

Karl Mannheim and the Sociology of Intelligence

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INTRODUCTION

§ 1. The thesis of Mannheim's actuality: the case of the sociology of knowledge and the sociology of intellectuals

As the co-founder of the sociology of knowledge and the sociology of intellectuals, Karl Mannheim is considered a “classical author” in the social sciences, especially in sociology and political science. According to Niklas Luhmann’s ironic remark, “[t]he classical authors are classical because they are classical authors; their use today is identified by self-reference.” (Luhmann 1987: 7, cited in Bohnsack 2018: 199). Irony is called for in this case because of the ambivalence and biases this category involves. It can have two adverse and interrelated consequences, both of which are typical of the reception of Mannheim’s oeuvre, especially in its earlier periods. The first, pointed out by Luhmann, is *self-referentiality*: it entails studying an author for no other reason than their importance in the canon of a given field. Understandably, such studies often seem to lack relevance for more practically bent researchers and scholars. The second consequence is complementary to the first, although it goes in the opposite direction: it entails *not* (or not seriously) engaging with a classical author because one supposes that the few widely cited ideas attributed to them – which are at best approximate but sometimes outright false – exhaust what is still worth to be known of their work. A classical author is thus one who is not supposed to have the ability to cause surprise and trigger new interrogations relevant for contemporary concerns. These two seemingly opposed attitudes are complementary in the sense that the sometimes voluminous monographies on the work of classical authors that try to make justice to their thought rarely trigger any serious interest on the part of those who otherwise make a quite liberal (and often superficial) use of partial aspects of their works.

My goal in this doctoral dissertation has been to remedy to these two problematic tendencies present in Mannheim’s reception by offering a reading of his sociology of knowledge and sociology of intellectuals based on the hypothesis of the *actuality* of his contributions to these two domains of the social sciences. Consequently, I did not strive to give a comprehensive exegesis of his writings on these subjects. Instead, my reading was guided by the idea of putting Mannheim in a critical dialogue with the main contemporary representatives

of these fields of study, with the aim of bringing to light and valorize what remains alive and fertile in Mannheim's project. To paraphrase and apply his own words to my endeavor in this dissertation, my aim was to exhume and develop those deeper tendencies and germs that lie buried in Mannheim's oeuvre capable of fertilizing contemporary research in the sociology of knowledge and the sociology of intellectuals (Mannheim 1982b: 240).

To make explicit these deeper tendencies and germs, I first wish to address a potential objection to the above diagnosis and the consequent statement of the aims of this dissertation, namely the existence of a recent noticeable shift in the history of the reception of Mannheim's oeuvre. Ralf Bohnsack's claim, made in relation to Mannheim's legacy, that "the status and the theoretical value of classical authors is defined by the extent to which their theoretical categories and their explicit or implicit methodological directives may give decisive impulses and categorical formulations for actual (empirical) research" (Bohnsack 2018: 199), well expresses the spirit of this shift in the contemporary scholarship on Mannheim and the researches it inspires (cp. Tverdota 2019). This tendency clearly considers that Mannheim's contributions, far from a groundbreaking though outdated performance of a "classic of sociology", instead have a direct practical impact in contemporary empirical and theoretical research in various disciplines in the human and social sciences (see Kettler–Loader–Meja 2008: 1, 194; Cs. Kiss–Fábrí 2007: 205–6). At the antipode of the above-depicted image of the "classical author", Mannheim is increasingly seen today as an actual thinker whose thought can be fruitfully applied either in different disciplinary fields, or even in a "multidisciplinary" manner (Gábor 1996).

In consideration of the prior phases of Mannheim's reception, in which, when not simply ignored, he was subjected to sometimes very uncharitable readings by a range of commentators using his figure more as a foil than as an object of serious attention and fair analysis (on this see Simonds 1978; Pels 1996; Jay 1973; Huke-Didier 1985; Mauger 1990), the satisfaction felt by some of the most distinguished Mannheim scholars over this favorable evolution is entirely warranted (Kettler–Loader–Meja 2008: 1–2). However, it is precisely this newer (and indeed most welcome) tendency in the Mannheim-scholarship that helps highlight a most striking fact, namely the *complete lack of any similar tendency* in precisely those fields of study that Mannheim is credited to have co-founded, namely *the sociology of knowledge and the sociology of intellectuals*. I consider the recognition of the incongruous character of the current situation, where Mannheim is seen as a potential inspirer in a growing number of disciplines and fields in the human and social sciences, *except in his own*, as an important step for a renewed understanding of what the actuality of his thought can mean today.

§ 2. The sociology of intellectuals as a recursive, dissenting, and transdisciplinary epistemic practice

Recognition, however, is only a first step that demands an explanation: why is Mannheim still considered a “classical author” lacking all contemporary relevance in his own domains of research? To this interrogation, this dissertation provides an answer, but one that gives to the project of establishing Mannheim’s actuality in these fields a rather peculiar tilt insofar as it leads to recognize that what is alive and fertile in his contributions is at any rate in a tense relationship with the state of these fields as they exist today. To be more precise, this project gives rise to the hypothesis that, under their current design, both the academic sociology of knowledge and the sociology of intellectuals have developed expressly *against* the paradigm set for them by Karl Mannheim as their co-founder – or, to use a psychoanalytical expression: the foundational act of both these domains of research is an act of repression of their origin (i.e., of the paradigm established by Mannheim).

An implication of this hypothesis is that what has been said about Mannheim as a classical author is in a sense also true for the sociology of knowledge and the sociology of intellectuals as such. Indeed, their status is today considered clear and unproblematic; they are supposed to function exactly like any other field of study in the social sciences and involve the same kind of professional motivations on the part of those who engage in them. It is thus assumed that some people specialize in the sociology of the family, others of sexuality, while still others choose “knowledge” or “intellectuals” as their specific objects of sociological study. Now, I see the interest and actuality of Mannheim’s contributions to these domains precisely in that they disclose the deeply problematic character of such assumptions and thereby problematize in a radical way the status of the sociology of knowledge and the sociology of intellectuals within the social sciences.

What does the specificity of the sociology of intellectuals and the sociology of knowledge consist of in the human and social sciences? The answer lies, I believe, in the *orientation* of these areas of research, which is – at least initially – both *practical* and *reflexive*. To understand what this means, one must start from the concept of “intellectual”, contained in the phrase “sociology of intellectuals” (I will explain later why I have so far always mentioned sociology of knowledge and sociology of intellectuals together). The concept of the intellectual as it is used today in the mainstream of the sociology of intellectuals comes from a specific

context, that of the Dreyfus affair in France, where it emerged as the name that a certain social group becoming aware of its social identity in a given political conjuncture conferred on itself. In this sense already, the concept of the intellectual implies reflexivity. However, the concept subsequently received – among other things thanks to the sociology of intellectuals born in the decades after the Dreyfus affair – a more general meaning going beyond its context of emergence (for a summary of the genealogy of the concept, see Charle 2015: 11-47). The clearest and simplest definition of this general concept was given by Michel Foucault who wrote that the intellectual is “simply the person who uses his knowledge, his competence and his relation to truth in the field of political struggles.” (Foucault 2000: 128.)

As Chapter 7 will detail, this definition captures the essence of the intellectual by a specific performance, sometimes called “*intervention*”, meaning an action taken in a given context in order to induce a change in it according to a goal defined by a principled position regarding certain values that are current in a given society. The specificity of a properly *intellectual* intervention is the *capacity to make other people act by epistemic means* (and non-coercive ones, as is the case, at least “in the last instance”, in a political intervention), i.e., by providing *models or patterns of behavior and thought* based on certain values. Insofar as it implies a *capacity to make others act* in certain ways, *all intellectual discourse is a discourse of power*. This is all the more the case as intellectual discourses are obviously *plural, conflicting*, even *antagonistic* to one another. Therefore, intellectual discourses always imply (albeit sometimes implicitly) *conceptions of intellectual discourse* (and of “intellectual types”) which are often exclusive of other conceptions and “types”. If the sociologist of intellectuals wants to make the theory of these various figures and conceptions, they will have to sort them, reflect on their mutual relations, and ultimately make themselves judge of the relative correctness of these plural and divergent definitions by adopting a point of view which is itself always-already informed by presuppositions arising from their own social position, their intellectual and political preferences. Because of this, whether they are aware of it or not, and although in a mediate and indirect way, they themselves take part and intervene in the field of intellectual struggles. In other words, the sociologist of intellectuals, provided they have sufficient distance vis-à-vis their own epistemic performance, will inevitably discover themselves... intellectuals. The sociology of intellectuals is therefore a field of practical and

reflexive research in the double sense of the *objective* and *subjective* genitive: it is practiced by intellectuals and takes *intellectuals as its objects*.¹

This reasoning, if constraining, is only so logically. Factually, the sociology of knowledge and the sociology of intellectuals are often practiced without much trace of such reflexiveness, which was so central to Mannheim's preoccupations. Following the above-sketched hypothesis, this difference accounts probably for a good deal of the resistance these domains oppose to Mannheim's insights. To think sociologically about oneself is to think of oneself as being constituted by and situated within a structured framework of social actors, networks, and processes. As Mannheim's first lectures in Frankfurt – pronounced amidst the dissolution of the Weimar Republic – make it plain, the intellectual discourse instantiating such reflexivity is as much a discourse of power as any other intellectual discourse, such as Fascism and "Orthodox Marxism". Its emergence has its own social and existential necessity, and it triggers its counterparts which try to shatter it. In other terms, it is a practical-existential necessity – with Mannheim's concise formula: the question of knowing "how to think of oneself in order to act" (Mannheim 2003: 92) – that prompts some intellectuals to think of themselves as objects of analysis and it is also by necessity that this sort of reflexivity triggers defensive reactions on the part of those who feel exposed in their social position or thwarted in their aspirations by it.

