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7 Phenomenological Sociology and Standpoint Theory: On the Critical Use of Alfred Schutz's American Writings in the Feminist Sociologies of Dorothy E. Smith and Patricia Hill Collins

Abstract: This chapter provides a historical reconstruction of how Alfred Schutz's American writings were critically engaged by the feminist sociologists Dorothy E. Smith and Patricia Hill Collins. Schutz's articulation of a phenomenological sociology in relation to, among others, the sociology of Talcott Parsons and the philosophies of science of Ernest Nagel and Carl G. Hempel proved fruitful to Smith in the development of her feminist standpoint theory in her 1987 *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*. Collins likewise draws on Schutz's writing in the development of her own standpoint theory in her 1986 paper "Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought," but in a way that addresses some of her own concerns with Smith's feminist sociology. As I hope to show with the recovery of this underappreciated history, the critical insights of Smith and Collins with regard to the possible uses and limits of phenomenology for feminist theorizing are still valuable today.

7.1 Introduction

Alfred Schutz's influence on American sociology has been documented quite extensively (see, e.g., Gross 2007; Overgaard and Zahavi 2008; Psathas 2004; and Pula 2022). What has not been considered in the literature is how Schutz's American writings were critically taken up by two prominent feminist sociologists—Dorothy E. Smith and Patricia Hill Collins—in the development of their respective standpoint theories, or epistemologies.[1] This is perhaps not surprising in the case of

1 Smith expressed her discomfort with using the term "standpoint" to describe her position in a 2010 interview: "In some ways, I wouldn't have minded ditching the notion of standpoint, although I think that it can be useful methodologically. But, it was imposed on us by Sandra Harding (e.g., Harding 2004). I think what she did was something very interesting: she drew together the work of a number of feminist writers and showed that there was this common critical thread. And she describes this as an epistemology, and she called it standpoint epistemology. And that was both useful

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Smith, who explicitly states that she is not a phenomenological sociologist, but neither is the American sociologist and founder of ethnomethodology Harold Garfinkel, whose relation to Schutz has received significant attention (see, e.g., Eberle 2012; Hammersley 2019; Psathas 2012; Ruggerone 2013; and Vom Lehn and Dingwall 2014).[2] With regard to Collins, while it may not be surprising that her critical uptake of Schutz has gone unnoticed by phenomenologists, what is surprising is that it has been suggested that her work could "profit from phenomenology."[3] As I show in what follows, in one of her most referenced and anthologized papers "Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought" (1986), Collins in fact just does that—though without therefore being or becoming a phenomenological sociologist.

This chapter provides a historical reconstruction of how Smith and Collins critically appropriate insights from the writings Schutz produced after his involuntary exile to the United States in 1939 in the development of their feminist sociologies.[4]

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and tended to be a bloody nuisance, really" (Carroll 2010, 22). Given that in what follows I focus on texts by Smith that she herself sees as a continuation of the text included in Harding's volume ("Women's Perspective as a Radical Critique of Sociology") and on the text by Collins that was included in Harding's 2004 anthology, I will use "standpoint theory" and "standpoint epistemology" interchangeably to refer to their respective sociologies, without therefore overlooking important methodological differences, which I will discuss in this paper in relation to their critical appropriation of some insights of Schutz in the development of their respective feminist sociologies.

2 Admittedly, unlike Smith, Garfinkel corresponded with both Schutz and Gurwitsch during his doctoral research (Vom Lehn and Dingwall 2014, 50). Moreover, if one understands Schutz's influence on Garfinkel along the lines of Psathas (2004) who claims that the "development of ethnomethodology *owes its origins* to Schutz's remarkable insights into the world of everyday life, common sense knowledge, and the taken-for-granted" (Psathas 2004, 9, my emphasis), this would not equally apply to Smith. That is, rather than claiming that Smith is in some sense indebted to Schutz for the development of her own standpoint epistemology, I propose we think about Schutz as, in Smith's own words, one of the "visible and invisible preceptors from whom, in the long course of trying to find a different way of thinking sociologically, I have learned" (Smith 1987, 8).

3 Michael Barber, in a critical exchange with existing critiques of, among others, Patricia Hill Collins's work states: "Collins's standpoint theory, as Ferguson describes it, and various forms of intersectionalism, could profit from phenomenology insofar it allows for the fact that we come to experience with sets of intentional activities, conditioned by class, gender and race, and insofar as these sets enable us to apprehend aspects of what is objectively given, though others, differently conditioned, might not even notice them" (Barber 2019, 606).

4 The critical influence of Schutz in feminist sociology extends further than the work of Smith and Collins. Notably the work of Louise Levesque-Lopman (see especially her 1988 work, where she also mentions Smith in the introduction which gives an overview of "Sociological Perspectives on Women's Experience"). The influence of Schutz on Levesque-Lopman is (according to Psathas) one of indirect personal influence insofar as she self-identifies to be working within a Schutzian-phenomenological perspective without therefore having met or worked with Schutz (Psathas

