



Don Quixote or the disenchantment of a revolutionary. On Alfred Schütz

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Abstract

Don Quixote or the disenchantment of a revolutionary. On Alfred Schütz.

Can Quixote be seen as a symbol of the revolutionary political parties trying to introduce a new reality in the disenchanted bourgeois world? In the 1950's, when Schütz presented his analysis of Quixote, the ideological choice was capitalist market or communist planism. It was addressed by Schütz in the article "Making music together" (1951), where he contrasted two models of social cooperation, the symphonic orchestra, and the jazz band. Quixote shared a common pattern with the symphonic orchestra and communist planism. In these cases, reality seems to come out of books: books of chivalry, the musical partiture, or the communist dogma. In all cases a different reality of a higher order is introduced in our chaotic "paramount reality", expressed by Sancho Panza, the jazz band, and the market. But to achieve social relationship all realities must be reduced to the common denominator of a disenchanting *common* sense.

Keywords

Revolution | Market | Multiple reality | Common Sense | Social Relationship





Alfred Schütz's interest in liberalism was well-known to the circle of liberal economists and social thinkers of his time. Born in Vienna (Barber, 2004), into a Jewish family, he studied law, economics, and sociology at the University of Vienna, after which he earned a doctorate in philosophy of law under Hans Kelsen in 1921. He then worked as a business lawyer and in 1927 obtained a position as executive secretary at the Reitler and Co in Vienna, a private banking firm with international activities. In addition to this, he frequented the Mises Circle in Vienna, an interdisciplinary circle founded by Ludwig von Mises, where he made friendships with Felix Kaufmann, Fritz Machlup, and Eric Voegelin, among others. In June 1932, he joined a group of phenomenologists in Freiburg im Breisgau, at Husserl's invitation. His prosperous collaboration, incited Husserl to offer Schütz to work as his assistant. However, in order to provide for his family, Schütz was forced to decline the offer and return to Vienna. For most of his life, he divided his time between his work in the business world and his research in philosophy and social sciences. Husserl, with whom he maintained close contact and a regular exchange of letters until Husserl's death in 1938, said of Schütz that he was a businessman by day and a philosopher by night.

In 1938, along with twenty-five other liberal economists and intellectuals, including Mises, Hayek et Aron, he participated in the Walter Lippmann Colloquium, held in Paris from August 26 to August 30, 1938. The colloquium was organized by the French philosopher Louis Rougier, with the valuable help of Louis Marlio, a *grand patron* of the aluminum industry in France, on the occasion of the French translation of Walter Lippman's "The good society" and the presence of the author in Paris. Liberalism and liberal ideas in the broad sense were at this time extremely threatened. It is reported that, at the time, Mussolini exposed on his bureau a bar of gold, inviting his visitors to take a look at the cadaver of liberalism. Totalitarianism was advancing everywhere. Shortly before the conference, Austria was absorbed by the Nazi regime with the *Anschluss* on March 12, 1938. Almost a quarter of the participants (including many Austrians) had to flee their countries. On the other hand, in non-fascist countries, liberalism was also very much threatened by the planism in vogue, the anti-market centralized organization and direction of the economic activity. Even liberals were convinced of the death of liberalism. In certain aspects, as sustained by numerous intellectuals and philosophers, like Michel Foucault¹, the Walter Lippmann Colloquium can be considered as the birth certificate of the new liberalism.

This short introduction of intellectual-biographical character is necessary to better understand the spirit in which Alfred Schütz presented two of his most enigmatic works, those on jazz musicians² and on Don Quixote³, in the early fifties, in the circle

¹ See the seminars of the 14th and 21st February 1979 (Foucault, 2008: 129-184).

² See "Making music together. A study in social relationship" (Schütz, 1976: 135-158).

