningless body and, subsequently, perform an extra-perceptual routine in order to understand it. As a matter of fact, in the view of DPT, our understanding of Others is conceived of as a sort of *automatic* process that takes place *within* the perception itself.

## 2. Contributions of Alfred Schutz's Phenomenological Theory of Interpersonal Understanding to the Contemporary Social Cognition Debate

### 2.1. Schutz's Account of Intersubjective Understanding as a DPT

A careful review of Schutz's work reveals that his phenomenological theory of interpersonal understanding is, to some extent, in agreement with the main thesis of the DPT. Indeed, for him, in its most primary form—that is, in the

face-to-face encounters—,<sup>8</sup> our understanding of Others has a perceptual nature. To be more specific, it could be argued that Schutz's account of social cognition constitutes a *moderate* version of the DPT insofar as it recognizes a certain degree of “directness”<sup>9</sup> in our understanding of the alter ego, but without denying the insurmountable transcendence of the Other's self-experience. In the following, I will show this by reviewing passages in which Schutz asserts the perceptual character of interpersonal understanding within face-to-face situations.

In order to clearly define the scope and limits of the present paper, it must be noted that although I will occasionally touch upon Schutz's treatment of the understanding of the Other's motives [*Motivverstehen*]—that is, the understanding of *why* the alter ego does what he does—, the focus will be put on his account of the understanding of the Other's expressions [*Ausdrucksverstehen*]—i.e., the understanding *that* the alter ego undergoes certain mental state. This decision is due to the fact that the current social cognition debate is mainly interested in this kind of interpersonal understanding.<sup>10</sup>

In a similar vein to DPT advocates, Schutz (1967 [1932]: §3) confronts the classical view according to which we never experience the mind of the alter ego but only his body as a mere physical thing (cf., for example, Carnap, 1928: 185 ff.). Drawing on both Husserl and Scheler, Schutz maintains that the alter ego is given to me from the outset as a psychophysical unity insofar as his body appears as field of expression [*Ausdrucksfeld*] of his mental life. The bodily movements of the Other, writes Schutz, “function as indications [*Anzeichen*] of the other person's inner life, for his body is no mere physical object, like a stick or a stone, but a *field of expression* for the life-experience of that psychophysical unity we call the other self” (Ibid.: 22). In fact, according to Schutz, when in presence of the body of the Other, his subjectivity is available to me “through a maximal abundance of symptoms” (Luckmann and Schutz 1973: 66). Now, if this is so, then it can be argued that, in Schutz's view, there is no need of resorting to complicated extra-perceptual cognitive mechanisms in order to “know” something about another's mind; for we can, at least to some degree, “directly experience” what he is intending, thinking or feeling by merely perceiving his bodily behavior. Indeed, in his paper on

<sup>8</sup> “The encounter is only one relation, even if in its immediacy [*Unmittelbarkeit*] it is the most originary and genetically important social relation” (Luckmann, Schutz 1973: 69; Luckmann, Schütz 2003 [1973]: 110).

<sup>9</sup> When referring to the Schutzian account of social cognition, I deliberately put the nouns “directness” and “immediacy”, and the verbs “to experience”, “to perceive”, “to grasp” and “to seize” between quotation marks in order to do justice to the fact that, in Schutz's view, the perception Of the Other's mind is, at the same time, direct and indirect. That is to say, in order to stress the *moderate* character of Schutz's version of DPT.

<sup>10</sup> I am thankful to one of the anonymous reviewers of *Schutzian Research* for making me notice the fundamental importance of this conceptual distinction.

Scheler's account of intersubjectivity from the year 1942, Schutz writes, "If I listen to somebody I perceive him as such; moreover, I perceive him talking, proving, doubting, wanting, etc. And within the same limits I can also say that I perceive his wrath, his suffering" (Schutz 1962 [1942]: 176).