Schutz's forced emigration required that he adapt to a new intellectual climate and formulate his own views on the methodology of the social sciences in relation to accounts that were prominent in the United States at the time. Specifically, as I discuss in section 7.2, after he arrived in the US, Schutz articulated his position regarding the methodology and fundamental concepts of the social sciences in relation to the sociology of Talcott Parsons and the philosophies of science of Ernest Nagel and Carl G. Hempel, among others. In her early essays collected in *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology* (1987), Smith then draws on Schutz's discussion of the methodology of the social sciences in his American writings to develop a standpoint theory. Thus, while Smith was only in the US for a short time doing graduate work and then lecturing in the Department of Sociology at UC Berkeley (until 1963, after which she left the US for Canada), the availability of Schutz's writings in English and more significantly Schutz's articulation of how his method differed from sociological and philosophical paradigms then dominant in the US prove fruitful to Smith in the development of her own feminist sociology (section 7.3). For Patricia Hill Collins, in "Learning from the Outsider Within" (1986), Schutz's analyses from his 1944 paper "The Stranger: An Essay in Social Psychology" prove fruitful for articulating a standpoint epistemological approach that is influential to this day, which she in turn differentiates in a critical review from 1990 from Smith's approach in *The Everyday World as Problematic* (among other writings) (section 7.4). Finally, as I hope to show with the recovery of this underappreciated history, the critical insights of Smith and Collins with regard to the possible uses and limits of phenomenology for feminist theorizing are still valuable today (section 7.5). That is, while critically appropriating some of Schutz's methodological postulates, Smith, also formulates a critique of phenomenological sociology that remains relevant. And Collins's productive use of Schutz's phenomenological description of the stranger points toward ways that phenomenological thought may aid in conceptualizing resistant standpoints, albeit within certain limits.

7.2 Schutz's Phenomenological Sociology: From Vienna to New York and Beyond

Before being forced into exile from Vienna by way of Paris to New York in 1938 by the rise of antisemitism and National Socialism in Germany, Schutz had already published *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt* (The Meaningful Structure of the

2004, 4). Also of interest is the paper by Lengermann and Niebrugge (1995), who argue for a "renewed interest in Schutz's work" for a feminist sociology.

Social World), which he presents as a critical development of Max Weber's interpretive (*verstehende*) sociology. Like Weber, Schutz is committed to the value-free character of the social sciences (Schutz 1932, 3), which, according to him, ought merely to describe the subjective meaning (*subjektiver Sinn*) of social (inter-)actions from the perspective of the (inter-)acting subject. Also like for Weber, these descriptions are to perform an idealizing typification of this individual agency in the social world through the generation of so-called ideal types (*Idealtypen*) (Schutz 1932, 4)—such as the police officer, the salesperson, or the traveler. Where Weber's account needs further elaboration, in Schutz's view, is in the development of the methodological foundations of the social scientific investigation of this agency in general and in articulation of the fundamental concept of the sociology: meaningful, and hence interpretable, agency (Schutz 1932, 4–5). In his 1932 work, Schutz develops what he finds lacking in Weber's interpretative sociology by drawing on insights from Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and Henri Bergson's philosophy to provide an account of the (inter-)acting individual as the subjective center of a social world of which the social sciences aim to provide a second-order scientific account. While the *Aufbau* was translated into English in 1967, in what follows I focus on his American writings, which were published in a variety of American philosophy and, less frequently, sociology journals before that translation became available, as these are the writings that Smith and Collins refer to.

After his forced migration, Schutz readily engages with some of the most prominent sociologists of his time, while also aiming to introduce, with Marvin Farber and Aron Gurwitsch, phenomenology to the American philosophical establishment (see, e.g., Embree and Barber 2017; Strassfeld 2022). Particularly relevant for what follows is Schutz's engagement with the sociologist Talcott Parsons from the then-leading sociology department at Harvard, who was, like Schutz, influenced by Max Weber and a translator of his work.[5] Schutz's first text written upon arrival to the US was a critical review of Talcott Parsons's 1937 *The Structure of Social Action.* This review remained unpublished in its entirety after having been shared with Parsons in 1940.[6] Schutz had been invited by Friedrich von Hayek to prepare this review (Etzrodt 2013), but when he sent it (titled "Parsons' Theory of Social Action") to Parsons on November 15, 1940, a tense correspondence ensued (Grathoff 1978; see Barber 2004, 93–96; Embree 1980; Endress 2018). This correspondence was preceded by Schutz's participation in the "Seminar on Rationality in the Social Sciences" coorganized by Parsons and the Harvard economist Jo-

5 See Kivisto and Swatos (1990) on the reception of Weber in American sociology including Parsons and Schutz.

6 The review was partially published in 1960 as "The Social World and the Theory of Social Action" in *Social Research* (Schutz 1960; see also Brodersen 1976).

seph A. Schumpeter in 1939–40 at Harvard for their graduate students. On Saturday April 13, Schutz presented the paper "The Problem of Rationality in a Social World" (Barber 2004, 91–93; Staubmann and Lidz 2018, 5), which would be published in 1943 in a slightly abridged version in *Economica* (Schutz 1943).