³ See "Don Quixote and the problem of reality" (Schütz, 1976: 159-178).



of the New School for Social Research, in New York. Not only the end of the war and the end of Nazi fascist order did not change much of the intellectual resentment against liberalism, instead, the international context of the fifties saw a growing opposition between liberal market economy and communist planism. The situation was particularly acute in the 1950's when Alfred Schütz presented his own version of Quixote as a multiplier of social reality as, at the time, the difference between liberal and communist ideologies had been codified in the dilemma: bourgeois market or communist planification. This dilemma was addressed by Schütz in yet another article of the same period, written before the one on Don Quixote, "Making music together" (1951), where he contrasted two models of social cooperation, the symphonic orchestra and the jazz band⁴. How is it possible to coordinate an ensemble of musicians and instruments without conductor and partiture, where no one knows either the piece of music to be played or his place in the orchestra? Whether it is a string quartet or a jazz ensemble, the principle is the same, says Schütz. Musical composition is the result of synchronization on the basis of embedded patterns and components of music such as chords, melody, rhythm. In free jazz the big problem is the sequencing of the roles. Its dominant element is improvisation, individual or group, on a predominantly musical theme. Some accompany and some improvise. In succession, the last one passes the baton to the next one by making a signal, that is by changing the volume or even the rhythm. Gradually and through the experiential path of the band, a common code and a culture of communication is established both between the musicians who make up the band and between the band and its audience. In this way, musical forms and repertoires are formed in the world of jazz that facilitate interaction and refine the aesthetic criterion.

This model of social collaboration is based upon a horizontal interaction between the actors of the band themselves, as well as the interaction between the band and their audience. This interaction includes the element of temporal experience, which could be qualified as historical if it were to refer to bands with a life history of thirty or forty years. The production of the culture of musical interaction in the jazz band is equivalent to Menger's theory (Menger, 1985; Menger, 1963) of production of social institutions by society itself in his *Untersuchungen über die Methode der Sozialwissenschaften und der Politischen Ökonomie Insbesondere* (1883). Against the metaphysical and holistic conception of the German "national spirit" (*Volksgeist*) and the socialist ideology, Menger advocates the model of "methodological individualism"⁵. In other words, he attempts to derive the social wholeness and the

⁴ The part on the communication between jazz musicians of the following analysis is borrowed to Paolo Fabbri, who entrusted me with the manuscript of his yet unpublished work on "The improvisation", a presentation at the international colloquium "Sociologie compréhensive et postmodernité", organized by the CEAQ / Université Paris Descartes, the 19th and 20th December 2001, at the Salle Louis Liard, Sorbonne.

⁵ See Niall Bond, *Carl Menger entre épistémologie et idéologie* in Gilles Campagnolo (éd.), *Existe-t-il une doctrine Menger? Aux origines de la pensée économiques autrichienne*, Aix en Provence, Publications de l'Université de la Provence, 2011: 101-126, « Individualisme méthodologique et lutte contre les métaphores collectivistes », 117-121.

institutional order from the intentional actions of individuals. He divides institutions into two types: the first, those that come directly from society, which he calls “organic”; the second, those that come from the state, which he calls “pragmatic”. What is an “organic” institution? It is a self-created order that imposes itself without the mediation of any authority or power.

We have here, then, what we may call a praxeological theory of institutions, admittedly in rough outline, in which the existence of certain institutions is explained as the unintended result of the pursuit of individual plans by large numbers of actors – as a ‘resultant of social forces’, not a product of social design. In Menger’s terminology, they are the institutions of organic, not pragmatic origin (Lachmann, 1971: 57)⁶.

First, an organic institution is an activity, a habit, a solution to a problem that serves a person or a group, facilitating their daily communication and interaction. Another person or group notices this solution, acknowledges its usefulness and adopts it. The use of this form of social interaction, *i.e.*, the organic institution, eventually becomes widespread and standardized, gaining social power and prestige. In other words, this informal solution is used by larger and larger groups, until it is formalized in a social institution. This is the process of the genesis of social institutions. Hayek will take up this analysis to speak of “spontaneous orders”.

