

Michael Barber

Resilience and Responsiveness

Alfred's Schutz's Finite Provinces
of Meaning

Contributions to Phenomenology

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*For Jesuit Friends Living and Dead
And For Ollie and Shiloh*

Preface

This book project grows out of my 2017 publication *Religion and Humor as Emancipating Provinces of Meaning* (Springer) in which I explained the pragmatic nature of Alfred Schutz's understanding of everyday life and then considered in depth the provinces of meaning of religious experience and humor. In this book, I return to this earlier project but with entirely new and specific foci on religious/spiritual ritual experience and on African-American folkloric humor. In addition, I develop an account of two provinces of meaning that Schutz only gestured toward, play and music. Schutz never did fully examine music as finite province of meaning, but he, instead, singled out the social relationships we find in the musical province, described as "mutual tuning-in," which he argued could clarify social relationships beyond the boundaries of the finite province of meaning. Instead of separating social relations from the encompassing musical province of meaning, this book investigates, beginning with music, how the five non-social features of the cognitive style of any province of meaning can affect what goes on within the social relationships carried on within any finite province of meaning. It extends this method of considering sociality in the light of the other features of the cognitive style of provinces of meaning to play, religious/spiritual ritual, and African-American folkloric humor. I have also traced throughout this discussion of finite provinces of meaning two fundamental themes of Schutz's work, resilience, that is the creative and multiple ways in which we come to terms with, or "give meaning to," imposed relevances, and responsiveness, the distinctive model of social relationship that characterizes the finite provinces of meaning—both of which reveal Schutz's commitment to what is widely known as a social phenomenology.

I wish to acknowledge the support I have received and philosophical/phenomenological societies, such as The Society for Phenomenology of Religious Experience (SOPHERE), the Society for Phenomenology and the Human Sciences (SPHS), and The International Alfred Schutz Circle for Phenomenology and Interpretive Social Science. I would also like to express my gratitude to colleagues such as Olga Luchakova-Schwartz, Martin Nitzsche, Peter Costello, Maurice Natanson, Lester Embree, Jochen Dreher, Alexis Gros, Carlos Belvedere, Daniela López, Jerry Williams, Andreas Göttlich, Teppei Sekimizu, Hisashi Nasu, Hermilio Santos, and Erik Garrett.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Finite Provinces of Meaning, Resilience, Responsiveness, the Plan of This Book



Abstract This chapter explains what Alfred Schutz means by “finite provinces of meaning” and what the six features of a cognitive style are and how they characterize in different ways all such provinces. It examines how Schutz’s methodology in his essay “On Multiple Realities” is phenomenological. In addition, it presents two central themes traced throughout the book: resilience, understood in terms of how events or objects imposed upon us do not cause our response but solicit our meaning-giving, and interpersonal responsiveness. Although Schutz himself does not explicitly use these concepts, they can be taken to provide a novel and comprehensive interpretative key to his entire work. The chapter concludes by considering Schutzian concepts that need clarification, such as the “tension of consciousness,” and “fundamental anxiety,” and it considers the significance of non-pragmatic provinces for a philosophical anthropology.

As is well known, Schutz, in his essay “On Multiple Realities,” spends the first half of the essay explaining the province of meaning of everyday life, which he designates as the “world of working” (Schutz 1962, 222–229), a title derived from its form of spontaneity, “working” (Schutz 1962, 212), before moving on to limning the characteristics of the provinces of phantasy, dreaming, and scientific theory—all of which modify the features of everyday life. Schutz acknowledges that there are many provinces of meaning and refuses to provide a typology of them. Furthermore, when discussing Henri Bergson’s discussion of diverse “tensions of consciousness” (Schutz 1962, 212), which is a fundamental property of Schutz’s finite provinces of meaning, Schutz observes that for Bergson there were an “indefinite number of different planes, ranging from the plane of action on one extreme to the plane of dream at the other” (Schutz 1962, 212). To determine whether a sphere of activity is a finite province of meaning or not, one could consider whether it resembles the provinces of meaning Schutz treats extensively or one could determine whether the sphere exemplifies the six features of a “cognitive style” (Schutz 1962, 230) that Schutz spells out in between his treatment of working and the realms of phantasy, dreaming, and science. All the provinces of meaning treated in this book: play, music, ritual, and humor are specifically identified by Schutz as being provinces of meaning (Schutz 1962, 231).