One of the main points of disagreement between Parsons and Schutz hinges on Schutz's claim that the individual's experience of their meaningful action in the social world and its scientific interpretation are not to be conflated—just like one should not conflate finding one's way in one's hometown, a town one is familiar with insofar as one has a sense of the distances of relevant places in relation to one's home, with the activity of the cartographer who has to draw up a map of the same city (Schutz 1943, 131–132). Regarding the methodological importance of this distinction, Schutz writes in the part of the review of Parsons's book that was published: "The safeguarding of the subjective point of view is the only but sufficient guarantee that social reality will not be replaced by a fictional non-existing world constructed by some scientific observer" (Schutz 1960, 209)—like when a social scientist, such as Parsons, considers the rather rare phenomenon of voluntaristic deliberation between alternatives and a choice between those alternatives to be characteristic of human agency as such (Schutz 1943, 141). Reflecting on their short acquaintance in 1974 in a letter to Richard Grathoff, who edited the correspondence between Parsons and Schutz, Parsons himself is still puzzled by this distinction between meaningful action in everyday life and its scientific interpretation. For Parsons, Schutz's "special emphasis on phenomenological access to what is called 'everyday life' and the insistence that everyday life in this sense is radically distinct from any perspective of the scientific observer" amounts for Parsons—for whom, along Kantian lines, all experience entails categorization—to an "unreal dichotomy" (Staubmann and Lidz 2018, 270). For Schutz, however, this dichotomy or, what is for him in fact a distinction between two kinds of categorizations (Schutz 1932, 157–158), means that the adequacy of the social sciences can by no means be taken for granted and that careful methodological reflection is needed to guarantee that one's scientific understanding is adequate to the everyday understanding at work in everyday social interactions and life.

Schutz's views of how the social sciences can achieve adequacy in their scientific account of the subjective phenomenon of human (inter-)action also plays an important role in Schutz's critical engagement with the then-prominent philosophers of science Ernest Nagel and Carl G. Hempel (another exiled philosopher). In 1952, Schutz attended the American Philosophical Association (see Embree 1997), which organized a symposium on *Problems of Concept and Theory Formation in the Social Sciences* with presentations by Hempel and Nagel. On May 3, 1953, Schutz gave a talk with almost the same title ("Concept and Theory Formation in the Social Sciences") at the Thirty-Third Semi-Annual Meeting of The Conference

on Methods in Philosophy and the Sciences at Columbia University (Hammersley 2019, 60), where Nagel was then a full professor (Neuber and Tuboly 2022, 6) and which also housed one of the leading departments of sociology in the 1940s and '50s (Psathas 2004, 6). The paper was published in 1954 in *The Journal of Philosophy*, which Nagel was one of the editors of.

In his paper, Schutz addresses point by point what he takes to be Nagel's criticism of Weber's interpretative (*verstehende*) sociology and in doing so articulates his own position on the methodological foundations of the social sciences. Schutz begins his criticism of Nagel by pointing out what they agree on. Unlike some of his contemporaries, Schutz agrees with Nagel that the natural and social sciences do not differ in some fundamental respects. First, Schutz confirms the central role of observation and controlled verification of logically consistent claims for the social sciences: "*all* empirical knowledge involves discovery through processes of controlled inference, and … it must be statable in propositional form and capable of being verified by anyone who is prepared to make the effort to do so through observation" (Schutz 1954, 260; my emphasis). Second, the social sciences also aim to articulate "determinate relations between a set of variables in terms of which a fairly extensive class of empirically ascertainable regularities can be explained" (Schutz 1954, 260). Schutz disagrees with Nagel, however, on the nature of the observation and verification through which these regularities are ascertained.

In Schutz's view, Nagel unduly limits observation to sensory observation, which Schutz attributes to his "basic philosophy of sensationalistic empiricism or logical positivism" (Schutz 1954, 261). As Schutz argues, even our everyday understanding (*Verstehen*) cannot be equated to such sensory observation as understanding another person does not coincide with either the observation of overt behavior or with introspection on oneself and the subsequent projection on another person (Schutz 1954, 262). Schutz substantiates this argument by pointing out how the same overt behavior may have different meanings (e. g., a war dance or a barter trade); how negative actions, while not observable in this strict sense, are nevertheless social actions (e. g., refraining from selling something at a given price); and how our experience of the social world is by no means exhausted by face-to-face interactions between social actors (e. g., the anonymous relations involved in one putting a letter in a mailbox) (Schutz 1954, 262 – 263).

In our everyday dealings, it is not through a narrowly understood form of observation but rather by means of everyday understanding that we always already make sense of the actions of fellow human beings and cultural objects (such as tools but also social institutions), which is a form of understanding through social acculturation that makes possible the experience of a social world (Schutz 1954, 264). How someone understands a given social situation is, for Schutz, moreover something that can in turn be understood by others and even verified (e. g.,

think of the rules of procedure in the context of the court that are based on certain rules of evidence that are used to determine "intent" in the case of a killing). The interpreting (*verstehende*) social scientist ought to do so in a scientific way. But even after asserting that we can in daily life understand how someone else understands a social situation, the question remains how it is possible "to deal *scientifically* … with subjective phenomena" (Schutz 1960, 218, my emphasis).