This theory contrasts of course with the widespread communist ideal of the production of society through the persistent and accurate action of an all-powerful and fully dominant State. From this point of view, the implementation of a ready-made system of institutions, brought up in a book or a party program is simply otherworldly. The revolutionary order of reality simply contrasts with the living experience of societies – their *Lebensumwelt*, as Husserl would say (Husserl, 1976: 38, 67, 106 *et passim*) – as they get to produce their proper organic institutions, based mostly on socially derived common sense and not on scholarly erudition. In this sense, one could look upon Don Quixote as a symbol of the revolutionary or, to be more accurate, of the revolutionary political parties and of the new reality they are trying to introduce in the disenchanting bourgeois world. There are elements which can let an attentive reader believe that Don Quixote shared the same pattern as the symphonic orchestra and the central planning of the communist regimes. For example, in all three cases reality seems to come out of books: books of chivalry and the Bible for Quixote, an element upon which Schütz insists in his “Don Quixote and the problem of reality” (1953); the partiture for the symphonic orchestra; and, finally, Marx-Engels works and communist theory for revolutionary regimes and parties. It seems that in all these cases, there is a kind of a new reality of a higher and more structured order that is introduced in a world of chaos and disorder. This last world, the incomplete world of our senses, our “paramount reality” that is, is expressed by



⁶ See also, Panagiotis Christias, *Méthode et vérité : aspects de l'analyse historique chez Foucault* in Francis Farrugia et Antigone Mouchtouris (dir.), *La pensée des sociologues. Catégorisation, classification, identification, différenciation et reconnaissance*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2018: 67-82.

Sancho Panza, the jazz band and the bourgeois market. In this reality of ours, there is no scripture to follow, no *chef d'orchestre*, the world is ever changing, mutating, moving. Nevertheless, as Sancho Panza would put it, it is the only reality in which we can talk to each other. In other words, to achieve social relationship, all realities must be reduced to the common denominator of common sense. It is what happened to Quixote, and it is also what happened to the revolutionary ideals.

What is difficult to understand is how to conciliate the ideal order with the chaotic reality. The answer to that question is given by Schütz, when he asserts that the two universes of reality, the one of madness of Don Quixote and the one based on Panza's senses and experience are not as hermetically closed to one another as one would have supposed them to be. There are windows of communication between them that help Quixote maintain his belief in his own realm of reality:

Again and again the ingenious knight refutes any doubt on the part of outsiders that the heroes of whom the books of chivalry give an account have ever lived and that their adventures occurred as described in the books. He has good arguments to proffer. The institution of knights errant, he explains to the canon of Toledo, is universally acknowledged and authenticated. The story of Fierrabras took place in the time of Charlemagne, the deeds of King Arthur are recorded in the histories and annals of England, in the King's Armory in Madrid Roland's horn can be seen even to this day. Furthermore, the books which deal with the life and history of the knights describe in all details the family, time, place, action of this or that knight day by day (Schütz, 1976: 137).



The reference to the authority of the consecrated books, that stand with one foot in the paramount reality and with the other in another reality of their own imaginary universe, is one the two essential elements of the possible conciliation between the utopic world of Quixote and the world of Panza. These books can be seen as an alternative reality or as an alternative interpretation of the reality. It all then depends on the element of faith in chivalry and in the existence of its utopic world. In an analogous way, the communist's faith in the possibility of the existence of a society without social classes, social discrimination and social inequality is funded upon the authority of Marxist ideology. Once you accept the principle of the social transformation, which is no other than the society-to-come, then it is easier to assume that this end can be achieved by organized rational human action. But what is "rational" only depends on the rationalizations advanced by the Marxist-Leninist revolutionary theory. It is not necessarily reasonable. In order to be reasonable, a communist should avoid founding his judgement on communist ideology as Quixote should stop reading reality through books of chivalry. In both cases, the communist as well as Quixote should stop being who they are and abandon their own identity. Of course, the denial of one's own understanding of one's self would practically correspond to a psychological collapse. For the believer of utopic worlds, defending the reality of the books is actually defending the psychological robustness of his own ego structured as a missionary way of life based on knowledge and truth.

Knight errantry is first of all a way of life. It fulfils a heavenly mission. Knights errant are "God's ministers on earth, and the arms by which His justice is executed here." In this iron age it is their profession to roam the world, righting wrongs and relieving injuries. But chivalry is not only a way of life, it is a science, more, the queen of all sciences, which comprises all or most sciences in the world. He who professes knight errantry must be a jurist and know the laws of person and property; he must be a theologian so that he may give the reasons for the Christian rules he professes; a physician and especially a herbalist in order to prepare a flask of the balsam of Fierrabras, of which a few drops heal a knight cut through the middle, provided the parts are fitted together before the blood congeals; an astronomer to know by the stars how many hours of the night have passed and in what part of the world he is; he must know how to shoe a horse, how to mend a saddle, how to swim. And above all, he has to be a maintainer of truth, although its defence may cost him his life (Schütz, 1976: 138).