According to Schutz (1967 [1932]: §20), the bodily presence of the Other allows me to "experience" his conscious life in genuine simultaneity [*echte Gleichzeitigkeit*]. That is, I don't have to stop and think in order to "grasp" the psychological life of the Other; rather, as I perceive his bodily movements, I "seize" his mental states in the mode of actuality. "In other words: I am able to apprehend his mental states through the perception of "his movements, his facial expressions, his gestures, the rhythm and intonation of his speech, etc." (Luckmann and Schutz 1973: 66). In *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt*, Schutz put this idea in the following way:

"In everyday life we directly experience the acts of another. We interpret those external events which we call 'another's act' as indications [*Anzeichen*] of a stream of consciousness lying outside our own. To the extent that we do these things, we can 'understand' the events in question, reading the indications as they occur, and thus directly witness the action as it unfolds, witness it 'in the mode of actuality'" (Schutz 1967 [1932]: 22).

Following this train of thought, it is even possible to claim that, in a certain sense, the fellow-man is "presented to me as more 'alive' [*lebendiger*] and more 'immediate' [*unmittelbarer*] than I am to myself" (Luckmann and Schutz 1973: 66; Luckmann and Schütz 2003 [1973]: 107). It is doubtlessly true that I know myself better than the alter ego since I am able to recall my own past experiences in an "infinitely more detailed fashion" than someone else could (Luckmann and Schutz 1973: 66); however, whereas I can only seize my own mental states *after their termination* and by means of reflection (Schütz 2004 [1932]: §12), I perceptually "grasp" Other's current experiences in the very moment in which they occur. In this sense, thus, "my fellow-man is before me in his relation to me with a greater abundance of symptoms than I am to myself" (Luckmann and Schutz 1973: 66).

Schutz especially emphasizes the "directness" of our understanding of the alter ego within the face-to-face encounter when contrasting the latter to other spatial-temporal perspectives in which the fellow-men is experienced. As is well-known, in his study of mundane intersubjectivity, Schutz distinguishes four different regions of the social world, namely (a) the world of directly experienced social reality [*Umwelt*]*—i.e., the face-to-face situation—*(b) the world of contemporaries [*Mitwelt*]*—i.e., those who share with us a community of time but not of space—*(c) the world of predecessors [*Vorwelt*]*—i.e., those who passed away—and* (d) the world of successors [*Folgewelt*]*—i.e., those who will live after our death* (Schutz 1967 [1932]: 189-215; Schütz 2004 [1932]: 285-376; Luckmann and Schütz 2003 [1973]: 98-140). Each

region implies a different way in which the Other is given [*Gegebenheitsweise*] to us and, accordingly, a different technique of *Fremdverstehen* (Schütz 2004 [1932]: 285). In Schütz's view, if one compares the face-to-face situation to the other three social regions, one can say that in the former the alter ego appears in a more "immediate" and "direct" manner than in the latter. Indeed, in the so-called *Umwelt*, the fellow-man presents himself in his corporeality [*Leiblichkeit*], whereas in the worlds of contemporaries, predecessors and successors the Other's body is totally absent. In this sense, the face-to-face situation "is the only social situation characterized by temporal and spatial immediacy [*Unmittelbarkeit*]" (Luckmann and Schutz 1973: 62; Luckmann and Schütz 2003 [1973]: 101).

"I immediately perceive another man only when he shares a sector of the life-world's space and of world time in common with me. Only under those conditions does the Other appear to me in his corporeality [*Leiblichkeit*]: his body is for me a perceivable and explicable field of expression which makes his conscious life accessible to me" (Luckmann and Schutz 1973: 62; Luckmann and Schütz 2003 [1973]: 101).

## 2.2. Indirectness in Schutz's Perceptual Account of Social Cognition: Towards Moderate DPT

Yet, when speaking more strictly, Schutz recognizes that, even in face-to-face situations, a truly "immediate" [*unmittelbar*] experience of the Other's mind is not possible. Every experience we have of the alter ego is, in fact, "mediated" [*mittelbar*] insofar as what we perceive of him is not his current mental state as he himself experiences it, but an expressive bodily movement which functions as an indication [*Anzeichen*] of the former. Nevertheless, as said above, when compared to other spatial-temporal ways of experiencing the Other, the face-to-face encounter appears as having an immediate character (Luckmann and Schutz 1973: 64; Luckmann and Schütz 2003 [1973]: 103-104).