In the second section of his essay, before considering the other non-everyday provinces of phantasy, dreaming, and theory, he specifically explains the six features of a cognitive style constitutive of *any* finite province of meaning, and he provides examples from everyday life. Each province of meaning has a distinctive *epoché* by which one marks out one's entrance into a province. For instance, in dreaming one falls asleep (Schutz 1962, 231) and the world of dreams opens up; or, in the theater, the curtain opens and one enters the world of the play as if it were real; or, Schutz describes the *epoché* of everyday life as a suspension of philosophical doubt (Schutz 1962, 229), a refusal to depart from everyday life or even to entertain any questions, for instance, as to whether what we see and touch and act on might be merely phantoms of our imagination—about which Descartes worried. One would have no use for such diversions in everyday life in which one is oriented more toward pragmatically mastering one's environs.

The form of spontaneity in everyday life is “working,” that is, “meaningful spontaneity based upon a project and characterized by the intention of bringing about the projected state of affairs by bodily movement gearing into the outer world” (Schutz 1962, 230). In contrast to this everyday form of spontaneity, in which for pragmatic purposes one plans out an action beforehand and then sets about transforming the world by bodily action, in alternative, non-pragmatic provinces of meaning (like music or art) one resorts, instead, to spontaneous actions without any planning or any endeavor to transform bodily the world. Thus, for example, one simply relates to the surrounding world by opening oneself to receive musical communication from an orchestra in music; or in play, instead of long-range projects, one seeks to be as responsive as possible to the rapid (unplanned) actions of one's fellow football players for the purposes of producing together a well-played game.

The tension of consciousness, in its everyday life version called “wide-awakeness” (Schutz 1962, 230), consists in being intensely involved in achieving motor mastery over the objects one deals with, such that one, for example, would not allow one's imagination to roam when one is caught in a traffic jam or when one is operating a dangerous jack-hammer. One's tension of consciousness, however, becomes “relaxed” when one allows music to flood in upon oneself and to release memories, feelings, or images that appear to a degree to be uncontrolled. In addition, there is an experience of self in which, in the case of the world of working, one experiences oneself as a unified whole in bodily engaging and shaping the outer world (Schutz 1962, 230), but in ritual one carves out a role for oneself as a worshipping participant (knowing that the world of working remains there on one's horizon) and one becomes reflectively aware of oneself as now bifurcated, as one had not been in working when one was immersed in working and did not turn to oneself reflectively. The feature of the “specific form of sociality” depicts a general category, which can include under intense forms of social interaction or solipsistic self-absorption, in which one acts all alone and communicates with no one and in which no kind of social interaction at all appears to be found (and then, in these provinces, the absence of sociality characterizes their form of sociality). Dreaming or solitary phantasy exemplify provinces whose form of sociality appears empty, in contrast with everyday communication (Schutz 1962, 230), in which one follows

another's communication step by step, remembering what was just said and anticipating what will be said as that communication unfolds visibly before one's very eyes. Finally, the form of temporality in everyday life consists in an intersection between the outer time of clocks and calendars and the inner time of an actor (Schutz 1962, 230); but, in dreaming, one is taken up with one's own inner time; or, in music, one's focus is on the inner time of a composer's thought as it polythetically unfolds in a symphony's performance of it. In both dreaming and music, then, to a degree, outer time recedes from prominence.

Each of the finite provinces of meaning realizes differently these six features of their cognitive style. The provinces are called "finite" since the experiences that are compatible and consistent *within* one province would not be so in another province. Hence baking pies formed from mud might be thoroughly appropriate in the play of children with each other, but it would not be consistent with how one ought to act when preparing a dinner in everyday life. Furthermore, there is no "formula of transformation" (Schutz 1962, 232) by which one can refer one province to another or move from one to another, instead one must deploy a Kierkegaardian "leap" (Schutz 1962, 232), which is experienced subjectively as a "shock" (Schutz 1962, 232), or an *epoché*, by which leaves behind one province and enters another. The provinces are called provinces of "meaning" since, in good phenomenological style, we are talking about how our experiences bestow meaning on what is given to us; hence the mudpie to the children is a pie, even though in everyday life it would be "mud in a pie tin," and some Christian ritual communities experience bread and wine as the body of Christ, which they would not appear to be in everyday life or to scientific theorizing. Schutz observes that while inhabiting a province of meaning, the province itself receives "the accent of reality" (Schutz 1962, 232) by those occupying it, and, as a consequence, not every province receives the reality accent of the everyday world of working. After presenting in general what the cognitive features constitutive of a province of meaning are and after articulating what a province of meaning is and how one accesses it—all this in section two of his essay—Schutz then proceeds to analyze the provinces of phantasy, dreaming, and theoretical contemplation. This brief summary cannot pretend to encompass the richness of Schutz's account of multiple realities and finite provinces of meaning—it is best to read his essay in full to appreciate his explanations.