The imaginary world of chivalry, the one Quixote lives in, is actually mentally constructed like our paramount reality. It involves knowledge, truth, science and experience, as well as all of the typical relations between those subjects. In all and for all, it is not another world with strange properties, but our own with some characteristic features, specific to the world of chivalry. These structural bridges between the two versions of our world expand also to the moral realities. The fact is, though, that even if a knight errant "must be a jurist and know the laws of person and property", he is exempt from obeying to the social, political, moral, and legal order.

This world of chivalry has its own legal and economic system. Knights errant are exempt from all jurisdiction, their law is their sword, their charter their courage, their statutes their own will. Where have you ever heard of a knight errant being brought before a judge, however many homicides he may have committed? What knight errant ever paid taxes, customs or toll? What tailor was ever paid by him for a suit of clothes? What warden who received him in his castle ever made him pay his score? (Schütz, 1976: 138)

This exception might sound innocent in the case of Quixote, but it is certainly not innocent if applied to the revolutionary order, anarchists, nihilists or communists. For the argument, it suffices to refer to a work much appreciated by Lenin, Sergey Gennadiyevich Nechayev's "Catechism of a revolutionary" (1869). In the *Catechism*, the work that helped organize the radical revolutionary movement in Russia, the revolutionary is portrayed as an amoral being, a vengeful creature, an expendable resource in the service of the revolutionary cause. Furthermore, he is committed to any crime or treachery necessary to achieve the downfall of the prevailing order (Avrich, 1990: 38). The exoneration of the believers from the moral order of the paramount reality is the result of the fact that revolutionaries only meet with reality through bridges and gates opened by enchanter's or revolutionary incantations.

Schütz modeled the system of interconnection by proposing the existence of a modal operator, that allows individuals to change universes of reality without having to go through the torment of moral conflict or material contradiction. In Cervantes' novel, this operator was no other than the order of enchanter, good or evil. At the same time, the existence of this order actually introduces a solid frontier between worlds, in this case between the inner world of Quixote and the exterior world of the peasants. As Schütz argues, whenever a conflict is introduced between the paramount reality and Quixote's enchanted reality, causing a cognitive dissonance, the modal operator intervenes. For example, it is a wicked magician that transforms the giants into windmills and the beautiful Dulcinea into an ugly peasant girl, making sure that nobody else could ever see her. According to Quixote's version, Dulcinea is entrapped in this image game imposed by the magician and needs to be liberated. This version suggests that the whole paramount reality is a fake mental creation imposed by a cheater. Once the mean enchanter is defeated, things will appear in their true form and human reality will be restored into its authentic form.



All this is due to the work of the enchanter, the friendly and the hostile ones, who fulfil in Don Quixote's sub-universe the role of causality and motivation. Their activity is the basic category of Don Quixote's interpretation of the world. It is their function to translate the order of the realm of phantasy into the realms of common-sense experience, to transform the real giants attacked by Don Quixote, for instance, into phantoms of windmills. Enchanters, so we learn, can transform all things and change their natural shapes. But, strictly speaking, what they change is the scheme of interpretation prevailing in one sub-universe into the scheme of interpretation valid in another. Both refer to the same matter of fact which is, in terms of Don Quixote's private subuniverse, Mambrino's miraculous helmet, and, in terms of Sancho Panza's paramount reality of everyday life, an ordinary barber's basin. Thus, it is the function of the enchanter's activities to guarantee the coexistence and compatibility of several subuniverses of meaning referring to the same matters of fact and to assure the maintenance of the accent of reality bestowed upon any of such sub-universes. Nothing remains unexplained, paradoxical or contradictory, as soon as the enchanter's activities are recognized as a constitutive element of the world. But to Don Quixote the existence of enchanter is much more than a mere hypothesis. It is a historical fact proved by all the sacred source books reporting on matters of chivalry. Of course, this fact is not verifiable by ordinary means of sense perception. For magicians never allow themselves to be seen, and it is clear that the axiom of enchantment, which makes the reconciliation between the sub-universe of phantasy and the paramount reality possible, cannot itself be subjected to a test originating within one of these sub-universes (Schütz, 1976: 139-140).