Although we speak of the "immediate" experience of fellow-man, this experience is internally, also in the precise meaning of the word "mediated". I grasp my fellow-man's flow of lived experiences only "mediately", in that I explicate his movements, his expressions, his communications as indications of the subjectively meaningful experiences of an alter ego. But among all my experiences of the other I, what is mediated least is the encounter of the Fellow-man in the simultaneity of the we-relation. Thus we will continue to speak, even though it is not completely accurate, of an immediate experience of the fellow-man (Luckmann and Schutz 1973: 64).

With this in mind, it becomes clear that, for Schutz, claiming that we "directly" perceive Other's mental states does not imply that we experience them in the same way he does, that is, that we have a *total* and *indubitable*



access to what the other person feels, thinks or intends. This can be seen in the criticism that Schutz (1962 [1942]; 2004 [1932]: §3) draws on Scheler's theory of the perception of the Other [*Fremdwahrnehmungstheorie*] for excessively exaggerating the certainty, immediacy and directness of our perception of other minds. According to Scheler (1973 [1923]: 245), by means of inner perception [*innere Wahrnehmung*], the subject can access not only to his own mental states, but also to the ones of the Other (cf. Gros 2012). The Schelerian assumption of a total empathy [*totale Einfühlung*], says Schutz (2004 [1932]: 102; 1967 [1932]: 20), "is a theory which is inconsistent with the fundamentally lawful character of consciousness". In this sense, it could be argued that Schutz's aim is to formulate a *perceptual* account of interpersonal understanding which, in turn, is respectful of the otherness and insurmountable transcendence of the alter ego. To put it in other terms, Schutz endorses a *moderate* direct perception theory, rather than a *radical* one, like Scheler and some DPT advocates seem to do<sup>11</sup>. In order to formulate such a *moderate* account, Schutz draws on a set of Husserlian theoretical developments.<sup>12</sup>

As is well-known, for Husserl (2009 [1913]: §43), perception is the way in which an intentional object manifests itself in the most direct, original and optimal way, that is, in its bodily presence [*leibhaftig*]. The father of phenomenology recognizes two kinds of perception, namely external or transcendent perception [*äußere / transzendente Wahrnehmung*]—which is directed to physical objects—and inner or immanent perception [*innere / immanente Wahrnehmung*]—which is directed to mental states (Ibid.: §38). According to Husserl (2009 [1913]: §44), inner perception is *eo ipso* self-perception. Only I can have an indubitable and total access to my own mental states, and so the alter ego to his own. Neither can I have such a direct access to his mind, nor can

<sup>11</sup> "In order to attack TT and ST, DPT defenders tend to overemphasize the direct character of social cognition. This earned them the criticism of being behaviorists (Jacob, 2011). DPT advocates deny this accusation. In some passages of their writings, they claim that maintaining the directness of our understanding of the Other doesn't entail to neglect his otherness and transcendence (cfr. Gallagher and Zahavi 2008: 186-187). In this sense, they seem to acknowledge the need of a *moderate* version of the DPT like the ones of Schutz and Husserl. However, it could be argued that the stress on *directness* always prevail due to the rivalry with the two dominant theories of social cognition."

<sup>12</sup> Schutz's criticism of Scheler's *Fremdwahrnehmungstheorie* is closely linked to his criticism of Weber's concept of observational understanding [*aktuelles Verstehen*]. According to Schutz, it is impossible to immediately grasp the subjective meaning [*subjektiver Sinn*] of the Other's action, since we can never have total access to his inner psychological life by means of perceptions of his bodily movements. Thus, when Weber says that we immediately grasp the subjective meaning of the Other's action by mere observation, he is confusing the self-interpretation [*Selbstausslegung*] of *my* experiences of the Other with the very life experiences of *that* Other, that is, the objective meaning [*objektiver Sinn*] with the subjective meaning (Gros 2012). Due to space constraints, I do not treat here Schutz's reformulation of Weber's fundamental concepts and the distinction between subjective and objective meaning, (cf. Schütz 2004 [1932]: chaps. 1, 2 and 3).

he have it to mine. If this was possible I and he would be the same, and the otherness of the Other would be suppressed. “[I]f what belongs to the other’s own essence were directly accessible, it would be merely a moment of my own essence, and ultimately he himself and I myself would be the same” (Husserl 1991 [1931]: 109; Husserl 1995 [1931]: §50).

