

Robert Gorman. *The Dual Vision: Alfred Schutz and the Myth of Phenomenological Social Science*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977.

The main thesis of Robert Gorman's book is that the social theory of Alfred Schutz contains two contradictory elements: the idea of self-determining subjectivity, taken from the phenomenological philosophy of Edmund Husserl, and the demand for empirical criteria of validation. These two notions according to Gorman constitute a dual vision in Schutz's work because one implies free will and the other, determinism. Unfortunately, Gorman's formulation of what he sees as Schutz's problem is crucially flawed, thus making the rest of his analysis incorrect.

The most glaring error in Gorman's presentation is his equation of the concept "subjectively meaningful" with that of "freedom." The concept of subjectively meaningful in Schutz's writings is taken from Husserl's analysis of the origin of meaning. Briefly, Husserl's position is that meaning is not a characteristic inherent in objects themselves, but is instead constituted by a subject (transcendental ego) each time the object is presented to consciousness. The concept is employed by Max Weber in a parallel fashion in his definition of social action as subjectively meaningful action. In both cases the concept has nothing to do with free will or voluntary action, as Gorman maintains. When Schutz does discuss voluntary action, his position is taken from Henri Bergson's analysis of determinism in *Time and Free Will*, which in no way overlaps with Husserl's notion of subjectively meaningful.

Even overlooking this first mistake, the seemingly incompatible notions of free will and determinism, in this context, need not be so. Although Schutz's Bergsonian analysis of voluntary action makes no metaphysical assertions concerning free will, such a position is not contradictory with the determinism of Schutz's homunculi theory of social science. As Stephen Toulmin points out in *The Philosophy of Science*, there is a difference between metaphysical determinism and methodological determinism. The first position dogmatically asserts that human

behavior actually is determined, whereas methodological determinism merely represents human behavior as if it were determined, for purposes of scientific explanation. Thus, even if Gorman's characterization of Schutz's position were correct, and it is not, the charge of a dual vision would still be mistaken.

Perhaps even more seriously, Gorman misunderstands the nature of Schutz's enterprise, stating "what is perhaps more frightening is the fact that a person of Schutz's intelligence and knowledge can devote a lifetime to studying this very same lifeworld and conclude the behavior he has observed fulfills the only possibility we have for free, meaningful social interaction"(78). Whatever this means, it does not characterize Schutz's ambition. As Richard Zaner has often stated, Schutz's attempt is to show "what makes the social world tick," how there is a social world *for us*, which reveals the real sociological significance of the subjectively meaningful, as Weber first emphasized.

Gorman's fundamental misconceptions become irritating when he glibly states that "it may be interesting, for some, to scientifically explain why we . . . stop at red lights, . . . but it is more useful and significant for society as a whole to understand the origins, nature, and possible correctives for the 'seamy' aspects of our democratic system" (84). Does he completely reject the studies on the authoritarian personality and other works on the social psychology of fascism? To me, Gorman's plea for relevance is grossly misguided.

A final blow to the book is that the discussion of the "trivialities" of ethnomethodology shows that Gorman is painfully unaware of the location of Schutz's influence on that discipline. The writers and works that Gorman cites in his criticisms are almost exclusively from a particular offshoot from ethnomethodology known as conversational analysis. Even a cursory reading of conversational analysis will reveal that the work is primarily influenced by the Anglo-American philosophical tradition of ordinary language analysis, not Schutzian phenomenology. In all fairness, it must be admitted that

undertaking the task of explicating the work of a thinker of Schutz's magnitude is indeed an enormous challenge, but the fundamental errors in Gorman's analysis make the book less than rewarding for the interested reader.

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