Yet, the role of sociological reflexivity does not reduce to the practice of ideology-criticism. Rather, its recursive exercise entails the *particularization* and *relativization* of one's identity through a becoming-aware of the constitutive role of one's social locations in one's thought-processes and its results. The types of determinants constitutive to one's ideation processes cannot be established in an *a priori* fashion, so as to exclude from them those that trigger unease and keep only those that reinforce the feeling of legitimacy of one's social identity. One can only discover these determining factors through the *exercise* of reflexivity. This exercise involves self-criticism not in the sense of some kind of introspective spiritual exercise internal to the academic community and the sociology of intellectuals in particular, but as a confrontation of one's own intellectual perspective and practice with forms of intelligence emerging on the basis of radically different – typically non-academic – life-worlds. In the case of academic intellectuals, this sort of experience amounts to what I call *transdisciplinarity*,

¹ The best-known expression of this thesis is probably Zygmunt Bauman's formula according to which "all definitions of intellectuals are self-definitions." (Bauman 1987: 8.) For a detailed analysis of Bauman's position, see here Chapter 7, § 49.

which as Chapter 6 will show is a central preoccupation in Mannheim's sociology of knowledge and sociology of intellectuals. This transdisciplinary character appears most clearly in his aspiration to make these domains, within academic science, an instrument for the establishment and the furthering of contacts between different types and groups of intellectuals belonging to these different life-worlds.

§ 3. The sociology of intelligence as a sociology of intellectual knowledge

This involves important consequences for the sociology of intellectuals, namely the depersonalization, de-multiplication, and through these, the *democratization* of the concept of the "intellectual", which indeed tends to be replaced in recent scholarship by alternative notions. In this spirit, Lambros Fatsis (2016) has recently suggested to call intellectuals rather "public characters"; Dallyn et al. (2015: 1032) have proposed to understand the intellectual less as a social type but rather as a "particular *temperament, orientation or sensibility*" (what one might call with Mannheim an "*attitude*" – see here Chapter 6, § 42). Eyal and Buchholz (2009: 119-210), on their part, have submitted that the sociology of intellectuals be converted into a "*sociology of interventions*". According to my own thesis on this matter, the more the academic intellectual practices the sociology of knowledge and the sociology of intellectuals in a transdisciplinary manner, the more this allows them to transcend their own specific position toward other relevant contexts (above all those which concern them more closely); and the more they get to see the range of variability of their objects of study (to which they belong), the more they will see their particularity as that of a specific type of intellectual among others; as a consequence, they will be inclined to go toward a conception of the sociology of intellectuals as a *sociology of intelligence* (see here Chapter 7).

I see the main difference between a sociology of intellectuals and a sociology of intelligence in that, contrary to the former, the latter takes as its prime object of analysis not persons and groups conventionally considered intellectuals, but rather those sometimes anonymous *sociocultural processes* that produce the kind of *knowledge* that makes possible to perform an intellectual intervention. Conversely, what makes someone, or some human group, be worthy of the adjective "intellectual" is not some dominant social *convention*, but the *fact* that they are equipped to make use (and do indeed make use) of their *capacity to generate intellectual knowledge*. The sort of endeavor based on these principles – which I see contained in Mannheim's sociology of intelligence – promotes the democratization of the concept of intellectual since it makes it possible to conceive the idea of intellectual processes at work in

social contexts and groups that are radically different from those in which most sociological theories of intellectuals – sometimes in a self-centered and even self-apologetical manner – exclusively locate their object of study. This reasoning also helps understand why I have so far always mentioned together sociology of intellectuals and sociology of knowledge. The reason is that the sociocultural processes making for the emergence, formulation, and circulation of intellectual knowledge (and the corresponding capabilities) are distributed much more widely in society than it is supposed by the standard (and often quite elitist) conceptions of intelligence. The appellation “sociology of intelligence” is thus in this sense the equivalent of the longer phrase “sociology of intellectual knowledge”.

The thesis of identity between the sociology of intellectuals as a reflexive theoretical practice and the sociology of knowledge can, in Mannheim’s case, also be deduced from his thesis according to which “[t]he intelligentsia as a specialized group in general and the post-medieval intelligentsia in particular constitute a central subject of the sociology of the mind. (...) The intellectuals who produce ideas and ideologies form the most important of the connecting links between social dynamics and ideation.” (Mannheim 2003b: 121-122.) According to Mannheim’s first premise, the task of the sociology of the mind (which can be considered a synonym for the sociology of knowledge) is to uncover, restore and analyze the links between *processes of ideation* and *social dynamics*. According to the second premise, processes of ideation are performed by social actors and groups called “intellectuals”. Therefore, to grasp the links between ideation and social dynamics, the sociology of knowledge must study the intellectual groups and their practices producing (intellectual) ideas. The consequence (one that I have already stated above based on different premises) is that the sociology of knowledge is a sociology of intellectuals in the sense of an objective genitive.²

² Similar views are put forth by several authors working in this domain. For instance, in his 1936 *Preface* to the first English edition of Mannheim’s *Ideology and utopia*, Louis Wirth wrote: “in all of its aspects, the sociology of knowledge is concerned by the persons who are the bearers of intellectual activity, namely the intellectuals. In every society, there are individuals whose special function it is to accumulate, preserve, reformulate, and disseminate the intellectual heritage of the group. The composition of this group, their social derivation and the method by which they are recruited, their organization, their class affiliation, the rewards and prestige they receive, their participation in other spheres of social life, constitute some of the more crucial questions to which the sociology of knowledge seeks answers.” (Wirth 1963: xxix-xxx.) See also Harry Goldman: “In its most general form, sociology of knowledge is the analysis of the sources and meanings of forms of knowledge in relation to experience, institutions, traditions, practices, and positions of social groups and the individuals within those

Furthermore, in accordance with what I wrote above, since the study of intellectual groups is performed by intellectuals (which logically involves the exercise of reflexivity, although it cannot guarantee such exercise), the sociology of knowledge is a sociology *of* intellectuals also in the sense of the subjective genitive in that it involves a reflexive self-analysis of intellectuals through the study of the sociocultural processes of the production of intellectual knowledge.

If the above hypothesis about the contentious (and even repressive) relationship between the today dominating conceptions of the sociology of knowledge and intellectuals and Mannheim's "dissenting" and "transdisciplinary" sociology of intelligence is correct, it can be expected that a work like this one, seeking to put to the fore and valorize precisely these qualities of Mannheim's work (presumably causing its repression), can also expect some of this resistance to arise against its own theses. My way of proceeding in this dissertation has tried to adapt to this circumstance and therefore follows the subsequent reasoning.

As is often the case with the work of "classical authors", a lot of things are generally presupposed when Mannheim's sociology of intellectuals comes into question. From the point of view of the present dissertation, the first and most sensitive assumption is that Mannheim's work in this domain is homogeneous with the general way in which the academic sociology of intellectuals is practiced since the inception of the field. This means that, from the very outset, the *transdisciplinary* and *dissenting* character of Mannheim's endeavors is simply out of sight for most readers and commentators. Thereby, his sociology of intelligence is assimilated to a *specialized subfield of sociology*, a conception to which Mannheim was strongly opposed (as Chapter 6 will show). Given the expectable resistance to an approach stating the opposite about the nature of Mannheim's contribution, the first part of this dissertation opts rather for temporarily endorsing the conventional perspective, and to argue *from there* for my own theses.

This means concretely to start from the assumption that Mannheim's actuality in contemporary sociology of knowledge and intellectuals stems from its greater richness and coherence, as well as its sophisticated methodological apparatus which in some respects outstrips what other specialized research-paradigms in this domain can offer. However, by following up step by step the constitutive categories of Mannheim's sociology of intelligence, the latter will progressively show itself to be transcending its strictly academic-disciplinary bounds toward non-academic social realms and phenomena. In other terms, its transdisciplinary character will emerge upon a careful investigation of it as a methodology for specialized

groups. In its most developed form, sociology of knowledge is an approach to knowledge producers and their products mediated by a unique philosophical detachment and a pointed understanding of social dynamics."

research. To avoid a possible misunderstanding, I wish to underline that my point is not that this latter dimension (the capacity of Mannheim's methodology to inspire specialized researches), is illusory, but to say that if Mannheim's sociology of intelligence works well as a methodology for specialized research, *it is precisely because of its transdisciplinary character* – which character will then be exposed in detail in the second part of the dissertation, containing and explicating the claims and hypotheses set forth in this introduction.