As Schutz (2004 [1932]: §19) claims in *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt*, if we stick to this restricted definition of perception, it would not be possible at all to claim that we *perceive* Other’s mind, for only he can do this, whereas I, in strict sense, merely *perceive* his bodily movements. However, following Husserl, Schutz uses the concept of perception [*Wahrnehmung*] in a wider sense in order to characterize our experience of the mind of the alter ego. According to Schutz, it can be said that we have a *signitive* perception of the Other’s mind through the *medium* of his body. Indeed, by means of a “special intentional act of founded apprehension [*fundiertes Auffassen*]”, which does not involve neither inference nor judgment, see the Other’s bodily movements as indications [*Anzeichen*] of the lived experiences he is going through (Schutz 1967 [1932]: 100; Schütz 2004 [1932]: 222-223). “My intentional gaze”, says Schutz, “is directed right through my perception of his bodily movements to his lived experiences lying behind them and signified by them” (Schutz 1967 [1932]: 101). In Schutz’s view, this “signitive apprehension [*signitive Erfassung*]” of the Other’s mind (Ibid.; Schütz 2004 [1932]: 223) can be considered as a kind of perception insofar as it automatically provides us with “a more or less well-founded belief of apperceiving a thing as present” (Schutz 1962 [1942]: 172). However, for Schutz (1967 [1932]: 22), this signitive apprehension is, ultimately, a doubtful one because the indications provided by another’s body give only “opaque motives” to belief in the existence of certain mental states of the Other but never fulfilling presentations of them.

[W]e can only say that we ‘perceive’ the other’s experiences if we did not imply that we directly intuited them in the strict sense but meant rather that we grasped them with that same intuitional supposition [*anschaulisches Vermeynen*] with which we grasp a thing or event as present to us. It is in this sense that Husserl uses the word perception [*Wahrnehmung*] to mean ‘taking notice of’: ‘The listener notices that the speaker is expressing certain subjective experiences of his and in that sense may be said to perceive *them*; but he himself does not live through these experiences—his perception is ‘external’ rather than ‘internal’. This kind of perception which is signitive in character should not be confused with that in which an object directly appear to us (Ibid.: 100; 2004 [1932]: 223).

Relying on an exhaustive reading of late Husserl’s works, in “Symbol, Reality and Society”, the late Schutz (1962 [1955]) uses the Husserlian concept of appresentation [*Appresentation*] in order to give account of the perceptual and at the same time signitive nature of our experience of the Other’s mind.

According to Husserl (1995 [1931]: §51), appresentation is a kind of passive synthesis of consciousness which plays a crucial role not only in our experience of the Other's mind but in every perceptual experience. In Schutz's (*Ibid.*: 296) terms, "by appresentation, we experience intuitively something as indicating or depicting significantly something else". For Husserl, this process works automatically, that is, without "any active interference of the mind" (*Ibid.*: 297). Consider, for instance, a perception of a house. Strictly speaking, due to the perspective nature of our visual perception, only the frontside of the house presents itself. However, it seems to me that I *experience* the whole house. This is possible because the frontside automatically "calls forth" or "wakens" the apperception of the backside thereby "completing" my incomplete perception of the house. To put it in Schutz's words, "this perception of the visible frontside of the object involves an apperception by analogy of the unseen backside, an apperception which, to be sure, is a more or less empty anticipation of what we might perceive if we turned the object around or if we walked around the object" (*Ibid.*: 297). Following Husserl, Schutz claims that something very similar occurs in the case of our perception of Others: the body of the Other automatically appresents his mental life. The Other's body, writes Schutz (*Ibid.*: 314),

like all other material objects, is given to me in original perception or, as Husserl says, in originary presence. His psychological life, however, is not given to me in originary presence but only in copresence; it is not present but appresented (...) so-called 'empathy' is nothing but that form of appresentational apprehension which grasps his meaning.<sup>13</sup>