I have discussed the phenomenological methodology employed in describing finite provinces of meaning elsewhere (Barber 2017, 5–7). In "On Multiple Realities," Schutz never enacts the phenomenological reduction, just as in *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, he uses the reduction in Chap. 2 to describe meaningful lived experience and then, for the next two chapters, removes the reduction to describe in eidetic terms intersubjective understanding and the structure of the social world. Schutz characterizes this entire work as a "phenomenological psychology" (Schutz 1967, 44). While Schutz himself does not reflect fully on the methodology of "On Multiple Realities" and while he never formally implements the reduction, he does seem to describe in at least semi-eidetic terms the various finite provinces of meaning in terms of the six features of a cognitive style that pertain to *any* finite province of meaning. In my earlier treatment of finite provinces of

meaning, I concurred with Martin Endress who locates all the provinces of meaning, including everyday life or the world of working (with its own transcendences and the transcendences outside of everyday life which are announced within it) and others (phantasy, dreaming, theory) within the more encompassing concept of “the meaning-structuring of the life-world” (Endress 2006, 88). Similarly, Richard Grathoff (1989, 94–95) explains the life-world (*Lebenswelt*) as providing the ontological ground-categories of the everyday world (*Alltagswelt*), as its *Hintergrund*. Further, this everyday world, a pregiven construct of the preconstituted world in its concrete history, involves a continual process of interaction and shared experiences that results in the constructive bringing forth of new worlds, new provinces of meaning. These provinces of meaning then contain within themselves aspects of everyday life (referred to as *aufüglichen Lebens*) such as routinization or taken-for-grantedness, even as Schutz claims that these non-pragmatic provinces of meaning introduce modifications into the features of pragmatic everyday life. Since so much of this work operates in similitude to orthodox phenomenological methods, one would have to say that one can only validate descriptions of these finite provinces of meaning if they (as signitive intendings) are found to be accurate to (or fulfilled in) the intuitively given experienced reality they purport to describe. As one would do with Schutz’s phenomenology of the social world, one would have to ask if what is described accurate. What is missing? What ought to be discarded? It might be added that none of this would challenge Schutz’s views that the life-world provides a philosophical foundation for social science. Furthermore, including finite provinces of meanings like music, ritual, or play within the scope of the life-world has been of great value for an esteemed social scientist like Robert Bellah, who in his major work on the evolution of religion, takes as a starting point this wider, enriched view of the life-world to counter overly intellectualized approaches to social science in modernity (Bellah 2011, 1, 2, 3–4, 25, 28, 41, 90; Bellah 1970, 247–258).

In considering the assorted provinces of meaning that this book examines, play, music, ritual, and African-American folkloric humor, I will be following two themes that I have found to be fundamental to Schutz’s approach: resilience and responsiveness. While it is certainly the case that Schutz himself does not use these specific terms, I will argue that the concepts themselves and the meanings I give to these terms provide an excellent interpretive key to the whole of his work. Moreover, I have discovered the importance of these concepts for my interpreter’s perspective precisely by exploring new developments that have emerged when other scholars and I myself have brought the Schutzian framework into confrontation with other theoretical standpoints. For instance, as I shall show in Chap. 2, social thinkers such as Pierre Bourdieu, Jürgen Habermas, and Zygmunt Bauman have charged Schutz with being incapable of taking account of the power and coercion that are endemic to social and, in particular, political structures and relationships. As a result, Schutz’s theory has been accused of espousing a kind of “idealism,” as if we just decide as isolated monads the meaning of our social and political lives as we see fit and flawlessly realize those purposes unimpeded. Several Schutz scholars, though, have defended him by pointing to the idea of “imposed relevances,” which, they contend,