In the case of the revolutionary, "capitalism", "liberalism" or, today, "neoliberalism", are the equivalent of the wicked magicians and their order. Human reality is not what it seems to be, as it is actually the mean enchanter of the (neo)liberal order that are to be blamed for the decadence of human societies. It suffices to study the use of the adjective "liberal" or "capitalist" in most of the

antiliberal pamphlets of the thirties and forties in European thought⁷, or even today's propaganda of anticapitalism movements, to realize that the use is ideological, if not metaphysical⁸. This use offers "reasons" to believe that the struggle against liberalism and capitalism and the final victory against them will restore humanity in its rightful, authentic order.

To be sure, if we introduce the enchanters into the causal chain, we cannot solve the Cartesian doubt about whether the world is governed by an evil genius or by God. But we are sure that whatever happens, happens reasonably, that is, within the motivation of the enchanters. We might be tempted to speak of a non-Hegelian dialectic in a similar way in which we speak of a non-Euclidian geometry (Schütz, 1976: 140).

It is interesting to observe that the difference of universes was transposed, during the soviet years, to the economical-political field. The Soviet Union had to operate according to communist economy within its frontiers and as a capitalistic force worldwide. This inconsistency proved to be fatal, as a number of economists have already explained. Forcing the communist regime to face the reality of the others proved a dangerous enterprise for its survival just like Quixote's need to communicate and interact in an everyday basis with Sancho forced the self-proclaimed chevalier into embracing the principles of paramount reality.

But the main modal incantation of revolutionaries living in a capitalistic world – or of totalitarians obliged to live in liberal democracies – was always the one of the earthly paradise to come. One could simply swap realities if only he recited the incantation: A revolutionary had every right to live and accept the benefits of the bourgeois states as long as he used them against their liberal order. In most of the times, this just proved to be hypocritical, and actually betrayed a systematic distortion in the revolutionary narrative as doings and words did not match. As long as the socialist society would necessarily come because of the contradiction between productive forces and relations of production (Marxism), one could always postpone the revolution to come for later and keep taking advantage of the "system". The structural inaccuracy of the Marxist prophecy is proven extremely useful in the construction of the revolutionary cultural criticism. All social institutions are considered inadequate if measured to the excellence of the society to come. But wouldn't that be a major difference between the Cervantes imaginary and the revolutionary one? Quixote's phantasy world of chivalry seems to be dominated by



⁷ See the author's introduction to Serge Audier, *Le colloque Lippmann. Aux origines du « néo-libéralisme »*, Paris, BDL, 2012, « Crise du libéralisme, émergence du "néo-libéralisme" », that refers to the antiliberal critique of the time.

⁸ By metaphysical, I am referring to the fascist and communist critique of liberalism degrading the human nature, abandoning human persons and societies to be corrupted by the individualistic model of life. For its adversaries, the liberal state lacks proper ideal, mission, and will to forge the new man and the new society. It is understandable that behind any "new man" and any "new society" project lies a metaphysical conception of the human essence.

the nostalgic reminiscences of an ever-changing society⁹ while revolutionary visionaries' critique points to practices and mentalities that will have to disappear in a near future. It would seem that quixotism is turned toward the past while utopist spirit towards the future. But how true is the conception of Marxist cultural criticism as a critique that originates from a vision of the future? According to Panajotis Kondylis (Kondylis, 1986), cultural criticism originates in the farouche social and political critique of the conservative intellectuals of the Ancient Regime to the new order of modernity. Based upon the critique of the counterrevolution and the ideological leaders of the reactionary nobility, Marxist cultural criticism was tainted by the language of restauration and authenticity. Marxism and the revolution were supposed to restore the human being to an authentic way of life and actually focused on the salvatory action of the reformed state-produced society on individuals. So, even if communism dreamt and prepared the society to come, this society was thought to be a restoration of some kind of original prototype of human society.