Again, in order to do justice to the otherness and transcendence of the Other's mind, it is important to remark that, as in contrast to the case of the backside of the house, the more or less empty appresentation of the Other's mind can never be fulfilled by "walking around" his body. In this sense, thus, the mental states of the Other remain ultimately inaccessible to us, having something of a doubtable character (Husserl 1995 [1931]: §51).

### 2.3. A Contribution of Schutz to Enhance the DPT: Helping to Clarify the Problematic Notion of Expression

In the DPT, the notion of expression plays a crucial role. However, as authors like Overgaard and Krueger (2012: 242) maintain, there are ambiguities

<sup>13</sup> Although Schutz agrees with Husserl that we can only get to experience the psychological life of the Other by means of an apperception, he does not agree that the latter is awakened because of the similarity between my own and The Other's body. Schutz thinks that the phenomenon of my corporeality is "as dissimilar as possible" to the phenomenon of The Other's body (Schütz 2009 [1957]: 237, cf. Barber 2013).

in the way this concept “tends to be deployed when describing how another’s actions serve as our point of access to their ‘inner’ mental life” (Ibid.). In order to illustrate this point, they refer to the following statement of the most important promoters of the DPT, Zahavi and Gallagher (2008: 185): “Expressive behavior is saturated with meaning of the mind; it reveals the mind to us”. According to Overgaard and Krueger (2012: 242), the authors of *The Phenomenological Mind* don’t clarify what they mean when they claim that bodily behavior expresses the mind. This is problematic since there are many “ways of understanding how it is that the gestures, facial expressions and behavior of another can be expressive of their mental life” (Ibid.).

Among these several manners of understanding the concept of expression, there are two radical opposed views which are fundamental. According to the first one (I)—which is informed by Cartesian dualism—there is a clear-cut distinction between mental state and expression; the former is an “intracranial entity”, whereas the latter is nothing but a “causal output” of it (Ibid. 242-243). Drawing on Merleau-Ponty’s and Scheler’s criticism of Cartesian dualism, the second view (II) argues that far from being external to the mental state, expressive behavior makes up a constitutive part of it (Ibid.: 257). This theoretical outlook depends on what can be called a hybrid conception of mind. According to this conception, mental states are not merely spiritual entities; rather, they “straddle” internal—i.e., psychological—and external—i.e., behavioral—elements (Ibid.: 245). This is attested by the fact that the bodily expression of some psychological states seems to be indispensable for them to be experienced by the subject. “In other words, the act of bodily *expression* is somehow part of what is *expressed*. Take away the expression and you have removed part of the emotion *itself*” (Ibid.: 251).

In between these *radical* views, there is a *moderate* position (III), the so-called “co-presence thesis of social cognition” (Ibid.: 243), which draws its inspiration on the aforementioned Husserlian notion of appresentation. According to this thesis, in a similar way in which the front side of the house automatically appresents its invisible back side, another’s bodily behavior automatically awakens the appresentation of his lived experiences. In other words: “although we only ever *perceive* another’s behavior (e.g., a frown or smile), we nevertheless *experience* associated mental phenomena (e.g., their misery or happiness) as amodally co-present” (Ibid.: 244).

For Overgaard and Krueger (Ibid.: 245), it is not quite clear in which of these three ways the most prominent DPT advocates deploy the notion of expression when they claim that “[e]xpressive behavior is saturated with meaning of the mind” (Gallagher and Zahavi 2008: 185). Which of the above stated definitions of expression do they endorse? One could argue that saying “behavior is *saturated* with the meaning of the mind” entails that behavior and mind are merged into one. In this case, Zahavi and Gallagher would be defending the (II) second of the above-mentioned conceptions of expression.