have been neglected by Schutz's critics and even his defenders. Imposed relevances consist in the events, persons, or objects that we encounter that upset our current systems of intrinsic relevances, that is, our preferred ranking of values, which, in conjunction with our systems of typifications, enable us to categorize, organize, and manage everyday life. When we run up against these imposed relevances, we find ourselves often compelled to attempt reflectively to come to terms with them, as when the COVID pandemic befell the human race and forced us to decide how we would work, what risks we were willing to run, or what preventive strategies we might have deployed. We were forced to determine how to reconfigure our lives in order to uphold what is perhaps our highest intrinsic relevance, namely, to preserve our lives. So also in political and social life, one continually runs up against policies, practices, and other human beings that pose challenges to the projects our intrinsic systems of relevances call for us to carry out and that constrain and limit us. While this recovery of "imposed relevances" is of momentous importance in my view, what I will attempt to demonstrate in this book is how pervasive in Schutz's thought is the often unseen positive obverse of such relevances, namely, the multiple creative ways in which we come to terms with the panoply of imposed relevances. These entire processes of creatively coming to terms with imposed relevances exemplify resilience. Indeed, after reading this entire book, one should be able to see clearly why using the concepts of resilience and responsiveness are appropriate interpretive keys to Schutz's work.

In what follows, I will argue that imposed relevances and our resilience in coming to terms with them take place pervasively and on fundamental levels. For instance, when I encounter an object that seems to defy what my typifications lead me to expect (as when the whale that looks like a fish displays mammalian features), my very coming to terms with such objects by revising my typifications is a way of responding to an imposed relevance. In running up against this object that undoes my typifications, I am not causally determined or beaten down by the object, but rather I recover from the failure of my typification and rise to the occasion of giving the object a different meaning—in other words, I show myself resilient. The child who "figures out" how to crawl across a room when her parents refuse to come toward her and pick her up (precisely to teach her how to crawl) has come face to face with imposed relevances and handled them admirably and resiliently (without the child thinking of its crawling that way). In fact, the taking up of finite provinces of meaning in everyday life can itself be seen as a resilient coming to terms with imposed relevance: when everyday life has become boring, one enters the province of play; when tragedy befalls a village, they embark upon the religious ritual realm to give meaning to their suffering; or when slavery dominates everyday life, a people can resort to folkloric humor to give vent to their anger against their slave-owners without succumbing to despair, depression, or subservience that slavery often generates in its victims. In fact, the very creation of an institution parallel to slavery, folklore, surrounded with protections against the slave-owners' desire to crush any protest or resistance, represents a socio-structural way of coming to terms with slavery's institutionally imposed relevances. In fact, one could say that the development of this para-institution of folklore humor demonstrates resilience in

the face of one of the most brutal systems of control and domination ever devised or enforced. The development and embarkation upon alternative finite provinces of meaning instantiate then the intricate entwinement of imposed relevances with our resilient responses.

In addition, although one might take refuge from the imposed relevances of everyday life in a non-pragmatic province of meaning, one surprisingly butts up against imposed relevances even *within* the newly taken up province: in play one's team finds itself confronted by a talented opponent team and stirred up to respond resiliently, to bring to bear the most refined skills and greatest cooperation possible as much to produce a well-played, artfully executed game as to defeat a competitor. Or, in a religious ritual setting, a community encounters a God (according to the personalist theism with which the author is familiar), who, as an imposed relevance, can resist being subordinated to the community's plans, confront its pathologies, affirm its goodness, or even challenge the community when it is tempted to inflict violence on other religious communities different from itself. How the community interprets, responds to, and acts on such interventions from God's side can be seen as part of its resilience, its leaping up (re + salire) again, its rising to the occasion of a divine intervention. However, to describe a God who, out of a sense of love, brings challenge or even affirmation that might run contrary to that community's intrinsic relevances (as when a community feels unloved and resists accepting love, for instance) as an "imposed" relevance can seem like a mis-categorization. This would be true, though, in any interpersonal relationships, in which the love of a partner can be experienced as "imposed," but such love, when it affirms one's dignity and summons one to one's best self—sometimes against the current status of one's intrinsic relevances that might incline one to lack of self-confidence or self-hatred—needs to be understood completely differently from the imposed relevances of natural disasters, accidents, or cruel political and social systems that have nothing to do with love, affirmation, or liberation. Still, to a depressed individual or community, such love is experienced as an imposed relevance and allowing oneself to be freed by it an act of resilience.