§ 4. Outline of the dissertation

In a more detailed manner, this dissertation builds up as follows. The first part contains four chapters, while the second part contains three. The first chapter starts from the most frequented node in Mannheim's sociology of intelligence (and often the only text referred to when discussing Mannheim's conception on the matter): the sections in the central essay of *Ideology and Utopia*, "The Prospects of Scientific Politics", where the concept of "*freischwebende Intelligenz*" is introduced. Besides the fact that Mannheim's reception tends to be oblivious to the fact that he wrote a good deal of things relevant to the sociology of intellectuals well beyond (and also prior to) *Ideology and Utopia* (cp. Ettrich 2007), there is also a serious problem with the standard readings of the respective sections of this essay. This problem is illustrated by considering the challenge of translating the term "*freischwebende Intelligenz*" into English, often rendered as "free-floating intelligentsia". According to the thesis of the first chapter, this standard translation relies on an incorrect understanding of Mannheim's reasoning. Although Mannheim's terminological choice is objectively unfortunate, the meaning of the concept is nevertheless clearly exposed in his essay. The first chapter thus reconstructs and interprets the reasoning leading to this concept, whose meaning, as I will show, would be more correctly rendered by the translation "freely bound intellectuals", a willful oxymoron which I will use thereafter in the dissertation in place of other English versions of the term. From the point of view of the dissertation, the function of this first chapter is to find a conceptual footing for the task of the following chapters, which is to reconstruct in detail the methodology of Mannheim's sociology of intelligence not in a purely immanent fashion but through its confrontation with its different (and contradictory) interpretations, on the one hand, and the alternative methodologies in use in the sociology of intellectuals, on the other.

Chapter 2 starts with sketching a general map of the sociology of intellectuals as a specialized field of sociological research based on a review article by Kurzman and Owens (2002). According to this article, there are three big paradigms in the sociology of intellectuals:

the “class-in-themselves” approach; the “class-bound” approach; and finally, the “class-less” approach, with the foundation of which the authors credit Mannheim. I take this useful and suggestive framework as my point of departure in order to show why Mannheim does in fact *not* belong to *any* of the idealtypes constructed by Kurzman and Owens. The successive confrontations with each of them will throw into relief different aspects of Mannheim’s methodology, which will thus be reconstructed step by step, always in open dialogue with other contemporary paradigms. The first confrontation occurs with representatives of the class-in-themselves paradigm, according to whom Mannheim considered the intellectuals as a distinct *class* by virtue of their privileged position as “producers of culture” (more precisely, of intellectual knowledge). The second confrontation takes place with the opposite tendency, accusing Mannheim of *class-reductionism*, i.e., to explain the process of intellectual knowledge-generation as a mere reflection or function of non-intellectual social (and especially political) processes and interests associated with them. The rebuttal of such readings will lead me to propose a first definition of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge. This definition will however come across a temporary setback, which is the necessity to determine with more precision what appears to be a key notion of Mannheim’s methodology: the concept of *worldview*.

Chapter 3 takes on the task of defining this notion and its implications for the methodology of Mannheim’s sociology of intelligence by providing an immanent reading of his main texts from the 1920s. By doing so, Chapter 3 breaks the continuity of the confrontations began in Chapter 2, which will be taken up again in the next, fourth chapter. Thus, Chapter 3 focuses on a sequence of texts in which Mannheim uses the concept of worldview, as well as the affiliate notions of “*committedness*” (“*Engagiertsein*”), “*world-aspiration*” (“*Weltwollung*”) and “*perspective*” (“*Aspektstruktur*”). A further function of this chapter is to show that the complexity and richness of Mannheim’s sociology of intelligence does not reduce, as is often believed, to the few sections of the third essay of *Ideology and Utopia* analyzed in Chapter 1. Although this is not the place to provide details, I would like to mention the particular importance that one of the texts (analyzed at a greater length in Chapter 3) has in my eyes for the right understanding of Mannheim’s sociology of intelligence, namely the long, unfinished essay, written in 1924 but published only in 1980 by David Kettler, Volker Meja and Nico Stehr, titled “A Sociological Theory of Culture and its Knowability (Conjunctive and Communicative Thinking)”, which contains Mannheim’s first, detailed exposé of his conception of *intellectual knowledge*, itself based on the notion of *conjunctive knowledge*.

The basic categories of the methodology of Mannheim's sociology of intelligence that were elaborated in Chapter 3 are invested in Chapter 4 to carry to their end the confrontations began in Chapter 2. Thus, Chapter 4 begins with a critical dialogue with the works of Robert J. Brym, an author that I consider to be the strongest contemporary representative of the class-bound approaches, to which some commentators assign Mannheim's endeavors. While definitely establishing why Mannheim does not belong to this paradigm, this confrontation also shows how some of the Mannheimian notions worked out in Chapter 3 make possible to propose better solutions to some difficulties posed by Brym's otherwise fascinating researches.

The rest (and the bulk) of Chapter 4 focuses on the third approach to the sociology of intellectuals to which Mannheim is, I believe mistakenly, assigned by Kurzman and Owens: the so-called "class-less" paradigm, of which the most emblematic contemporary representative is Randall Collins, author of a thousand-pages-long monograph titled *Sociology of Philosophies. A Global Theory of Intellectual Change*. Collins' impressive and original performance has a special importance for the present undertaking because, according to my understanding of it, this work is the most comprehensive attempt at elaborating a sociology of intellectuals that is systematically and self-consciously at the antipode of Mannheim's transdisciplinary and "dissenting" sociology of intelligence. What is of particular interest in Collins' case (and also in the case of the so-called "new sociology of ideas", a recent tendency in the sociology of intellectuals with which I believe Collins can be associated) is that, because of its systematic opposition to Mannheim's paradigm, it touches upon most of the phenomena that Mannheim himself sought to theorize through the conceptual apparatus elaborated in Chapter 3. Therefore, this confrontation is the decisive one from the point of view of the aims of this dissertation, which is to bring out the transdisciplinary and dissenting dimensions of Mannheim's sociology of intelligence, in which dimensions lie its potential to have an actual impact in these domains today. The conclusion of this last confrontation, which already points toward the second part of this dissertation, is that the true subjects of Mannheim's sociology of intelligence are not so much individual intellectuals or their groups but the more diffuse "intellectual currents" ("*Geistesströmungen*"), encompassing both intellectuals understood in the first (classical and tendentially elitist) sense and sociopolitical movements and their organizations which contribute to form and influence public opinion and transform social conditions based on intellectual activity (without however a corresponding recognition of this role within the standard sociological conceptions of intelligence).

The goal of the second part of this dissertation is to define the substance of Mannheim's sociology of intelligence and its status within the human and social sciences. To proceed toward

this goal, I start Chapter 5 by studying a significant recent attempt by Scott Frickel and Neil Gross at elaborating the insight – very similar to Mannheim’s, put forward at the end of the first part – of a decisive correlation and even homology (at least in definite respects) between scientific and intellectual currents on the one hand and sociopolitical movements on the other. According to Frickel and Gross, intellectual change happens through the emergence of so-called “scientific/intellectual movements” (SIMs), which are collective structures conceived on the model of “social movement organizations” (SMOs) theorized by McCarthy and Zald in resource mobilization theory. This attempt is linked to the above-mentioned trend in the sociology of intellectuals calling itself the “new sociology of ideas”, whose characteristic is to try to transcend the contemplative self-comprehension prevailing in the academia at large and in the contemporary sociology of intellectuals in particular in such a way as to exclude any extra-academic agency from among the potential factors expected to impact intellectual-ideational processes (this is sometimes called an “internalist” sociology of intellectuals).

Against this program (whose theoretical value I nevertheless fully recognize), I draw on a much earlier article by John Peter Netti to delineate an alternative account for the phenomena theorized by Frickel and Gross, more fitting with Mannheim’s own understanding of them. This reasoning leads to the proposition to distinguish between SIMs and what I suggest calling “disSIMs”, that is to say, “dissenting scientific/intellectual movements”, whose distinctive character is the predominance of a transdisciplinary orientation manifested in the salience of worldview-committedness in the ideational processes versus the scope-oriented character of innovations and movements internal to given disciplinary fields (as is the case with the SIMs theorized by Frickel and Gross). The point of the paragraphs dealing with these issues is to say that Mannheim’s sociology of intelligence is closer to the ideal type of a “disSIM”, a claim that I then instantiate through the consideration of the so-called “sociology of knowledge dispute” triggered by the publication of Mannheim’s *Ideology and Utopia* in 1929. Chapter 5 then ends with a reflection on general and contemporary trends in Mannheim’s reception, which I criticize for disregarding the dissenting and transdisciplinary aspects of Mannheim’s thinking.