But, one could think that “just as a towel can be saturated with water while still remaining distinct from it, so, too, can behavior be saturated with mentality while nevertheless remaining distinct from the mental phenomena it expresses (even if the latter is amodally co-present)” (Overgaard and Krueger 2012: 245). If one reads the sentence in this way, then Zahavi and Gallagher would be defending the third (III) of the aforementioned conceptions of expression.

Yet, according to Overgaard and Krueger (*Ibid.*: 245), in order to be worthy of the name, the DPT must endorse the second (II) definition of expression, that is, the one which claims that expressive behavioral patterns make up proper parts of mental states. Indeed, for the authors, only if one conceives of expression as a constitutive part of the mind, it is possible to say that, by seeing the Other’s body, we *directly perceive* his mind. “[W]e argue that DP[T] advocates ought to explicitly embrace a constitutive sense of ‘expression’” (*Ibid.*). In contrast, option one (I) and three (III) are incompatible with the DPT since, despite their apparent differences, both maintain that “all we really perceive (i.e. *directly*) are *bodily features*, that is, patterns of expressive behavior that suggest, or hint at, mental phenomena but which fail to give us the phenomena in a genuinely direct sense (i.e., as anything other than amodally co-present)” (*Ibid.*).

In the light of the aforementioned threefold distinction, and taking into account what have been said so far, one can argue that Schutz’s account of interpersonal understanding, inspired by Husserl’s notion of appresentation, goes hand in hand with the *moderated* “*co-presence* thesis of social cognition” (*Ibid.*: 243). In my view, Schutz would deny that the DPT must necessarily embrace a *radical* definition of expression like the one defended by Overgaard and Krueger, not due to a blind commitment to Cartesian dualism, but because the emphasis that this *radical* position put on the *visibility* of the Other’s mind doesn’t do justice to the insurmountable transcendence of the alter ego’s self-experience.

Notwithstanding whether one accepts or rejects Overgaard and Krueger’s position, it is undeniable that they contributed to the elucidation of the notion of expression within the DPT. In my view, Schutz’s account of interpersonal understanding provides a rich set of conceptual distinctions which can help to clarify even more the obscure concept of expression. In the following, I will briefly examine Schutz’s differentiation between expressive movement [*Ausdrucksbewegung*] and expressive act [*Ausdruckshandlung*] (Schutz 1967 [1932]: 116; Schütz 2004 [1932]: §23), which plays a crucial role in his criticism of Scheler’s theory of the perception of the Other.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> To be sure, this differentiation depends on the distinction between behavior [*Verhalten*] and action [*Handeln*], which will not be treated in depth here (cf. Schütz 2004 [1932]: chap. 2).

An expressive movement is a behavioral pattern which the subject executes without any conscious purpose. Examples of this kind of movements are “reddening with anger” (1967 [1932]: 22) or “the gestures and facial expressions which, without any explicit intention, enter into every conversation” (*Ibid.*: 116). An expressive act, in turn, is a bodily behavior which deliberately aims to communicate something to the alter ego (*Ibid.*: 117). For instance, a subject nods with the head in order to let another person know his agreement or approbation.

According to Schutz (1967 [1932]: 117), due to the already indicated ultimately uncertain character of our perception of the Other’s mind, by merely seeing the Other’s bodily behavior we cannot be sure whether the latter is an expressive movement or an expressive act. In this sense, Schutz argues, we can never know if the Other is being genuine or “acting” in front of us. Consider, for instance, that we perceive an alter ego who seems to be screaming in pain. How do we know whether he is actually feeling pain or just trying to deceive us? To put it in Schutz’s (1967 [1932]: 117) own terms,

For instance, the play of a man’s features and gestures in everyday life may be no different from those of an actor on the stage (...) In everyday life, on the other hand, we never quite know whether another person is ‘acting’ in this sense or not unless we pay attention to factors other than his immediate movements. For instance, he may be imitating someone else for our benefit, or he may be playing a joke on us, or he may be hypocritically feigning certain feelings in order to take advantage to us.<sup>15</sup>