Another central aspect characterizing all Schutz's thought is social relationships, how they are constituted, carried out, and structured. Indeed, sociality is one of the six cognitive features of every province of meaning. While there is nothing inherently unethical about social relationships in pragmatic everyday life in which one looks upon one's partners as those with whom one might respectfully collaborate in achieving mutually beneficial pragmatic projects, in the non-pragmatic provinces of meaning, one forgoes long-range planning and embraces a more relaxed tension of consciousness. As a result, within these provinces, one surrenders to sensible stimulation, makes connections quickly and passively (beneath the control of the ego), and exhibits responsiveness to the rapid, repeated, unexpected spontaneous interventions of partners in play, in musical compositions and performances, in ritual interactions, and in the repartee of humor. The asymmetries, particularly evident in music, in which one spends intense energy within the limited periods of time of a symphony or jazz performance seeking to understand the non-conceptual, musical meaning of another (composers and performers), are reminiscent of the

asymmetrical responsibility for another that is the hallmark of the understanding of ethics in the thought of Emmanuel Levinas. I will argue that the kinds of relationships that appear in finite provinces of meaning like music, play, ritual, and humor do not generally reach the level of what Levinas calls “responsibility,” but they do intensify a flexible and vulnerable “responsiveness” to one’s partners that can be seen to advance one along the way toward responsibility and occasionally pass over into it. Such responsiveness itself also represents resilience in the face of the imposed relevances of the other’s breaking in upon us, a coming to terms with the other’s intervention—and often such relevances are encountered as *positive*, drawing us into invigorating, even joyful interaction with others. Just as the encounter between Schutz’s theory and those who accuse him of idealism led to discovering resilience, so also the comparison of Schutzian and Levinasian intersubjectivity reveals the idea of responsiveness as contrasting with responsibility.

This book begins in Chap. 2 by reflecting on imposed relevances and resilience—themes that pervade Schutz’s work, as I will demonstrate, and that are of relevance to the discussion of finite provinces of meaning. In Chaps. 3 and 5, I will demonstrate how play and music exhibit what Schutz means by finite provinces of meaning by paying attention especially to how those domains of activity embody the six features of the cognitive style of provinces of meaning. Schutz himself indicated that play was one of the possible provinces of meaning (Schutz 1962, 231, 258), but he never examined it in depth, as he did the realms of phantasies, dreams, and theoretical contemplation in “On Multiple Realities.” He did, though, write several essays on music, but he admitted that he was not concerned “with a phenomenology of musical experience” (Schutz 1964, 159), but more with the “social interactions connected with the musical process” (Schutz 1964, 159), and that he thought that studying this aspect of music can “lead to some insights valid for many other forms of social intercourse” (Schutz 1964, 159). In a few paragraphs in “Fragments toward a Phenomenology of Music,” he does sketch out some inchoate comments on what music as finite province of meaning might look like, mentioning its tension of consciousness and *epoché* (leap), but these comments are far from filling out how the six features of a cognitive style might appear in music (Schutz 1996, 257–258). Chapters 3 and 5 are original in that they develop how play and music represent finite provinces of meaning and how the six features of the cognitive style of any finite province of meaning are fleshed out in them. It should be noted that I have chosen to address play and music as provinces of meaning that Schutz pointed to, but did not develop himself; likewise, I have refrained from delving into fantasy, dreaming, and theoretical contemplation since Schutz developed these provinces at length. These provinces, however, do lurk on the horizons of my discussion and I do turn my attention to them when needed.