Chapter 6 takes up the thread at this point and endeavors to give a clearer and more detailed articulation to the idea that Mannheim’s program, instead of being the founding document of the sociology of intelligence as a specialized subfield of sociology, was in fact a dissenting scientific/intellectual movement (disSIM) whose aim was to bring about a thorough reorganization of the entire social-scientific disciplinary field, and in this undertaking to give sociology the task of becoming the *basic* (because synthetic and transdisciplinary) social science. This is also the chapter where the above-stated hypothesis of an antagonistic and

repressive relationship between post-Mannheimian sociology of intellectuals and knowledge, and its original, Mannheimian paradigm, is made explicit and discussed in detail. Besides a necessary historical contextualization of Mannheim's disSIM, and a detour to elaborate operative concepts that will be invested in the successive paragraphs, the bulk of the chapter consists in an immanent reading of a set of underrated and hence under-studied Mannheimian texts from the first half of the 1930s, turning around the question of the status of sociology within the social-scientific disciplinary fields.

Chapter 7, the last of this dissertation, sets as its goal to elaborate the most essential dimension of Mannheim's disSIM, which accounts for the continuing relevance of his conception of the sociology of intelligence: the very notion of *intelligence* it carries, as well as the two other key concepts of "intellectual *function*" and "intellectual *knowledge*". My first move in this chapter consists in reconstructing a significant recent debate within sociology over the problem of so-called "public sociology", that is to say, a sociology vindicating a distinctly intellectual dimension (and not a barely scientific one). The aim of this first move is to suggest that the blind spots of this debate – threatening it with infertility – can be diagnosed and remedied if one reflects on the notion of "intellectual" explicitly or implicitly presupposed by this debate. However, a tour of some major conceptions of who intellectuals are according to influent currents and authors in the sociology of intellectuals gives ambivalent results, for the same biases that hinder the participants of the debate over public sociology to make the true reasons of their disagreements explicit seem to impact to the same degree the so-surveyed definitions of intellectuals as well. The remaining paragraphs of this last chapter are dedicated to exposing Mannheim's counterproposal (as well as of other similarly bent sociologists of intellectuals) by elaborating the notions of "intellectual function" and "intellectual knowledge" as constituent dimensions of the notion of intelligence. Based on these developments, I then conclude with a proposition regarding two different (though not mutually exclusive) ways to practice the sociology of intelligence: as a historical-reconstructive or diagnostic method and as an instrument for activist research giving itself the task of triggering, observing and theorizing intellectual knowledge in the making.

PART I

MANNHEIM'S SOCIOLOGY OF INTELLIGENCE AS METHODOLOGY FOR SPECIALIZED RESEARCH

Chapter 1 – Challenging the canon: Mannheim's concept of "*freischwebende Intelligenz*"

§ 5. Aim and structure of the chapter

The rationale of this chapter is to clarify the meaning of the basic concept of Mannheim's sociology of intellectuals: "*freischwebende Intelligenz*", usually translated in English as "free-floating intelligentsia". One of the goals of the chapter is to argue for the need of a new translation of this term, better suited to express what I deem to be the true signification of this notion. Therefore, until the point where I am ready to offer this new, alternative rendering, I will avoid using the standard English translation and refer to the concept with the original German expression "*freischwebende Intelligenz*".

Mannheim introduced the notion of "*freischwebende Intelligenz*" in the second, central essay (titled "*Ist Politik als Wissenschaft Möglich?*", translated in English as "The Prospects of Scientific Politics") of the first, German edition of *Ideology and Utopia*, published in 1929. Insofar as Mannheim's ideas on intellectuals are concerned, this is clearly the most well-known and influential text of his on the matter. This is so even though Mannheim wrote a number of other texts – before and after 1929 – where he treated this issue in greater detail and from different points of view. For reasons I will explain below, this unilateral reception of Mannheim's thoughts on intellectuals had a nefarious impact on the understanding of his concept of "*freischwebende Intelligenz*". To show the actuality of Mannheim's sociology of intellectuals and dissipate these misunderstandings, it is first necessary to offer my own interpretation of the relevant sections of the essay "The Prospects of Scientific Politics" in *Ideology and Utopia*. Only this will make it possible to directly confront the interpretations with which I disagree and therethrough to situate Mannheim's sociology of intellectuals within the contemporary currents of the field.

The thesis of this first chapter is that Mannheim arrives at his own conception of intellectuals by playing two existing approaches one against the other, realizing a dialectical synthesis between them. To show this, I will rely on a standard historical review of the three main trends in the sociology of intellectuals, which I will challenge and modify on one crucial point (§ 6). This will allow, in the following paragraph, for a redefinition of the meaning of the concept of "*freischwebende Intelligenz*" and for a new translation of the German expression (§

7). Based on these results, Chapter 2 will then turn to the comparative analysis of Mannheim's paradigm and the most significant approaches in today's sociology of intellectuals.

§ 6. Mannheim and the three ideal-typical approaches to the sociology of intellectuals

I will take as my point of departure an article published in 2002 by Charles Kurzman and Lynn Owens, which attempts to show the unity of the heterogeneous literature ascribable to the sociology of intellectuals as a sub-field of sociology (Kurzman and Owens 2002). The authors divide the literature into three paradigms based on how they conceive the autonomy and heteronomy of intellectuals and culture – understood as the *locus* of intellectual activity – in relation to class divisions in society and sociopolitical power-balances. These three ideal-typical approaches are assigned a paradigmatic author and an exemplary text. Kurzman and Owens then show how these three types structure the sociology of intellectuals since its inception at the beginning of the 20th century, and how one or the other gains in influence according to different sociopolitical conjunctures. For my present purpose, however, I will limit my discussion of the article to the proposed theoretical framework (i.e., the conception of the three ideal-types).

Kurzman and Owens characterize the first basic design in the sociology of intellectuals as a “class-in-themselves” approach, with French writer Julien Benda, author of the famous *La trahison des clercs* (published in 1927, translated in English under the title *The Treason of the Intellectuals* and under that of *The Great Betrayal*), as its ideal-typical and foundational representative. The class-in-themselves approach postulates that the intelligentsia, by virtue of its unique and privileged productive relation to culture, is a social formation that should be understood by analogy with the social classes, definable as groups of individuals sharing a common cluster of interests due to their shared social location. According to Benda, the difference between the intelligentsia and the other classes is that whereas the latter's actions are determined by material and particularistic interests, the former is driven by spiritual and universal interests. “Culture” is understood here as the materialization of all the higher, universal principles, generic drives and potentials of humankind, apart from contingent worldly purposes, materialistic interests, power struggles, etc. (Benda 2003: 126-136). The intellectuals' subjective devotion and faithfulness to culture as the quintessence of universality is the main condition for the autonomy of culture (namely vis-à-vis politics, where the particularistic

interests confront each other). In his book, Benda fustigates his fellow intellectuals for having succumbed to the siren-songs of nationalism, racism and classism, which amounts to confuse universal and particular vocations by descending into the arena of political struggle on behalf of particular groups.

The second ideal-typical approach in Kurzman and Owens' framework is the "class-bound" approach, epitomized by the Gramscian idea of the "organicity" of intellectuals (Gramsci 1932). This paradigm of the sociology of intellectuals treats the intelligentsia as the "outgrowth" of social classes and of the power relations and structures that define their relations. The intelligentsia is seen here as a heteronomous stratum functioning as the "organ" of a given social class. The intellectuals do not have here a privileged relation to "universality"; they are driven by the volitional inputs of their class. Yet, the proponents of this paradigm do not deny that the intellectual has a significant relation to culture; they only assert that the intellectual is not defined by this relation but by their function of "satellites" of classes engaged in sociopolitical struggle for hegemony and domination.³ In contrast with Benda's problem, Gramsci's practical challenge is the way in which parts of the traditional intelligentsia, still living within the orb of pre-capitalist social, political and productive relations (and tending to see themselves according to the self-image promoted by Benda's book), as well as of the new, organic intelligentsia linked to the ascendancy of the capitalist bourgeoisie, could be attracted to the cause of the workers' movement and to communist politics (see Buci-Glucksmann 1975, pp. 34-70).