In *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt*, Schutz criticizes Scheler, first, for confining his account of interpersonal understanding to the comprehension of expressive movements of the Other—that is, smiling, crying, reddening, etc.—and, secondly, for not problematizing the possible deceiving character of the latter (1967 [1932]: 24). Accordingly, for Schutz, an exhaustive phenomenological theory of intersubjective understanding must not only give account of the peculiarity of our comprehension of expressive acts but must also treat the problem of the dubious character of our perception of the Other. Now, since most of DPT advocates heavily draw on the Schelerian *Fremdwahrnehmungstheorie*, this Schutzian criticism can be extensible to them.

It is possible to argue that the difficulties entailed in determining whether an expression of the Other is an action [*Handeln*] or a mere behavior [*Verhalten*] constitute the starting point of the complicated problem of the understanding of the Other’s motives [*Motivverstehen*], which cannot be treated in

<sup>15</sup> The deceiving character of expression, however, should not be exaggerated. As afore mentioned, in the face-to-face encounter, other’s mind is given to us in the plenitude of symptoms and in genuine simultaneity. In this sense, the other cannot deceive us so easily unless he is a great actor. And, certainly, that is not the case of the majority of individuals.

depth here. It is ultimately impossible to determine whether the alter ego is performing an *Audrucksbewegung* or an *Ausdruckshandlung*. And if the second is the case, finding out *why* the subject performs the action at stake is even more difficult because of the complex and intricate character of the subjective processes involved in the constitution of the subjective meaning [*subjektiver Sinn*] of action (cf. Schutz 1967 [1932]: chap. 2 and 3).

### Conclusion

This paper aimed to show the current interest of the Schutzian theory of everyday interpersonal understanding within the context of the phenomenological turn which is currently taking place in the social cognition debate. As it has been noted, Schutz agrees, to some extent, with the main thesis of the DPT. For him, intersubjective comprehension is, at least in its most fundamental form—the face-to-face encounter—a process of perceptual nature which does not involve the deployment of complicated intellectual or imaginal mechanisms. Schutz, however, does not accept a *radical* DPT, which overemphasizes the *visibility* of the Other's mind. Rather, he defends what can be called a *moderate* version of the DPT, that is, a version that, without denying the perceptual character of social cognition, reflects upon its limits with the purpose of doing justice to the transcendence of the Other's self-experience.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the Schutzian account of interpersonal understanding can make valuable contributions to bring forth a more self-clarified and enhanced version of the DPT. Due to space constrictions, I only demonstrated here how the distinction between expressive movements and expressive acts can help to bring more clarity to the obscure concept of expression. However, it has to be noted that within the framework of my current research, I found some more theoretical contributions which, unfortunately, I was not able to present here. Among them, it is worthy to mention Schutz's analysis of the role which stock of knowledge [*Wissensvorrat*], typifications and relevance [*Relevanz*] play in our perception of Others, as well as his reflections on the so-called "mutual tuning-in relationship".

### References

- Barber, Michael. 2013. Alfred Schutz and the Problem of Empathy. In *Husserl's Ideen*, ed. Lester Embree and Thomas Nenon, 313-326. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Baron-Cohen, Simo. 1995. *Mindblindness: An Essay on Autism and Theory of Mind*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Berger, Peter and Luckmann, Thomas. 1991/1966. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. London: Penguin.
- Carnap, Rudolf. 1928. *Der logische Aufbau der Welt*. Berlin: Weltkreis.