While Schutz considers the epistemological worry regarding the knowledge of other minds as already solved by our understanding of others' actions within everyday life, the relation between understanding as a method in the social sciences and understanding as we practice it in our everyday social relations and actions does require for him careful methodological consideration. Failing to provide an account of this results, in Schutz's view, in overlooking an essential difference between the natural and the social sciences: "the world of nature … does not 'mean' anything to the molecules, atoms, and electrons therein. The observational field of the social scientist, however, namely the social reality has a specific meaning and relevance structure for the human beings living, acting, and thinking therein" (Schutz 1954, 266–267). Social science is, hence, "founded on" (in the Husserlian sense of being dependent on) the commonsense thinking of everyday life in a particular way: "the constructs of the social sciences are, so to speak, constructs of the second degree, namely constructs of the constructs made by the actors on the social scene, whose behavior the social scientist has to observe and explain in accordance with the procedural rules of his science" (Schutz 1954, 267). This means that, unlike the natural sciences, the social sciences cannot but include a reference to the individual agent as a subjective point of view or the acting subject as a center of meaning—which Schutz terms the "postulate of subjective interpretation." At the same time, the scientificity and objectivity of the social sciences is exactly guaranteed by their not being on a par with our everyday understanding but by radically breaking with this first-order understanding in what they deem relevant (this is also in line with the value-free character of sociology). Concretely, the social sciences generate idealizing typifications of actions and agents that are logically consistent (postulate of logical consistency). What guarantees their validity or objectivity is, however, their adequacy. As Schutz articulates this postulate of adequacy: the social scientists' typifications are to be "constructed in such a way that a human act performed within the real world by an individual actor as indicated by the typical construct would be understandable to the actor himself as well as to his fellow-men in terms of common-sense interpretation of life" (Schutz 1954, 271; see also Schutz 1943, 147). Schutz's insistence on the necessary reference to the subjective point of view and the demand that any sociological construct be adequate to that subjective point of view are two postulates that are productively put

to work by Smith in her feminist reform of sociology—all the while pointing to some serious limitations of Schutz's phenomenological sociology.

7.3 Smith on the Everyday World as Problematic

In her 1987 *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*, which collects writings from the 1970s up to its publication, Smith explicitly draws on Schutz in the development of a feminist critique of the sociological discourse of her time. I focus on the chapter "A Sociology for Women" (1987, 49–104), which was written between 1977 and 1981 (1987, 44) and which Smith considers a development of a paper ("Women's Perspective as a Radical Critique of Sociology") she circulated in the early 1970s and which was written for the meeting of the American Academy for the Advancement of Science (Pacific Division) at Eugene, Oregon, in June 1972. In this earlier paper, which was anthologized in *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader* (Harding 2004), Smith develops "how a sociology may look if it began from the point of view of women's traditional place in it and what happens to a sociology which attempts to deal seriously with that" (Smith 2004, 21). Smith characterizes the sociology of her time as a conceptualization and transposition of people's lives and experiences into a theoretical framework that is beholden to and participates in certain relations of governing or ruling. That is, in a Foucauldian vein, Smith points out how "mental illness, crimes, riots, violence, work satisfaction, neighbors and neighborhoods, motivation, etc. … are the constructs of a practice of government" (Smith 2004, 23) or facts that are given shape by this practice. Sociology, as the theoretical investigation of these constructed facts, participates in this practice of governing. Since society and sociology in Smith's time were governed by interests particular to men, sociology inevitably ends up reproducing these interests as well and, in this way, contributes, according to Smith, to the alienation of women from their own experience (Smith 2004, 22). As a result, women joining the profession of sociology may be confronted with "a disjunction between how women find and experience the world beginning (though not necessarily ending up in) from their place and the concepts and theoretical schemes available to think about it" (Smith 2004, 22).

To articulate this disjunction, "bifurcation" (Smith 1987, 82, 86, 89; 2004, 25, 27, 28, 32), or "rupture" (Smith 1987, 51, 59), Smith draws on Schutz's articulation of the relation between the natural attitude of everyday life and the scientific attitude as Schutz articulated these attitudes in his 1945 paper "On Multiple Realities."[7] In this

7 In her earlier 1972 paper, Smith does not refer to Schutz. However, her use of terms like "rele-

paper, Schutz describes the relation between science and the world of everyday life that Parsons had such a hard time understanding.[8] The world of everyday life is characterized as a "world of working" and as "paramount" over against other realms (such as the world of dreams and imagination) we may engage in (Schutz 1945, 549, 553). The different realities we spend our lives in are characterized by Schutz as "finite provinces of meaning" that correlate to particular interests and parts of our personalities and are structured by what Schutz calls different "systems of relevances" (Schutz 1945, 550), due to which our experience is by necessity selective. Given the pragmatic character of our relation to the paramount world of everyday life, this world is experienced in a way that is dictated by our current projects (e. g., a wire in one's toolbox stands out in the context of trying to hang a bird house on a tree). It is these everyday systems of relevances that the social scientist abandons or brackets while inquiring into the social interactions in this everyday world (Schutz 1945, 565). In doing so, the scientist also brackets his "physical existence and therewith also his body and the system of orientation of which his body is the center" or, in short "his subjective point of view" (Schutz 1945, 566 – 567). At the same time, by engaging in the scientific attitude, the scientist takes over the system of relevances or problems particular to a given science, which means that "the decision of the scientist in stating the problem is in fact a very small one" (Schutz 1945, 568). What is more, like in his later critical exchange with Nagel, Schutz already here underlines the importance of the postulate of consistency as well as the postulate that scientific claims are to be derived from tested observation common to all sciences all the while emphasizing the distinction between the natural and social sciences insofar the latter's generalizations

vances" and "natural attitude" (Smith 2004, 26), as well as the characterization of the bifurcation between our embodied experience of the everyday world and its conceptualization in this text are on a par with what she states in the chapter in the 1987 volume, which does reference Schutz in these respects. In this chapter in the 1987 collection, Smith references Schutz's American writings as they are published in the first volume of the *Collected Papers* (1962)—which includes the 1954 paper in which Schutz engages Nagel—and his work on relevance that was edited by Maurice Natanson (2011).