Chapter 3, on play, engages an extensive literature developed in anthropology, psychology, and educational theory, and it describes how one experiences play as a province of meaning. In Chap. 4, I consider a challenge from Jan Strassheim that Schutz’s theory of typifications tends toward ossification and “tunnel vision” unless supplemented by spontaneity, and I respond to Strassheim by highlighting Schutz’s comprehensive view of imposed relevances and resilience and the resource that play

affords for resisting the sclerotic tendencies about which Strassheim is concerned. The chapter also considers how everyday life might appear (as playful) when viewed from the prism of play, and it opposes the idea that play diminishes the seriousness of ethics, as certain views founded in existentialism have argued.

Chapter 5 is devoted to music as a finite province of meaning, but as a prelude to this discussion, I consider the role of bodily movement and the interacting layers of human activity constituting the holistic experience of music: cognition, physiological changes, sensory awareness, feeling/emotion (understood intentionally), and one's physiological and psychological background and history. After elucidating how the six cognitive features appear in music, I present and go beyond Schutz's own basic interest in music, namely how social relationships, one of the six features, appear in music and even provide insight into the structure of social interaction as such. I develop Schutz's thought by concentrating on the mimetic, sub-rational manner through which the other elicits a Thou-orientation from us and on the asymmetries that appear in social relationships in music.

In Chap. 6, on the basis of the understanding of social relationships that emerges from the discussion of Schutz's "Making Music Together," I undertake a kind of project Schutz did not pursue because he is usually more interested in describing provinces of meaning in terms of the six features of their cognitive style, taking each feature by itself, one by one, without attending to how these features interact with each other. In this chapter I examine how the non-social features of finite provinces of meaning (e.g., *epoché*, form of spontaneity, tension of consciousness, sense of self, and temporality) interact with and affect the sociality dimension—and this in the provinces of music, play, and everyday life. I argue that the non-pragmatic finite provinces of meaning promote a kind of "responsiveness" but that this responsiveness falls short of Levinasian "responsibility" that entails an urgency and subversion of epistemological and ontological theory in a way that responsiveness does not. There are, though, examples, e.g., in jazz, where such responsiveness can undergo a transformation into responsibility, as the final section in this chapter illustrates.

Chapters 7 and 8 extend this analytic method of pondering how the non-social features impact the social feature into the domains of religious ritual and African-American folkloric humor, adopting a different approach to the provinces of religious experience and humor from that which I developed in my account of those provinces in my 2017 *Religion and Humor as Emancipating Provinces of Meaning*. Chapter 7 on the religious ritual province of meaning explores how such ritual resembles and differs from play in the way that both spheres come to terms with imposed relevances. I then spell out the limited understanding of religious ritual I will be presupposing, namely a Judeo-Christian one. Then, reiterating briefly how the non-social features of the cognitive style of the finite province of music affect its social relationships, I apply this methodology to religious ritual, whose incorporation of musical hymns, performances, and instruments enhances communication within ritual and whose non-social features play a key role in enhancing social relationships within ritual and even outside of it.

Chapter 8 illustrates how African-American folkloric humor reflects the resilient response of the African-American community to the cruel imposed relevances of

slavery and its consequences—both of which threatened any comic expressions that might express protest against the system of slavery and left the enslaved with little if any recourse to object to the oppression they suffered and often drove them to internalize the violence they suffered from others against themselves. By utilizing humor and confining its usage to oral folkloric communication within the community from which slave-owners were excluded, enslaved African-Americans and their descendants were able to come to terms, to a degree, with these vicious imposed relevances. By examining a single folkloric tale, I explore how the features of the cognitive style of folkloric humor and, in particular, its rapid-fire and sudden repartee, promote the kind of intersubjective responsiveness and flexibility between interlocutors found in other provinces, and this responsiveness undermines the supposed preeminence and power of the slave-owner, in accord with the superiority theory of how humor works. However, when, at the end of the tale I comment on the folkloric narrator depicts the slave-owner granting freedom to the enslaved person who outwitted him, according to his earlier promise and despite his humiliation in the story, the responsiveness building through the tale culminates in presenting even the slave-owner as manifesting certain ethical properties. There is something of a shocking (comic) reversal in the tale when the narrator attributes certain ethical characteristics to the slave-owner, who showed himself inhuman at the opening of the tale and who presided over an ethically despicable system (that made it possible for a slave-owner to grant freedom or not to a someone enslaved, depending on his druthers). The tale becomes an example of Levinasian pardon, where the enslaved narrator and audience forego an insistence on symmetry and reciprocity, to which they would have been entitled, against the slave-owner. Of course, such a vision is only utopic, a hope for a possible future, since it was articulated only from the side of the enslaved narrator and audience because slave-owners were never in attendance when these oral stories were communicated for fear that they would retaliate against any protest against their domination of others. Resilience, responsiveness, and responsibility, though, are front and center in this finite province of African-American folkloric humor.