- Carruthers, Peter. 1996. Simulation and Self-Knowledge: a Defence of Theory-Theory. In *Theories of Theories of Mind*, ed. Peter Carruthers and Peter Smith, 22-39. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gallagher, Shaun and Zahavi, Dan. 2008. *The Phenomenological Mind. An Introduction to Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science*. New York: Routledge.
- Gallse, Vittorio. 2009. Mirror Neurons, Embodied Simulation, and the Neural Basis of Social Identification. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 19: 519-536.
- Goldman, Alvin. 2006. *Simulating Minds*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gopnik, Alison and Wellman, Henry. 1992. Why the Child's Theory of Mind is really a Theory. *Mind and Language* 7: 145-171.
- Gordon, Robert. 1986. Folk Psychology as Simulation. *Mind and Language* 1: 158-171.
- Gros, Alexis Emanuel. 2012. El debate de Alfred Schütz con Max Scheler en torno a la empatía. *Tópicos: Revista de Filosofía de Santa Fe* 24.
- Gurwitsch, Aron. 1976 [1931]. *Die mitmenschlichen Begegnungen in der Millieuwelt*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Husserl, Edmund. 2009 [1913]. *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner.
- . 1995 [1931]. *Cartesianische Meditationen: Eine Einleitung in die Phänomenologie*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner.
- . 1991 [1931]. *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Krueger, Joel and Overgaard, Soren. 2012. Seeing Subjectivity: Defending a Perceptual Account of Other Minds. In *Consciousness and Subjectivity*, ed. S. Miguens and G. Preyer, 239-262. Heusenstamm: Ontos Verlag.
- Jacob, Pierre. 2011. The Direct-Perception Model of Empathy: a Critique. *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 2: 519-540.
- Lipps, Theodor 1907. Das Wissen von fremden Ichen. In *Psychologische Untersuchungen*, 1, ed. Theodor Lipps, 694-722. Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann.
- Luckmann, Thomas and Schütz, Alfred. 2003 [1973]. *Strukturen der Lebenswelt*. Konstanz: UVK.
- . 1973. *The Structures of the Life-World: Volume 1*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Maraffa, Massimo. 2014. Theory of Mind. *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/theomind/>, date of access: 03.03.2014.
- Overgaard, Soren. 2010. The Problem of Other Minds. In *Handbook of Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*, ed. Shaun Gallagher and Daniel Schmicking, 255-279. New York: Routledge.
- Scheler, Max. 1954 [1923]. *The Nature of Sympathy*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- . 1973 [1923]. *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie*. Bern: Francke.
- Schütz, Alfred. 2009 [1957]. Das Problem der transzendentalen Intersubjektivität bei Husserl. In *Alfred Schütz Werkausgabe Band III.1. Philosophisch-phänomenologische Schriften 1. Zur Kritik der Phänomenologie Edmund Husserls*, ed. G. Sebald et al., 233-267. Konstanz: UVK.
- . 1967 [1932]. *The Phenomenology of the Social World*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.



- . 2004 [1932] *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt: Eine Einleitung in die verstehende Soziologie*, Alfred Schütz Werkausgabe Band II, ed. Martin Endreß and Joachim Renn. Konstanz: UVK.
- . 1962 [1955]. Symbol, Reality and Society. In Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers I: The Problem of Social Reality*, ed. M. Natanson, 287-357. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- . 1962 [1954]. Concept and Theory Formation in the Social Sciences. In Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers I: The Problem of Social Reality*, ed. M. Natanson, 48-67. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- . 1962 [1948]. Sartre's Theory of the Alter Ego. In Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers I. The Problem of Social Reality*, ed. M. Natanson, 180-207. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- . 1962 [1942]. Scheler's Theory of Intersubjectivity and the General Thesis of the Alter Ego. In Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers I: The Problem of Social Reality*, ed. M. Natanson, 150-190. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Simmel, Georg. 1957 [1918]. Vom Wesen des historischen Verstehens. In Georg Simmel, *Brücke und Tür*, 59-85. Stuttgart: Koehler.
- Smith, Joel. 2010. Seeing Other People. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 81 (3): 731-748.
- Stein, Edith. 1917. *Zum Problem der Einfühlung*. Halle: Buckdruckerei des Waisenhauses.
- Weber, Max. 1984 [1921]. *Soziologische Grundbegriffe*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Zahavi, Dan. 2010. Empathy, Embodiment and Interpersonal Understanding. From Lipps to Schutz. *Inquiry* 53 (3): 285-306.