8 Unlike the paper Schutz presented at Parsons's seminar in 1942 (Schutz 1943), the paper on multiple realities (1945) was first published in a philosophy journal (*Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*) that Schutz co-founded with Marvin Farber. In it, Schutz heavily references William James, G. H. Mead, Edmund Husserl, and Henri Bergson in the development of his position, which is not unsurprising given the venue of publication. In the section that discusses the scientific attitude ("The World of Scientific Theory") and from which Smith draws, Schutz refers the reader to his account of the relation between the natural attitude and scientific attitude as presented at Parsons's seminar.

are to be "compatible with all the pre-experiences of the world of daily life"—the aforementioned postulate of adequacy (Schutz 1945, 569, 572).

It is Schutz's distinction between different provinces of meaning, the distinction between the natural and scientific attitude, and the postulate of adequacy that will prove fruitful for Smith in the development of her feminist sociology. As she writes, "to help us analyze further the problem of women's relation as subjects or knowers to the sociological discourse, I shall draw on Alfred Schutz's description of the finite provinces of meaning and of the changes in the organization of consciousness associated with shifts from one province to another" (Smith 1987, 69). That is, Schutz's distinctions between our paramount reality and other provinces of meaning with their different and distinct systems of relevance (including those of scientific research) allow for Smith to localize a standpoint with its own sets of relevances that are outside of and different from the relevances that are characteristic of both the dominant common sense and its scientific articulation in sociology (Smith 1987, 78). While the sociologists of Smith's time overlook this experience, for the feminist sociologist, this experience or distinctive standpoint—in the case of Smith herself, the experience of a divorced woman having to care for children while lecturing on and researching a different world than her own—becomes the starting point of a sociology *for* women.

Hence, Schutz's idea of different provinces of meaning and the distinction between the natural attitude and the scientific attitude allows for Smith to make visible the lifeworld as experienced by women. Moreover, it is in and through the shift in focus on the everyday world of women, that the inadequacy of prevailing sociological paradigms becomes apparent. As Smith writes: "The theories, concepts, and methods of our discipline claim to be capable of accounting for and analyzing the same world as that which we experience directly" (Smith 1987, 85). However, Smith concludes that they fail to account for this world and hence violate the postulate of adequacy. Perhaps unsurprisingly, in this respect Schutz's own phenomenological sociology appears to be no exception, as some of his own claims about the everyday world betray his position in society. What is more, building on her critique of some of Schutz's claims, Smith also articulates a methodological criticism of Schutz's phenomenological sociology that has not lost its relevance today.

A first point of criticism that Smith formulates concerns Schutz's own generalizing typification of the relevance of housework in one's daily life.[9] As Schutz writes in his work on relevance that was published in 1970: "only very superficial

9 This is not Smith's only criticism of Schutz's characterizations of everyday life. She also takes issue with Schutz's Heideggerian claim that our fundamental anxiety in relation to our own mortality is fundamental to the organization of our relevances and projects (see Smith 1987, 64) pointing out that projects and relevances are organized for women by others.

levels of our personality are involved in such performances as our habitual and even quasi-automatic 'household chores' … requiring and receiving our full attention if only momentarily" (Schutz 2011, 98 – 99). Smith discerns here the distorting influence of Schutz's own position, which is presumably bracketed, on his second-order scientific understanding of the everyday world. As Smith sees it, Schutz's description is in fact a second-order articulation of the practices of governing that invisibilize women's labor and their everyday life.

> Without challenging Schutz's general picture of these various levels of personality and their organization in relation to project in the world of working, we can also recognize what is presupposed in just that organization, namely, that the routine matter, the household chores, *are not problematic*, do not become a central focus of man's work. … The place of women, then, in relation to this mode of action is where the work is done to facilitate men's occupation of the conceptual mode of action. … At almost every point women mediate for men the relation between the conceptual mode of action and the actual concrete forms on which it depends. (Smith 1987, 83, my emphasis)

Taking the point of view of women thus, in this instance, discredits "sociology's claim to constitute an objective knowledge independent of the sociologists' situation" (Smith 2004, 28). Importantly, however, for Smith, a feminist sociology consists in more than pointing out what has been "left out, overlooked" by established sociology (Smith 2004, 21) and for her critique is also always an "attempt to define an alternative" (Smith 1987, 78). This alternative entails two further points of criticism of Schutz's phenomenological sociology, that are of a methodological kind.

While Smith productively makes use of Schutz's distinction between the natural attitude of our paramount reality in which we are localized as embodied subjects in an everyday world of working and the scientific attitude which brackets this bodily existence and its particular interests or relevances, she also takes issue with how Schutz characterizes their relation:

> Beginning from the standpoint of women locates a subject who begins in a material and local world. It shows the different cognitive domains structuring our realities, *not, as Schutz describes, as alternatives*—a paramount reality on the one hand and the scientific domain on the other—but rather as a bifurcation of consciousness, with a world directly experienced from oneself as center (in the body) on the one hand and a world organized in the abstracted conceptual mode, external to the local and particular places of one's bodily existence. (Smith 1987, 84 – 85, my emphasis)

While Schutz's distinction between our everyday understanding and our second-order scientific understanding of this understanding is taken over by Smith, it is a critical appropriation insofar as she rejects Schutz's characterization of their relation. Schutz's own characterization of the relation between our everyday

world and its scientific understanding betrays his specific location in society in Smith's view: "The specific character of the sociological mode of reflecting upon society … in suspending the actual and particular position of the knower must be understood as itself located" (Smith 1987, 74–75). That is, as already implied by Smith's critique of Schutz's characterization of housework: "Participation in the 'head' world is accomplished in concrete settings making use of definite material means" (Smith 1987, 85). And while Schutz could overlook this because women's work conceals itself typically for scientific men losing themselves in the "head" world, "to those who do this work, the local and concrete conditions of the abstracted mode are thematic" (Smith 1987, 85). And for those women like Smith who engage in this work as well as scientific research, the former can never be left behind—hence the bifurcation of her consciousness.