The third ideal-typical approach to the sociology of intellectuals proposed by Kurzman and Owens is the so-called "class-less" approach. It seems to be either in a "neither-nor" relationship with the two others or is a sort of "golden mean" between them. As the authors explain, the "class-less" paradigm considers the intelligentsia neither as a "class" (Benda) nor as the appendages of a class (Gramsci), but as a not easily graspable "*tertium datum*", neither totally autonomous, nor completely heteronomous (Kurzman–Owens 2002: 67). The exemplary thinker Kurzman and Owens ascribe to this paradigm is Karl Mannheim, author of *Ideology and Utopia* (1929) and the creator of the concept of "*freischwebende Intelligenz*", most often translated in English, as "free-floating intelligentsia" or "unattached intelligentsia" (for a list of alternative English translations, see Elis–Fopp 2007: 2). In accordance with their understanding

³ This characterization is an oversimplification of Gramsci's conceptions regarding the intellectuals. Gramsci had in fact developed a more nuanced view on this topic, especially in his conjunctural analyses, such as *The Meridional Question* or *The Intellectuals and the Organization of Culture* (see Buci-Glucksmann 1975: 34-70).

of the floating nature of intellectuals in Mannheim, and in contrast with Benda's and Gramsci's paradigm, Kurzman and Owens are unable to ascribe any concrete practical or political aim to them.

§ 7. From “free-floating” to “freely bound” intellectuals

Kurzman and Owens' illuminating synoptic reconstruction of the whole of the sociology of intellectuals must be praised in particular for its treatment of Mannheim, to whom it restitutes his central place in the field and emphasizes the originality of his conceptions. Yet, on a closer look, Kurzman and Owens' characterization of Mannheim's ideas does not entirely succeed in doing justice to them. They overlook that the right understanding of the concept of the “*freischwebende Intelligenz*” in *Ideology and Utopia* lies in the identification of the *method* by which Mannheim elaborates his concept. This makes Kurzman and Owens miss two major points. The first is that, albeit implicitly, Mannheim had already identified the three paradigmatic approaches that Kurzman and Owens see as structuring the field of the sociology of intellectuals.⁴ The second is that, contrary to their reading, Mannheim does not construct his own paradigm as a “golden mean” between two extremes, as a “*tertium datum*” resulting from a Weberian ideal-typical construction, but rather as the suppression-reproduction of the “class-in-themselves” and the “class-bound” approaches in the frame of a *dialectical synthesis*.

Mannheim's argument in *Ideology and utopia* can be reconstructed in three steps. First, Mannheim draws on the *18 Brumaire* of Marx to argue against the idea of a “univocal class-determinism” of the intelligentsia, imputable to the class-bound paradigm. Mannheim's argument is that if it is true that the class location of the majority of intellectuals is the petty-bourgeoisie (the “middle classes”), a transitional and impure class according to Marx (which should not even be considered as a class proper), this cannot give grounds to interpreting and predicting the expectable political allegiances and attitudes of intellectuals in any reliable way.⁵ Second, in accordance with Benda's argument⁶ about intellectuals being a class by virtue of

⁴ In truth, Kurzman and Owens themselves note this but they do not draw any consequence (Kurzman–Owens 2002: 67.)

⁵ It is likely that Mannheim's criticism is directed toward his one-time mentor and friend Georg Lukács, who takes up Marx's argument in his *History and Class Consciousness* (Lukács 1971: 59).

⁶ It is not clear whether Mannheim had read Benda's book at the time of writing the essay “The Prospects of Scientific Politics”. However, three years after the publication of the first edition of *Ideology and Utopia*, in 1932,

them partaking in *culture*, a sphere uncorrupted by worldly and material interests, Mannheim states that

“although they are too differentiated to be regarded as a single class, there is, however, one unifying sociological bond between all groups of intellectuals, namely, cultivation [“*Bildung*”], which binds them together in a striking way. Participation in a common cultural heritage [“*Bildungsgut*”] progressively tends to suppress differences of birth, status, professions and wealth, and to unite individual cultivated people [“*Gebildeten*”] on the basis of the culture [“*Bildung*”] in which they participate.” (Mannheim 1963: 155, transl. mod.⁷)

However, the impression that, against the class-bound approach Mannheim sides with the representatives of the classical ideal of *Bildung*, understood as an apolitical, or even antipolitical, sphere of human activity remote from the concerns of everyday life and sociopolitical struggles, is overturned in the next sentence, which marks the beginning of the third, decisive, synthetic step of the argument. In it, with the help of two implicit tropes – the idea of “microcosm in the macrocosm” and the idea of culture as *sublimation* and *mediation* of socially destructive impulses –, Mannheim operates a characteristic reversal of the preceding step of the argument, as well as a reassessment of the rejected “class-bound” paradigm. As he writes,

“nothing could be more wrong than to misinterpret this view and maintain that the class and status ties of the individual disappear completely by virtue of this. On the contrary, it is peculiarly characteristic of this new basis of association that it preserves the multiplicity of the component elements in all their variety by creating a homogeneous medium within which the conflicting parties can measure their strength. Modern culture [“*Bildung*”] from its inception is a living struggle, a replica, on a small scale of the conflicting purposes and tendencies which rage in society at large.” (Mannheim 1963: 155-56.)

at a conference in Amsterdam, Mannheim straightforwardly charged Benda’s conception of the detached, self-sufficient, “aesthetizing” intellectual type, whose activity he scorns for being socially futile and quietist (Mannheim [1932] 1993: 79). Of course, in “The Prospects of Scientific Politics”, Mannheim could also have taken aim at his fellow German academics, whose attitude he criticized in an essay written around 1933 for the same reasons as he had attacked Benda’s position (cp. Mannheim 2003c: 230-4).

⁷ Instead of the translation of “*Bildung*” by “education”, I use the term “cultivation”, understood as self-formation, and “culture”, as the result of self-formation, according to what the context seems to imply (the *process* of self-formation or its *product*).

Mannheim's operation in this third step consists in *bringing back the theme of sociopolitical struggle* (and the role intellectuals play in it), seemingly excluded following the first step, *at the very heart of the concept of culture*. As he will later write, "[t]he social process is contained in the very structure of cultural life itself, so that it is never for one moment free from its influence." (Mannheim 1940: 80.) By saying this, Mannheim goes against the German academic consensus of his times over the idea that cultivation not only is an autonomous sphere of human existence unimpaired by political strife, but whose vocation is precisely to bridle the destructive effects the particularistic aspirations of various social forces have on human coexistence. Against this consensus, Mannheim's conception implies that the autonomy and effectivity of culture can be attained only if culture succeeds in replicating in a concentrated and *sublimated* form the social and political struggles with which society is shot through. Thus, culture is inherently and essentially socio-political. Participation in it entails taking an *indirect* but nevertheless *engaged* role in the social processes and political antagonisms of the day, whether the cultural actors are fully conscious of it (for a different interpretation, see Loader 1997: 227-229).

It must be stressed that the idea of a "replica" must not be taken to mean reproduction in miniature in the sense of a passive reflection, but rather the *continuation* of the said struggles *with other means*. This means that culture should be seen as being simultaneously the *result*, the *continuation*, and the *expression* of social struggles; its function is to *mediate* and *sublimate* these struggles. For *these* reasons and in *this* sense, intellectuals are the agents of a vital social function. As Mannheim later writes:

"[a] society which did not allow a sublimating group to develop, could neither direct its culture nor further its creative powers. (...) In all the spheres of cultural life, the function of such elites is to express cultural and psychological forces in a primary form and to guide collective extraversion and introversion; they are responsible for cultural initiative and tradition. If these small groups are destroyed or thwarted in their selection, the social conditions for the emergence and persistence of culture disappear." (Mannheim 1940: 83-85.)

Therefore, the above-stated characteristics of culture also hold for its bearers, the intellectuals. The latter, far from being "suspended in a vacuum into which social interests do not penetrate (...), subsume in [themselves] all those interests with which social life is permeated." (Mannheim 1963: 157). In Mannheim's view, the ability of intellectuals to become

the actors of the cultural synthesis of sociopolitical power-struggles comes from their *existential attachments* to various social locations, and not from their detachment from all material constraints (cp. Kettler–Meja–Stehr 1986: 14; Löwy 1985: 89-92). Moreover, the reason why the intellectual is able to *loosen* his own existential attachments by the way of cultivation is not the presumed *apolitical* character of culture, that would counterbalance these attachments. It is the opposite: the intellectuals become capable of loosening their primary existential ties precisely because culture involves a constant (though mediated) *confrontation* with *multiple* and *conflicting* social strivings, which mutually unmask each other (appearing either as ideologies or utopias). Thus, the modalities of the intellectuals' participation in sociopolitical struggles are defined by the characteristic manner in which culture itself is always-already political (see also Kettler–Loader–Meja 2009: 6-7).

These results make possible to tackle the above-mentioned challenge of the translation of the concept of “*freischwebende Intelligenz*”. As a first step, it is useful to consider that, in the English translation of the above quote from *Ideology and utopia* stating that intellectuals are not *suspended* in a vacuum above social interests, the German verb rendered by “suspended” is “*schweben*”, often translated as “floating”, as in the expression “free-floating intellectuals”. By avoiding using the term “floating” in this case in favor of “suspension”, the English translator reminds of a semantic dimension of the verb “*schweben*”, mostly absent from the discussions on Mannheim's conception of intellectuals. It indicates that there are different modalities and meanings of “floating” and it is not insignificant for the correct understanding of Mannheim's concept which one of these meanings we have in mind when we translate the text.