Regardless the orientation, towards the past or towards the future, restauration of the old and timeless order or creation of a new historical order, there is another, historically defined, element that prevails in the attachment to an imaginary reality: faith in an order of reality different from everyday reality and common sense. Faith is an element particular to the Christian religion, it did not exist in Ancient Greece or Rome. To give an example, when Paul Veyne asked the question: "Did Greeks believe in their gods", what he meant was if the Greeks actually thought that their gods were real. "Belief" without the element of faith has a mere gnoseological sense, something like Kant's *fürwahrhalten*, "accept as being true". In his last work, *On certitude*, Ludwig Wittgenstein notes that when you make an assertion like: "This is my hand", this does not mean that you "know" that this is your hand. That means that you "believe" it, and that you probably have good reasons to do so. "Believing" in God, in chivalry or in communism does not have this meaning: it means that you have "faith" in them. Faith involves a non-rationalistic procedure of attachment to the object of your belief. And while simple beliefs can rationally change, faiths do not. Both, Quixote's world of chivalry and revolutionaries' communist world, are byproducts of the Christian existential attitude of faith. This is clear in the farouche critique that Raymond Aron addresses to Marxist communist intelligentsia in the *Opium of the intellectuals* (1955), an expressed first used by Simone Weil: "Marxism is undoubtedly a religion, in the lowest sense of the word. Like every inferior form of the religious life, it has been continually used, to borrow the apt phrase of Marx himself, as an opiate for the people¹⁰". In the tenth chapter of this book, "The intellectuals in search of a religion", he states:

⁹ In this sense, see Panagiotis Christias, *Don Quichotte et Sancho Panza : Noble mensonge et vulgaire réalité. Histoire d'un malentendu* in Sidonie Keller, Astrid Nierhoff-Fassbender, Alice Perrin-Marsol, Fabien Théophilakis (hrsg.), *Missverständnis Malentendu. Kultur zwischen Kommunikation und Störung*, FORUM / Studien zur Moderneforschung, Zentrum für Moderneforschung in der Philosophischen Fakultät der Universität zu Köln, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 2008: 91-104.

¹⁰ Cited by Raymond Aron, *The opium of the intellectuals*, New York, The Norton Library, 1962: vii.



The doctrine provides true Communists with a global interpretation of the universe; it instils sentiments akin to those of the crusaders of all ages; it fixes the hierarchy of values and establishes the norms of good conduct. It fulfils, in the individual and in the collective soul, some of the functions which the sociologist normally ascribes to religions. As for the absence of the transcendental or the sacred, the Communists do not categorically deny it, but they recall that many societies throughout the centuries have been ignorant of the notion of a divine being without being ignorant of the way of thought and feeling, the obligations and the devotions, which the observer of today regards as religious (Aron, 1962: 265).

In his own words, Communism is the first successful religion of intellectuals, organized as a neo-Christian sect or Church:



The Marxist prophetism, as we have seen, conforms to the typical pattern of the Judeo-Christian prophetism. Every prophetism condemns what is and sketches an outline of what should or will be; it chooses an individual or a group to cleave a path across the no-man's land which separates the unworthy present from the radiant future. The classless society which will bring social progress without political revolution is comparable to the dreams of the millennium. The misery of the proletariat proves its vocation and the Communist Party becomes the Church which is opposed by the bourgeois/pagans who stop their ears against the good tidings and by the socialist / Jews who have failed to recognise the Revolution which they themselves had been heralding for years (Aron, 1962: 267).

This ideology, drawn from "the sacred scriptures of dialectical materialism" (Aron, 1962: 286), has only fallen after the opening of the Soviet state and society to the West. The need to communicate with the capitalist world, the experience of a *common* life with the others, disenchanting the communist narrative and the soviet world, as the "dialectic of intersubjectivity" (Schütz, 1976: 145) lead "to the personal tragedy and the downfall of the knight" (Schütz, 1976: 146):

Having lost with his knight errantry his heavenly mission, Don Quixote has to prepare himself after his spiritual death for his physical end. And so he dies, no longer Don Quixote de la Mancha, but Alonso Quixano the Good, a man who considers himself of clear judgment, free from the misty shadows of ignorance with which his dwelling in the province of phantasy has obscured it (Schütz, 1976: 157).

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