Insofar as Schutz's phenomenological sociology aims for a second-order understanding of our first-order understanding that is value-free and generates typifying characterizations of our everyday life and social interactions, the very project of such a phenomenological sociology seems to become questionable once one takes women's point of view seriously in sociology—as it betrays sociology's inadequacy to this point of view all the while being unable to bracket or leave behind the systems of relevances of a dominant male position in society. But if so, this raises the question how a feminist sociology that starts in women's everyday experience and their bifurcated consciousness can fare any better. Or, to ask this question in Smith's own words, would "proposing a sociology grounded in the sociologist's own experience" not just amount to "the self-indulgence of inner exploration or any other enterprise with self as sole focus and object" (Smith 2004, 29)?

Smith's answer to this question consists in a second, more radical, Marxist criticism of Schutz's phenomenological sociology. That is, for Smith, feminist sociological research ought to focus on the scientific investigation of the relations of ruling, which are the social and historical-material relations that govern the everyday world. Research into these relations ought to take as its starting point the everyday experience to which our sociological theorizing is beholden: "The movement of research is from a woman's account of her everyday experience to exploring *from that perspective* the generalizing and generalized relations in which each individual's everyday world is embedded" (Smith 1987, 185). Though to understand these generalized relations it by no means suffices to provide the kind typifying descriptions Schutz was after with his phenomenological sociology. That is, to understand, for example, the relations that obtain between mothers and schools (and constructs such as "homework," "progress," etc.; see Smith 1987, 168–175) or relations between people and cities (and the difference between "rental-units," "single family dwellings," and "respectable neighborhoods"; see Smith 1987, 155–156), it is by no means sufficient to restrict oneself to a generalized description of how these

relations and constructs are experienced, because these social relations are "not produced by the mysterious 'idealizations of intersubjectivity' which Schutz's cognitively based conception of social reality requires" (Smith 1987, 126). Instead, as a Marxist analysis of these relations would reveal, these meanings are actually constructed in and through concrete material relations of ruling particular to a capitalistic society, which remains invisible when one just describes social (inter-)action. Or as Smith states it already in 1972:

> No amount of observation of face-to-face relations, no amounts of analysis of common-sense knowledge of everyday life, will take us beyond our essential ignorance of how it is put together. Our direct experience of it constitutes it (if we will) as a problem, but it does not offer any answers. The matrix of direct experience as that from which sociology might begin discloses that beginning of an "appearance" the determinations of which lie beyond it. (Smith 2004, 32)

And this is why Smith denies what others have suggested to her: "that a phenomenological sociology is a feminist sociology merely because it begins with the consciousness of the knower and is hence 'subjective'" (Smith 1987, 86). That is, as Smith is all too well aware, this phenomenological perspective takes for granted or leaves unproblematized "the material and social organization of the bifurcated consciousness, and does not render its organization and conditions examinable" (Smith 1987, 86). Once we realize this, "we are no longer stuck with shared meanings or intersubjectivity as the guarantor and ground of the social" (Smith 1987, 123) as a phenomenological sociology would be—and the possibility of a different kind of inquiry becomes visible that *does* examine the organization and conditions of our lifeworld by inquiring into the material and productive relations that bring about this lifeworld.

What this criticism of Smith on Schutz makes clear is how a phenomenological sociology that restricts itself to a second-order descriptive understanding of our everyday dealings is at best quite limited in its explanatory value and at worst ends up with a distortive description of our actual experience because of its replication of the systems of relevance of a dominant position in society (failing the postulate of adequacy). At the same time, Smith also shows how our experience of the everyday world could constitute the starting point of the investigation that would be "capable of explicating for members of the society the social organization of their experienced world" (Smith 1987, 89) by looking at material and productive relations, which is a project that aligns with contemporary critical phenomenology (see Ahmed 2006, ch. 1), even if Smith's contribution seems to have been forgotten. Insofar as this sociological investigation begins from women's experience of the world, and given that Smith recognizes that "women are variously located in society" (Smith 1987, 85), this raises the question of which experience is to furnish the

critical starting point of such an investigation—and it is this question that is at the heart of Collins's critical appraisal of Smith's standpoint theory. Of interest for this chapter is, moreover, that Collins, in her own methodological articulation of the role of experience in the development of a critical standpoint vis-à-vis prevailing sociological conceptualizations, draws on Schutz's description of a particular ideal type—specifically, "the stranger"—and through this different critical appropriation of Schutz, Collins addresses some of the issues she discerns in Smith's version of standpoint theory.