The idea of “floating” can obviously refer to an ethereal detachment and illusory freedom from all constraints, an image according to which many readers of Mannheim tended to interpret his notion of “*freischwebende Intelligenz*”. However, if we take floating in the above-mentioned sense of “suspension” (or “hanging”) we arrive at a quite different picture: to be suspended implies an attachment to a structure, which therefore makes the freedom of movement of the subject at the same time *possible* and *relative*. The example of an air train such as the “*Schwebebahn*” in Wuppertal, Germany, can help visualize the issue at hand: the train is suspended under a fixed iron structure (the rail), leaving some freedom of movement for the wagons, which swing when the train makes turns. In this case, this relative “detachment” or “floating” of the train vis-à-vis the iron structure is *a consequence of the way in which the train is attached* to this structure (which precludes it from crashing in the ground in the first place). My suggestion is that the relationship between Mannheim's intellectuals and the social

structure is similar to that between a suspended aerial train and the rail: the intellectuals' freedom of movement (their "detachment") is a function of their specific mode of attachment to the structure on which they depend.

This interpretation is corroborated by a later text (written in the early 1930s and published posthumously) in which Mannheim returns to his concept of "*freischwebende Intellektuellen*" with the explicit aim of dispelling the disturbing misunderstanding according to which the intellectuals in his conception are entirely free from all social conditioning.

"Let us re-emphasize at this point that intellectuals do not form an exalted stratum above the classes and are in no way better endowed with a capacity to overcome their own class attachments than other groups. In my earlier analysis of this stratum I used the term 'relatively uncommitted intelligentsia' (*relativ freischwebende Intelligenz*), which I accepted from Alfred Weber, without any thought of an entirely unattached group free of class liaisons. The epithet '*relativ*' was no empty word. The expression simply alluded to the well-established fact that intellectuals do not react to given issues as cohesively as for example employees and workers do. (...) After this reminder, it should not be expected that the critics will again conveniently simplify my thesis to the easily refutable proposition that the intelligentsia is an exalted stratum above all classes or that it is privy to revelations. In regard to the latter my claim was merely that certain types of intellectuals have a maximum opportunity to test and employ the socially available vistas and to experience their inconsistencies." (Mannheim 2003b: 105-106.)

Interestingly this clarification contains a lapsus: in the passage of *Ideology and Utopia* to which he alludes, Mannheim wrote about a "***soziale freischwebende Intelligenz***", and not, as he claims here, a "***relative freischwebende Intelligenz***", even though he spoke in the same sentence of a "relatively classless stratum" to qualify the "*freischwebende Intelligenz*". In my view, this shows Mannheim's uneasiness with his own nonchalantly chosen term, which would later result in the systematic misinterpretation of his conception. It is very likely that the English translation "free-floating intelligentsia" contributes to perpetuating these misunderstandings. Therefore, I believe it would make sense to replace the canonical translations with one corresponding better to the real meaning of the concept. Drawing on my hypothesis that Mannheim's conception of the intellectuals is the product of a dialectic synthesis between the "class-bound" approach, postulating the *heteronomy* of intellectuals and culture, and the "class-in-themselves" approach, asserting the *autonomy* of intellectuals and culture, I will suggest translating "*freischwebende Intelligenz*" by the paradoxically sounding "*freely bound*

intellectuals”, which expresses better the idea that the intellectuals’ freedom in Mannheim consists in having a greater flexibility in their choice of their sociopolitical affiliations.

Chapter 2 – Mannheim’s place in the contemporary sociology of intellectuals (Part one)

§ 8. Aim and structure of this chapter

The previous chapter has argued that the lack of recognition of the dialectical character of Mannheim’s argument in “The Prospects of Scientific Politics” contributes to various misrepresentations of his sociology of intellectuals. These misrepresentations, which occur regardless of whether the commentator is sympathetic or critical toward Mannheim, materialize in two ways. The first occurs when Mannheim is presented as a representative of either the class-in-themselves or of the class-bound approaches. The second occurs when Mannheim is assimilated to different initiatives that Kurzman and Owens categorize as “class-less”. This amounts to say that, properly speaking, Mannheim does not belong to any of these three categories. A closer look at his program should reveal the existence of a fourth way to conceive the sociology of intellectuals.

To show this, I will first elaborate the consequences of an un-dialectical reading of Mannheim’s ideas by exhibiting how each one of these three misrepresentations takes one or the other step of Mannheim’s argumentation out of its context and hypostasizes it as if it was the sociologists’ last say on the matter. I will begin with the analysis of a case where Mannheim is categorized as representative of the “class-in-themselves” approach (§ 9). Then, by putting forward a non-reductionist interpretation of Mannheim’s methodology, I will expound and refute some of the reasons why he is taken as belonging to the “class-bound” approaches (§ 10 and § 11). However, a thorough refutation of Mannheims’ assimilation to class-reductionist approaches is possible only on the ground of the knowledge of some fundamental concepts and categories of Mannheim’s sociology of intellectuals, among which figures the notion of *worldview-committedness*. The explication of this concept will demand a break in the continuity of the demonstration began in the present chapter. Chapter 3 will thus be dedicated to making this notion explicit. The results of Chapter 3 will then make it possible to establish with more precision the relation of Mannheim’s paradigm both to the class-bound and class-less approaches (this will be the topic of Chapter 4).

§ 9. Mannheim as representative of the “class-in-themselves” approach

To illustrate the first type of category-error (assimilating Mannheim’s views to the class-in-themselves paradigm), I will discuss a chapter of Thomas Jung’s recent monography on Mannheim’s conception of intellectuals (Jung 2007: 249-72). Jung discusses Mannheim’s ideas in the perspective of two other sociologists of intellectuals, Carl Brinkmann and Alfred von Martin, Mannheim’s contemporaries, to demonstrate the homology between their theories. From Brinkmann’s conceptions, Jung retains the idea that the rupture of the intelligentsia (“*Bildungsbürgertum*”) with the bourgeoisie (“*Bürgertum*”) as its “socio-genetic” origin, is the single most important structural determination of the fate and characteristics of Western intellectuals. The originality of Brinkmann’s theses lies in his reversal of the standard explanation of the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia. The peculiar outlook and mode of thought of the latter is seen not as the result of its gradual separation from the bourgeoisie, but the opposite: the separation is itself the result of the peculiar mode of life and thinking of the intelligentsia. This assertion is not necessarily idealist insofar as it is grounded in the sociological-historical insight that the intelligentsia as “*Bildungsbürgertum*” is precisely that part of the emerging modern bourgeoisie that has resisted the debilitating effects of the integration into the capitalist way of life and mentality. The intelligentsia is then the conservative-critical “bad conscience” of the bourgeoisie accompanying it through its whole history, tirelessly recalling its betrayed juvenile ideals and failed promises. At the same time, it is a constant utopian-revolutionary ferment insofar as the ideals in question still carry with them the moral imperatives that had once set Western history in motion.

The theoretical-methodological consequence of this hypothesis is that, properly speaking, no positive sociological determination of the intelligentsia is possible: to understand what the “*Bildungsbürgertum*” (still) is today, one must learn what it *once was*, i.e., one must go back to the original historical matrix of the formation of the bourgeoisie under the auspices of the genesis of Modernity. As Brinkmann puts it, from a theoretical point of view the intelligentsia is to be seen as a “parthenogenetic entity” (Brinkmann 1921: 32, cited in Jung 2003: 252), whose sociological characteristics are to be understood not on the basis of its specific embeddedness in *present* sociohistorical circumstances, but on those *timeless* and *immutable* features which accompany it *since its inception*, and which distinguish it from any other social group. From a methodological point of view, then, this means that the intelligentsia can be studied in a *sociological* fashion only *historically*. If one wishes to study it sociologically

in *synchronicity*, the only way to approach it is *from within, internally*, on the basis of the *immanent experience* of its conservative-oppositional-idealistic character.

“Alfred von Martin”, writes Jung, “sketched the intellectual in a similar way to Carl Brinkmann. For him, the modern intellectual is indeed a social type that has evolved in the development of bourgeoisie since the Renaissance but remains faithful to the ideals of the Modern conception of man as a bourgeois heritage until the present day. The anti-bourgeois positioning of the intellectual thus results from a permanent betrayal of the bourgeoisie’s own moral promises.” (Jung 2007: 253.) According to von Martin (1948: 110, cited in Jung 2003: 253-254), it is precisely this *(self-)exclusion of the intelligentsia from the bourgeoisie* that renders it “free-floating”. Translated in the language of existential interests, this means that the socially self-conscious intellectuals concern themselves exclusively with generic and universal existential norms (“*existentielle Sinnfragen*”) and maintain a distance from political and economic (because “particularistic”) purposes, thereby arriving to a formulation of the problem very similar to Benda’s.