There are several problems or unclarities in Schutz's own theory of multiple realities that this book will seek to address. In connection with the experience of oneself, one of the features of the cognitive style, I think through Mead's account of roles, of a "Me" over against which there stands an "I," in terms of temporality since only a *later* reflective act illuminates what had been previously only implicitly the "I" and the "Me" (namely the role that had "I" had occupied without reflecting on it). Also, there are levels of specifications of roles: one is a musical performer but also a violinist, and one is a football player but also a goalie. All of this will be disentangled and clarified in Chap. 3 on play and in Chap. 5 on music.

As regards "tensions of consciousness," Schutz in "On Multiple Realities," tends to regard everyday life as the province of wide-awakeness, the fullest tension of consciousness, especially in its attentiveness to the motor demands of acting in everyday life (Schutz 1962, 212–213). Though it is true that in non-pragmatic provinces of meaning one relaxes one's tension of consciousness, nevertheless, in play, music, religious ritual, and humor there is also a special attentiveness that comes to

the fore, for example, the careful listening to music that requires a distinctive, heightened tension of consciousness and that appears at the same time that one is relaxing from the (motor) tension of wide-awakeness (Schutz 1996, 258). To clarify this seeming conflict or even contradiction, we will return to the writings of Henri Bergson from whom Schutz borrowed his idea of tensions of consciousness in the first place.

Another aspect that needs to be taken note of has to do with Schutz's tying the form of spontaneity in everyday life to the systems of hopes, fears, and risks that derive from our fundamental anxiety (Schutz 1962, 228, 247). It is significant then that for non-pragmatic provinces of meaning this fundamental anxiety and the hopes, fears, and risks it engenders recede in importance, though in religious rituals, particularly funerals, it can become more prominent. Finally, Jacques Ehrmann criticizes theorists of play Roger Caillois and Jon Huizinga, because they contrast a utopian vision of play over against a view of "reality" or "culture" (Ehrmann 1971, 55; see also 54) that they seem to assume, a priori, is inherently corrupted and dominated by the rigidities of Western capitalist/industrial society. I will attempt to demonstrate that it is possible to offer a less biased understanding of the everyday life that play modifies and differs from by considering it in terms of the pragmatically oriented everyday lifeworld whose eidetic features Schutz spelled out in his *The Phenomenology of the Social World* and elsewhere.

In the conclusion, we shall reflect on the importance, for an understanding of philosophical anthropology, of the fact that we are accustomed to spend so much of our lives engaged in these different non-pragmatic provinces of meaning, such as play, music, religious ritual, or humor. Philosophers, preoccupied with theory and pragmatic everyday life as they are, are more likely to overlook how we are shaped when we set to the side our long-range plans, yield to bodily and passive associative processes, interact more spontaneously with our partners and interlocutors, permit the ascendancy of inner temporality, and, in general, relate to others differently than we do in pragmatic everyday life. What more can be learned when we consider the relationships of these non-pragmatic provinces of meaning with each other? Does religious ritual appear less strange or eccentric when welcomed into the company of music, play, and humor? Is the theme of imposed relevances and resilience of particular value when one's phenomenology is a phenomenology of action as opposed to many outlooks in phenomenology that takes as their paradigm the phenomenology of perception (see Chap. 2, p. 19)? What more can be said about the variety of possibilities of social relationships that the assorted provinces of meaning reveal and the different ways in which the non-social factors in such provinces of meaning may affect or even promote these possibilities?