7.4 Collins on the Stranger and the Outsider Within

In her 1992 "Transforming the Inner Circle: Dorothy Smith's Challenge to Sociological Theory," Collins critically reviews three collections of Smith's essays, including the 1987 volume. In this review, Collins explicitly aligns herself with Smith's project when she likens Smith's "critical position on sociological knowledge" to her own work: "In my own work I refer to this position as that of an 'outsider within'" (Collins 1992, 74). At the same time, Collins wonders: "but will her [Smith's] thinking take us where we want to go?" (Collins 1992, 77). Collins goes on to articulate a twofold criticism of Smith's feminist challenge to existing sociological theory and her standpoint theory. Both criticisms can be understood as following from the different standpoint theory Collins herself developed in her 1986 paper "Learning from the Outsider Within" and her 1990 *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment.*

The first criticism that Collins articulates is of Smith's characterization of the point of view from which dominant sociological theories can be challenged. That is, the standpoint of women's experience of the lifeworld that is to be the starting point for the inquiry of the material organization of this lifeworld and its relations of ruling appears, for Smith, to be an individual experience or an individual's bifurcated consciousness. As Collins articulates it: "Smith describes how her *individual* experiences as a woman provide her with a unique perspective, but she does not develop this insight to invoke traditions of local knowledges produced by historically marginalized *groups*" (Collins 1992, 77). This is in part due to Smith's reliance on texts at the expense of oral traditions as well as her own positionality as a white woman. So, for example, in her development of a sociology for women, there is a rich tradition of Black feminist theorizing that Smith overlooks. In her 1986 article, and more elaborately in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (1990), Collins documented this tradition,

thereby challenging ignorance in feminist theorizing about this tradition by identifying feminist critiques by Black women going back to the nineteenth century and their shared themes (see Dotson 2015 on this feat). As Collins points out, "academic intellectuals' failure to investigate these traditions does not mean that alternative traditions do not exist" (Collins 1992, 78). That Smith overlooks such traditions, including the Black feminist tradition, is in Collins's view because she "underemphasizes diversity created by race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and age" as well as their intersecting, due to which she overlooks "the knowledges produced by these groups as they actively resist objective knowledge that justifies their subordination" (Collins 1992, 78) which makes Smith's approach in this respect not different from other existing sociological approaches. Collins, however, considers it possible that Smith's account be "complemented" with an "equally well-developed theoretical and empirical attention to the social construction of resistance as organized through local knowledges" (Collins 1992, 79) which is exemplified by Collins's own work.

A second point of criticism is of a more methodological nature. Collins articulates the critique by invoking Audre Lorde's warning that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (Collins 1992, 79). More concretely, Collins concludes that despite the value of Smith's challenge to the prevailing sociologies of their time, she did end up participating in the relations of ruling: "Smith chose to adhere to the rules, to do theoretical sociology in a way that makes sense to members of the inner circle. … her discourse never can be truly transformative because it is organized in the language of the inner circle, essentially addressed to its members" (Collins 1992, 79). While Collins herself has been critical of the way ideas central to the Black feminist tradition (such as intersectionality) have been operationalized in academic theorizing (see e.g., Collins 1999, 2017, and 2019), it is her embeddedness in a Black feminist tradition that transcends her own perspective that may put her in a better position to continue to challenge sociology. In her 1986 article, Collins methodologically articulates this position as one of an "outsider within" and her characterization of this position shows some important differences in relation to how Smith's articulates her bifurcated consciousness. What is more, and relevant in the context of this paper, in the articulation of Black women sociologists' standpoint as that of an outsider within, Collins draws on Schutz's 1944 paper "The Stranger: An Essay in Social Psychology," which was published in the *American Journal of Sociology*.

Schutz's essay on the stranger provides a concrete illustration of what it would mean to provide a second-order typification of a social relation or an idealizing description of a personality type in a given social context. That is, while Schutz's descriptions of the stranger could be understood in the context of his own position as a Jew in Vienna and then in the US (Tada 2023), the descriptions that Schutz pro-

vides of the stranger aim to apply to any kind of stranger—be it someone who voluntarily relocated to another country, the farmer's son who enrolls in college, someone who is born into a segregated society, or someone who finds themselves in exile due to persecution in their homeland. What Schutz wants to do in this paper is "to study in terms of a general theory of interpretation the typical situation in which a stranger finds himself in his attempt to interpret the cultural pattern of a social group which he approaches and to orient himself within it" (Schutz 1944, 499). The topic of the stranger is by no means unprecedented in sociology (Schutz himself refers to numerous American and German authors), though Schutz brings his own phenomenological sociological approach to bear on the topic.

What is, in Schutz's view, characteristic of any stranger is that they experience the thinking as usual of the social in-group to which they do not belong, but with whom they are confronted, in a different way than any of the members of this in-group. For Schutz, thinking as usual for members of an in-group is determined by their inherited and shared cultural pattern or their "peculiar valuations, institutions, and systems of orientation and guidance (such as the folkways, mores, laws, habits, customs, etiquette, fashions)" (Schutz 1944, 499) that define their fields of possible and actual actions in their everyday world. While in-group members' understanding of social situations is in fact incoherent, inconsistent, and only partially clear as any such understanding, for the in-group member thinking as usual has "the appearance of a *sufficient* coherence, clarity, and consistency" (Schutz 1944, 501). The stranger, unlike those who are part of the in-group, does not have this kind of access to this thinking as usual, which according to Schutz entails "the stranger's objectivity" (Schutz 1944, 506). This objectivity does not only consist in the stranger's critical attitude that follows from his "vivid feeling for the incoherence and inconsistency of the approached cultural pattern" but, more profoundly, comes from this awareness of the limits of "thinking as usual" in general due to his experience of being a stranger (Schutz 1944, 506–507).

