

EDITORIAL COMMENTARY

It is hard to find a work which expounds all the shades and subtleties of the notion of *Lebenswelt* in the field of contemporary philosophy; it is harder still to find a pertinent exposition of the “world of life” in the face of the social, cultural and political problems of our countries. It is well known that such difficulties encountered by the social sciences and philosophy spring from precisely that category, taken from the Husserlian matrix. They have been interpreted in a variety of trends: one need but mention three cultivators of contemporary sociology such as Schütz, Luckmann and Habermas, to name only three German thinkers who have marked this rich current debate. In the field of the “critical” social sciences in our countries moreover, the uses made among those who devote themselves to qualitative analysis or comprehensive studies are not always capable of assimilation. At the same time, other social scientists exist who question—or reluctantly withdraw from—those phenomenological categories which, in their opinion, are not capable of accounting for the sociocultural and political worlds; suspecting, in many cases, that the analysis of worlds contextualised through this category is too philosophical and will lead to a hermeneuticist idealism or a comprehensive type of sociology which does not account for the complex class structures of Latin American societies.

In this new number, the CUHSO review makes an important contribution to the clarification of these difficulties inherent in the analysis of the *Lebenswelt*. Here we have incorporated contributions in support of the world of life category, and help to clear up some of the above-mentioned epistemological controversies, on the basis of works dealing with the state of social science and an analysis of the cultural reality of Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Venezuela.

Despite the heterogeneous nature of the traditions referring to the world of life,

we aspire to contribute to the re-establishment of the intimate link between the categories relating to the world of life and the contextual categories present in the problem of Latin American philosophy and academic European philosophy; thus in the analyses of the world of life contained in this special number we find a transition between philosophical suppositions and those proper to the social sciences.

In the work “World of life, citizenship and migrations”, by Alcira B. Bonilla and Eduardo J. Vior, the authors analyse the phenomenon of migration and the recognition and validity of the human right to migration in relation to the three aspects announced in the title: the theory and world of life; the extension of the notion of citizenship; and the relations possible between a broad treatment of citizenship and the political participation of migrants which result in the notion of “emergent intercultural citizenships”.

The article by our colleague Iván Canales, “The category of *Lebenswelt* in Jürgen Habermas and its difficulties in the face of intercultural social dialogue”, expounds for us the various problems of this category of *Lebenswelt* in the work of the said author. Canales reflects critically on this concept in the dialogic of Habermas and evaluates the potential and limits of this theory to function as a basis for imagining intercultural social integration. He points out that the principal exclusions are those which prevent our peoples from being considered as legitimate interlocutors in the social and political whole, since in socio-evolutionary terms they belong to a plurality of worlds of life which, most of the time, do not exhibit the dialogical communication competencies proper to post-conventional or genuinely modern worlds of life.

The contribution of professor Hector Mora in his article “World of life, comprehen-

sion and intersubjective action in the phenomenological sociology of Alfred Schütz”, consists in drawing up a descriptive and analytical approach to three concepts which are central in the proposal of Alfred Schütz: ‘World of life’ (*Lebenswelt*), ‘comprehension’ (*Verstehen*) and ‘intersubjective action’. He explores the meaning of the ‘world of life’ as an eminent reality, as well as the multiple forms which it acquires from the perspective of the social actor; he reviews the concept of ‘comprehension’ both as a capacity of the actor and in its relation to the formation of the social world, and reflects on the characteristics acquired by subjective and intersubjective social action, placing it in its space-time framework.

In “The Spaces of Violence”, Dr. Alejandro Moreno offers a summarised report on an important qualitative investigation into violent delinquents of low social origin in Venezuela today. Continuing the biographical focus, fifteen life-stories have been drawn up of murderers of varying ages and all parts of the country, which have been systematically studied with hermeneutic methods, seeking not only to interpret, but to understand from within the subjects their principal motives, thus giving an insight into the dynamic of today’s violent Venezuelan delinquent.

From another Latin American context, Dr. Jovino Pizzi sketches “A hermeneutic-epistemological exercise linked to the world of life”, in which he considers that the concept of *Lebenswelt* requires a methodology capable of comprehending the possible orientations of human action, and at the same time of understanding decision-making in a communicational horizon. Thus the subjects make use of an epistemology which allows the horizon of the objective sciences to be extended. In this

context the project of a *mathesis universalis* of Cartesian rationalism proves inadequate. Contemporary thought has changed the physicalist methodology and introduced new ideals for the sciences. In this sense, phenomenology opens up prerogatives for the understanding even of life stories, and for making new sense of the historical facts and conjunctions relative to the multiplicity of knowledge of the different worlds of life.

Apart from presenting these five studies, this number of CUHSO goes more deeply into the growing use of the “world of life”, both by intercultural philosophy and by the comprehensive social sciences, with respect to the significant role of different cultural contexts in the gestation of knowledge. In this sense, it may be said that the question of the world of life has become central to clarifying intercultural themes.

To end with, let us add that this new number of this Social Sciences Review again draws attention to two questions for the social sciences in today’s context: one of an intellectual nature—in which the themes of critical thought and the world of life appear face to face with the contemporary philosophical and scientific debate—and the other relating to the sociopolitical experience within which the academic practices of knowledge are installed. This double problem informs both the logical and epistemological questions of the knowledge proper to the social sciences, and those questions referring to the commitment of the intellectual to the sociocultural meaning and relevance of academic practices with their own contexts. This link is a specific modality of the problem between knowledge and power which is part of the reflection proper to the social sciences.

Ricardo Salas Astrain
Director CUHSO