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Chapter 2

Imposed Relevances and Resilience



Abstract Recent authors rethinking Alfred Schutz’s social and political theory have rediscovered the importance of “imposed relevances” in his writings, and they have used this notion as a counter to interpretations that present Schutz’s theory as idealistic and incapable of handling issues of power or coercion in social and political thought. This chapter argues that Schutz takes account of imposed relevances throughout his work, and, at the same time, he repeatedly discusses how we often creatively “come to terms” with such imposed relevances, for instance, in adjusting our pragmatic projects in the face of obstacles, in the irrepressible sense that we can “do it again” when confronted with what is novel or unexpected, and in the multiple ways in which we handle the various levels of transcendences, space and time, other human beings, and limits of the world of everyday life through non-pragmatic finite provinces of meaning. We are resilient meaning-givers, not causally determined by events that we encounter. Such resilience brings out a practical dimension of phenomenology itself that resists causal-empirical accounts of philosophical anthropology.

In this second chapter, I will analyze: the importance of imposed relevances throughout Schutz’s thought and explain the various forms that resilience can take in the face of these relevances.

1 Imposed Relevances

Recent discussions in political and social theory have accentuated the importance of Schutz’s idea of imposed relevances. Daniela Griselda López and Valeria Laborda, for instance, have described the inequality that dominant economic institutions have produced as imposed relevances (López and Laborda 2019, 25). In addition, Carlos Belvedere and Alexis Gros have opposed Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens who accuse Schutz of having developed a subjectivist social theory that overlooks the constraining, objective, and macro-aspects of social reality. Belvedere and Gros’s opposition rests on recovering Berger and Luckmann’s idea that even through

institutions are constructed by social interactors and hence ought not to be reified or mystified as unchangeable, such institutions are nevertheless “objective” and exhibit the features of exteriority and moral coercion that Émile Durkheim insisted upon (Belvedere and Gros 2019, 45, 53, 55–56, 65, 67, 71; see also Vavrik and Fernández 2019, 95–96). López traces the polarization between the supposedly subjectivistic Schutzian view and the more objectivistic, institutional approach of Parsons back to the tradition of Schutz scholarship itself. The early protagonists of Schutz’s view tried to defend almost from the very beginning the distinctiveness of his position against Parsons and empiricist social science by emphasizing Schutz’s turn to the subjective meaning of the actor. Instead, López favors a solution along the lines of Garfinkel and Knoblauch that unifies subjective and objective dimensions in the communicative order of everyday life (López 2014, 66–69, 83).

The most significant article, though, regarding the significance of imposed relevances for social and political theory is that of Jochen Dreher and López, entitled “Subjectivity and Power” in *Human Studies* 38 (2015). In that article, after considering the objections of Pierre Bourdieu, Jürgen Habermas, and Zygmunt Bauman, who for various reasons argue that the Schutzian paradigm cannot address issues of coercion and power, Dreher and López contend that in fact Schutz is quite interested in how power is experienced (Dreher and López 2015, 198–210). They assert that “the Schutzian differentiation between intrinsic relevances and imposed relevances turns out to be of major importance in order to explain power differences or power relations from a phenomenological perspective” (Dreher and López 2015, 211).¹ Dreher and López refer to the example of ontological structure of the world (e.g. that we cannot be in two different places at once, cannot travel to Europe in 3 min, etc.) as something that is imposed upon us, but our biographical stock of knowledge offers us resources to come to terms with such imposed relevances. For instance, while we cannot alter the ontological structure of the world, we can come to terms with such impositions by, for instance, resorting to zoom technology that might allow us to be at our home and yet at the same time be present to people on the other side of the world, and through zoom, in a matter of minutes, we would be able to “travel to Europe” in an analogous manner. By taking up the issue of imposed relevances and our capacity to come to terms with them on the basis of resources in our subjective stock of knowledge, Dreher and López are cognizant that they are thinking in accordance with the phenomenological paradigm that subjective acts are not self-enclosed but intentionally open to objects beyond them (Dreher and López 2015, 201, 214). Consequently, from our subjective perspective, we are able to give meaning not only to the ontological structures that are rather immutable but also to power structures, which we can criticize and resist if they are judged illegitimate. In addition, we can make creative use of symbolic systems (e.g., contrasting, via highly

¹ Andreas Göttlich rightly cautions that just because in-order-to motives, which flow from intrinsic relevances are future oriented, as opposed to because motives which can be seen as imposed relevances, that does not mean the choice of such in-order-to motives are necessarily freely undertaken—at least for the “objective viewpoint” of the social scientist, despite the fact that in common sense the actor might experience such motives as freely chosen. See Göttlich 2014, 100–106.