In her 1986 paper, Collins characterizes sociology's system of knowledge in terms of "thinking as usual" and claims that Black women who enter this discipline of sociology "become, to use Simmel's (1921) and Schutz's terminology, penultimate 'strangers'" (Collins 1986, 26) and continues to quote Schutz's characterization of the stranger:

> The stranger … does not share the basic assumptions of the group. He becomes essentially the man who has to place in question nearly everything that seems to be unquestionable to the members of the approached group. … To him the cultural patterns of the approached group do not have the authority of a tested system of recipes … because he does not partake in the vivid historical tradition by which is has been formed. (Schutz 1944, 502 as quoted by Collins 1986, 26–27)

To describe the particular way that Black women sociologists are strangers, she uses, however, her term "outsiders within." What is more, Collins also provides a concrete sense of the way in which the outsider within—in this case, Black women who enter a "white male insider-influenced" sociology—can afford a critical point of view that illuminates sociology's anomalies (Collins 1986, 27). More concretely, Collins points to two different kinds of anomalies that may become visible from the perspective of the outsider within. First, there are omissions of facts or observations about these outsiders themselves that have resulted in the invisibility of Black women in the sociological research of Collins's time (Collins 1986, 27). Second, there are the actual "distortions of facts and observations about Black women" in and through the generation of misogynoir stereotypes (Collins 1986, 28). Both anomalies are addressed by Collins throughout her work.

Collins's critical use of Schutz's articulation of the experience of the stranger can serve as an indicator of an important distinction between Smith's and Collins's respective standpoint theories. That is, for Smith, women's standpoint is the possible site of a bifurcated consciousness that holds together the everyday world and how it is conceptualized in dominant discourses. While this bifurcated consciousness or disjuncture may yield a subsequent critique of such discourses, Collins points out that "remaining on the line of fault leaves the inner circle unchanged" and that Smith "eventually chose to adhere to the rules, to do sociology in a way that makes sense to members of the inner circle" (Collins 1992, 79). However, the outsider within does not in the same way experience bifurcation—rather as a stranger they are confronted with an alien common sense—and instead (will continue to) experience a tension—in the case of Black women entering sociology, a tension between one's own personal and cultural experiences and sociological theory. This tension, however, also affords a critical standpoint because due to being a stranger to another common sense, the latter's anomalies become more easily detectable. It is Collins's view that sociology can only be really transformed by trying to "conserve the creative tension of outsider within status by encouraging and institutionalizing outsider within ways of seeing" (Collins 1986, 29). So rather than leaving the standpoint from which the critique on dominant sociological theories is formulated in favor of a Marxist style analysis, Collins suggests that outsiders within linger with that experience. That they can do so, is because their experienced reality is a collective one (see also Collins 1999, 85), with its own history and (oral) traditions and as such always already provides an alternative to existing discourses. And what Collins hopes for is that this experienced reality "is used as a valid source of knowledge for critiquing sociological facts and theories, while sociological thought offers new ways of seeing that experienced reality" (Collins 1986, 30).

7.5 On the Uses and Limits of Phenomenology

I have already shown in passing how Smith's critical use of Schutz's phenomenological sociology remains relevant. That is, Smith's feminist sociology both indicates the use and limits of a focus on the experience of everyday life. If we take Smith's critique of Schutz's phenomenological sociology seriously, it would seem that a phenomenology that aims to understand the relations of ruling cannot restrict itself to providing phenomenological descriptions but must also inquire into the actual mechanisms that go into forming and maintaining these relations of ruling. And the inquiry that Smith proposes into the actual relations of ruling and the ways in which the everyday world is organized calls for a multitude of inquiries from different standpoints. That is, as Smith herself acknowledges "from different standpoints different aspects of the ruling apparatuses and of class come into view" (Smith 1987, 107).

This is not to say, however, that phenomenological descriptions could not also do another kind of work. That is, as is exemplified by Collins, phenomenological concepts and types like the one of the stranger may provide "new ways of seeing that [Black women's] experienced reality" (Collins 1986, 30). This, however, only applies insofar as these concepts are used by those with outsider within status in the articulation of their experienced reality and this articulation will inevitably introduce new concepts. After all, the outsider within, while a stranger, is not just any stranger—or, as Collins points out in retrospect about her own paper: "Nothing in the literature that I consulted in the 1980s really fit. Talks of insiders, outsiders, and marginal men came close *but something was missing*" (Collins 1999, 85, my emphasis) and it is only with the concept of the outsider within that Collins thought she had found an apt description of her own position and other Black women like her in sociology. What this means, however, is that existing phenomenological concepts, as they are all too often developed from the perspective of a dominant position, may not "really fit" (e.g., as Fanon [1965] has shown when introducing his notion of a historico-racial schema). Given both Smith's and Collins's poignant insights into the uses and limits of, in this case, Schutz's phenomenological sociology, their works can be taken as a prolegomenon to any future phenomenological work committed to understanding the relations of ruling (Smith) while avoiding omissions and distortions in its theorizing (Collins).

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