In a later text (1965: 192), von Martin generalizes the opposition of “*Bürgertum*” (bourgeoisie) and “*Bildungsbürgertum*” (bourgeois intelligentsia) as the opposition between an “average type” (cp. Heidegger’s “*das Man*”), possessing only practical skills and knowledge, and the intellectual, whose spiritual quest seeks nothing but the general sense of existence (Jung 2007: 254). It is important in von Martin’s conception that this “sense” is not only theoretical, but essentially *practical*, in that it aims, first and foremost, at *delivering binding moral principles able to give universally valid orientation for rational choice* (in Kant’s sense), in contrast to the pragmatic and utilitarian norms and rules governing everyday social life. This opposition pushes the intellectual in a state of social isolation and an attitude of radical criticism of worldly affairs. Von Martin also notes the specific *perils* of such an approach to life. The first one is “intellectual escapism”, stemming from a contemplative stance, entailing the abandonment of the *active defense* of the universal in face of rampant particularisms. The second one is revolutionary agitation as a typical form of reaction to bourgeois “economism” and materialism (Martin 1965: 215 ff.; Jung 2007: 255). For von Martin, it is especially the latter type of reaction that poses a problem: by descending into the maelstrom of the *saeculum*, the intellectual betrays its spiritual vocation. To remain faithful to its mission, von Martin believes it necessary to “live on in secular form the monks’ *vita contemplativa*” (von Martin 1948: 112). In sum, it is the failure to cling to what is *timelessly valid* in history that typically leads to the fall of the intellectual and to the loss of their intellectual freedom and cultural autonomy (Martin 1965: 219).

Brinkmann and von Martin's formulations of the problem of the intelligentsia is obviously very close to Benda's standpoint in 1927. These authors share a stark dualism of "spirit" and "power", seen as distinct, incommensurable principles. In von Martin's texts, one can find metaphors close to Benda's images in his 1927 book. Thus, the French author's biblical exclamation, put in the mouth of his "secular clerics", "My Kingdom is not of this world" (Benda 2003: 127), is echoed not only by the a-social nature and extra-temporal existence of von Martin's intellectual, but also by the above cited image of the "secular monk". The idea, in turn, of the "treason" or "fall" of the intellectual, which is the price to pay for intellectual commitment to a "particularistic" political cause, a central motive of Benda's book, is put forth both by Brinkmann and von Martin, the three of them asserting the incompatibility between commitment to the generic or the universal, on the one hand, and an engagement in favor of a particular sociopolitical option, on the other.

What mainly distinguishes the two German authors' approach from Benda's is the sociological language used by the former. Yet eventually this distinction does not seem decisive because for Brinkmann and von Martin the sociological phraseology seems rather to serve the paradoxical purpose of "exorcising" sociology from the problem-complex. Sociological language is used to demonstrate why sociology of intellectuals, instead of being a concrete investigation into the social functions of present-day intellectuals, should be practiced not as sociology but as *social history*. This is not to deny the gain of reflexivity the class-in-themselves paradigm can earn from considering Brinkmann's and von Martin's ideas. The point is simply to say that the transferable results of this sociological reflexivity remain limited and cannot qualitatively surpass Benda's position from 1927.

With regard to the interpretation of Mannheim's ideas on intellectuals, Jung's argumentation according to which Mannheim should be considered as pursuing the same line of research and theorizing as Brinkmann and von Martin is definitely misleading (Jung 2007: 256). The essence of the misinterpretation is well caught in Jung's thesis according to which "the sociological quintessence of Mannheim's intellectual determination" and "condition *sine qua non* of his argumentation", is "the lack of place or location of the intellectual" – that is, their rootlessness –, on the basis of which only "the social type of the intellectual can find purpose, social function and historical role at all." (Jung 2007: 257.) This can seem plausible only if one takes out of context what I referred to as the second step of Mannheim's argumentation in "The Prospects of Scientific Politics", stating that the intelligentsia's substance and unity consists in its unique participation in "*Bildung*" ("cultivation"), understood as a supra-political activity. Thus, Jung tendentially retains only the intellectual's "social and

structural lack of commitment” (Jung 2007: 258), quoting a prior remark of Mannheim concerning the intellectual’s “relative remoteness from the open conflicts of everyday life” (Mannheim 1963: 11), suggesting that it applies to the whole of intelligentsia. However, the fact is that Mannheim’s remark refers to the type of Medieval clerics and their present-day secularized counterparts, toward whom he is eminently critical *precisely* because of their “spiritual detachment from specific social locations” (*ibid.*). It is on these biased grounds that Jung concludes that, in Mannheim, “the intellectual stands beyond the competing interests determining the different social strata in the Modern world” (*ibid.*: 257-8), and that even the commitment of the intellectual to sociopolitical causes is made possible only by virtue of his fundamental social rootlessness (*ibid.*: 260).

Jung’s conclusions are based on the misunderstanding of the fact that, for Mannheim, the “bearer” of culture is not the intelligentsia *against the rest of society*, allegedly devoid of spirituality, but the socio-historical process as a whole, structured and dynamized by the struggle for political and cultural dominance of the various social groupings as parts of this whole, which includes the intelligentsia and their *specific role* in the total process (Mannheim 1971: 71-73). Contrary to what Jung believes, for Mannheim, the contradiction between the intelligentsia’s specific interests, stemming both from its generic function (to give meaning to life) and secular roles (its historically specific place in systems of domination), and the particularistic interests of the competing social actors, is not rigid and absolute, but is a dialectical, that is, a relative, one. Moreover, the intelligentsia’s sublimating activity expressly presupposes as its condition of possibility the existence of those social strivings and impulses that are to be sublimated. The interests of the intelligentsia and of other social groupings are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, the intelligentsia’s function consists precisely in the realization of those aspects of the conflicting groupings’ aspirations and realizations, which, on the one hand, though in a germinal state, already point toward a potential higher level of generality, but which, on the other hand, cannot be worked out properly by the said groupings themselves, all too invested they are in the immediate stakes of the struggle (cp. also Mannheim’s essay on “The Utopian Mentality” in *Ideology and Utopia*).

In the same way, the capacity of the intellectuals to join the struggle of groups in conflict is not the sign of their rootlessness, but the specific forms of their rootedness in the social process. It is this specific rootedness in the overall socio-historical process that confers the intelligentsia the ability to detect and develop the potentially generic-universal elements present germinally in the strivings and realizations of different social groups – groups to which, in Mannheim’s view, the intellectual never ceases to belong (cp. Mannheim 1982b: 265-269). For

Mannheim, the whole cannot be separated from the parts, the universal from the particular – separation, which is however at the basis of Jung’s interpretation, leaning on a dualism characteristic of the Benda/Brinkmann/von Martin’s trio, and explicitly rejected by Mannheim.

In defense of Jung, however, it must be said that parallels between these authors and Mannheim do exist indeed. This is especially true for an early text of Mannheim, which might even show the “influence” of Brinkmann (although this is just speculation since I do not have philological evidence). This speculation is based on one of Mannheim’s first publications after his emigration to Germany, the *Letter from Heidelberg* (written in 1921-22). This text, which I will analyze in more detail in Chapter 4, attests Mannheim’s shift of attention from more abstract problems of cultural philosophy to the sociological-existential problem of the intellectuals which it tackles from a so-called “internalist” point of view (on this too, see below Chapter 4). From an “internalist” perspective, intellectuals can be defined as those “who are one-sidedly interested, in writing and reading, in the spirit alone (...), who put themselves in the service of the spirit to such an extent that it is truly located at the center of their lives, and that its presence can be felt in every expression of their lives (...).” (Mannheim 2001: 82.) This definition shows clear affinities with the above expounded approach of Brinkmann and von Martin. That these overlaps are not a mere coincidence is made plausible by the fact that Brinkmann’s above analyzed study appeared the same year as the first part of the *Letter from Heidelberg* (1921), in a volume edited by Emil Lederer, one of Mannheim’s influential academic sponsors, who may have recommended Brinkmann’s text to his protégé.

The *Letter from Heidelberg* is not the only text of Mannheim where ideas close to Brinkmann can be located. As I stated above, “The Prospects of Scientific Politics” also contains such passages: what I have labeled the second (“idealist”) step of Mannheim’s argument expounding the concept of freely bound intellectuals can be seen as a paraphrase of Brinkmann’s position. However, as shown above, this second step is instantly followed by its explicit (dialectical) negation in the third step: once he has stated that the common experience of cultivation was the source of the unity and the peculiar outlook of the intelligentsia, Mannheim is quick to add that this should not be taken as if the class and status ties of the intellectuals would simply disappear (Mannheim 1963: 155). This means that if Brinkmann’s point of view is indeed voiced in Mannheim’s 1929 text, it is not because Mannheim agrees with it, but rather because he now seeks to distance himself from that view. The reason for this shift is simple: between 1921 (the *Letter from Heidelberg*) and 1929 (*Ideology and Utopia*), Mannheim’s views went through a thorough transformation regarding the central stakes of the sociology of intellectuals, especially regarding the priority of *attachment* over *detachment* (to

the sociopolitical process) and the dilemma of the *functional* versus the *internal* or *phenomenological* approach to the intellectual problem, resulting in their dialectical synthesis in a third, new type of approach (these ideas will be developed further in Chapter 4).

As Jung's interpretation shows, the imputation of Mannheim's position to the class-in-themselves approach is still lively in contemporary discussions.⁸ Yet, a distinctive feature of Jung's reading, beyond the fact that it is sympathetic to Mannheim, is that it is based on solid textual evidence and knowledge of the texts (contrary to many prior interpretations). Therefore, I consider that refuting the best articulated actual version of the attempt at assimilating Mannheim's conception to the view according to which intellectuals would by definition and essentially overcome their class-attachments amounts to refute also the less-well founded versions of the same argument.⁹

§ 10. Mannheim as representative of the “class-bound” approaches

Scorned by Marxists for his alleged (bourgeois) idealism epitomized in his theory of the “free-floating intellectuals” (Fogarasi 1930), Mannheim was also and simultaneously under attack for being a “crypto-historical-materialist” (see Alfred Weber's intervention during the discussion of Mannheim's paper at the Sixth Congress of German Sociologists held in 1928 in Zürich in Meja–Stehr 1990: 90), or a relativist befouling the sacredness of “*Geist*” by reducing it to its alleged roots in everyday social and political processes (see Curtius [1929] 1990: 116, 119).¹⁰ The epistemological charge made against Mannheim of committing the “genetic fallacy” (Grünwald [1934] 1990: 261-66; von Schelting [1934] 1990: 267-82) – i.e., believing that factual circumstances determine the meaning and truth-content of ideas and propositions (cp. Simonds 1978: 117) – is also to be related to the problem of the autonomy/heteronomy of the intellectuals. Indeed, the reductionism associated with the “genetic fallacy” consists in believing that ideas have *material causes*, and thereby that they are themselves *material*. At the

⁸ As Simonds puts it, “[t]his reading is so prevalent that references can only be arbitrarily chosen” (Simonds 1978: 127 n. 34). The quoted note contains a rather lengthy list of such references.

⁹ For other texts developing arguments like mine, see (Simonds 1978: 127-132; Loader 1985: 117-121; Mendel 2006; Ellis–Fopp 2007).

¹⁰ The charges of relativism and reductionism against Mannheim are commonplace in the critical literature. See again the bibliography brought together by (Simonds 1978: 10-11). For an analysis and presentation of the context of these charges, see (Meja–Stehr 1990: 285-306).

same time, this materiality is seen as an *illusion*: ideas are but the *reflections* of something more fundamental, *more real*, though *hidden* beneath the surface. The instrumental conception of “ideas” implicit in the thesis of the “organicity” of intelligence and culture according to the class-bound approaches seems to presuppose such a reductionist view of “ideas”: it is because ideas are always-already instrumental, because they are elements of material practices driven by the rationality of interest-realization, that they can also be employed as *weapons* in social and political conflicts. Intellectuals would then be nothing more than the bearers and virtuosi of these ideological weapons. Mannheim’s “relativism” and “reductionism” would thus necessarily imply a class-bound sociology of intellectuals.

As was the case with Jung’s interpretation, this reading of Mannheim is not baseless either. In well-known places of his oeuvre, Mannheim asserts that all forms of thinking fulfill certain social functions and can be understood properly only by considering their sociopolitical embeddedness (for e.g., Mannheim 1963: 288, 297; Mannheim 1971c: 228-229). There are no transhistorical, let alone supra-historical truths; each proposition and utterance are strictly related to their context of emergence. This view drove some commentators to the conclusion that Mannheim’s theory of the “free-floating intelligentsia” is a kind of sophism aimed at avoiding the self-defeating consequences of his relativism by securing an (illusory) epistemological vantage point from where it is possible to make unbiased affirmations while at the same time remaining a *de facto* relativist (see Merton 1968: 506-508; Coser 1968: 430; Ricœur 1997: 222-226). This position seems corroborated by an oft-quoted passage from *Ideology of utopia* in which Mannheim asserts the subjection of *all* forms of thinking to the distortive effects of *interestedness*, under the guise of either ideological or utopian thinking:

“[t]he concept of ideology reflects the one discovery which emerged from political conflict, namely, that ruling groups can in their thinking become so intensively *interest-bound* to a situation that they are simply no longer able to see certain facts which would undermine their sense of domination. (...) The concept of utopian thinking reflects the opposite discovery of the political struggle, namely that certain oppressed groups are intellectually so strongly *interested* in the destruction and transformation of a given condition of society that they unwittingly see only those elements in the situation which tend to negate it. Their thinking is incapable of correctly diagnosing an existing condition of society.” (Mannheim 1963: 40, italics added.)

Knowing that, according to Mannheim, in the Modern era all thinking is either ideological or utopian, this passage suggests that the above-cited critics were correct both about Mannheim’s

relativism and about the sophistic character of the theory of the “free-floating intellectuals”, supposed to extract themselves by miracle from the immanence of the historical flux in which only partial positions and views can exist (this is what Ricœur calls the “Mannheim-paradox”, see reference above).

Another passage that corroborates this reading is from Mannheim’s “*Habilitationsschrift*” on early German conservatism, the very text in which the notion of “*freischwebende Intellektuellen*” appears for the first time. In said passage, Mannheim depicts the German Romantic intellectuals of the early 19th century (especially Adam Müller) as genuine sophist-ideologues ready to justify and support the sociopolitical interest of their patrons with the ideology best corresponding to their situation (Mannheim 1986: 118; cp. Kettler-Meja-Stehr 1986: 13-14). This unflattering characterization contrasts with Brinkmann’s and von Martin’s ideal image of the “*Bildungsbürgertum*”. According to Mannheim, the reason of this opportunistic behavior is the economic, political and ideological backwardness of the German bourgeoisie around the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, incapable of constituting a social hinterland to a progressive and broad-sighted intelligentsia, whose unemployed members had to face the prospects of pauperization (Mannheim 1986: 117-18).¹¹ Intellectual activity in this case was motivated by interests in two senses: that of serving socio-political interests, and that of the elementary “interest” one has in material survival and minimal existential security.

Despite these elements showing that there are reasons to catalogue Mannheim in the group of the “class-bound” approaches, such a conclusion would be hastened and would do prejudice to Mannheim’s conceptions. This can be shown by analyzing that category with which Mannheim accomplishes his presumed reductionist intentions: the category of “*interestedness*”, aimed at grasping the relation between thought and social being. According to Mannheim’s definition, one can speak of interestedness when someone “sees certain ideas as the best means to an immediate end” (Mannheim 1982b: 275). In other terms, interestedness involves the idea that a vital liaison to means – resources, various forms of capital, key socio-political and institutional positions, etc. – by which a person or a group sustains and enhances its sociopolitical positions determines their relation to given mental forms and contents. The

¹¹ As Brym pointed out (Brym 1978: 4-7; Brym 1987: 206-8; Brym 1988: 364-8), the economic malintegration of the intellectual as a factor of political partisanship and radicalization was discovered early by the sociological study of intellectuals. However, Brym fails to mention that Mannheim was among those first scholars to make use of this hypothesis in their empirical research on the behavior-patterns of intellectuals in different settings of social mobility. See also (Mannheim 2003b: 142-155).

proposition that “ideas are the fruits of interestedness”, ascribed to the class-bound position, means that ideas are employed as *tools* in this struggle for sociopolitical positions and advantages. Thus, to prove that Mannheim should be classified within these approaches, one should prove that in his sociology of knowledge and intellectuals the category of “interestedness” assumes the function of the *exclusive* “interpreter” of the meaning of spiritual phenomena (“ideas”). In other terms, it should be proven that Mannheim systematically interprets given ideas and doctrines as stemming from a functional relation of interestedness of their formulators (the intellectuals) to given social contexts.

§ 11. Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge as a “sociologically grounded method of interpretation”

It is a great merit of A. P. Simonds to have demonstrated that the above arguments about Mannheim’s alleged reductionism (and the consequent assimilation of his conception of intellectuals to the class-bound paradigm) are based on a series of misunderstandings. Simonds drew the attention to three interrelated facts. First, Mannheim nowhere pretends that the sociology of knowledge seeks to establish relations of *causal determination* between mental and social phenomena. Second, *interestedness* is not conceived by Mannheim as necessarily involving causal determination. Third, for Mannheim interestedness is *just one type of functional relatedness* between thinking and social being (Simonds 1978: 26-28). As Simonds puts it:

“[i]n spite of the absence of textual evidence in its favour, the view that some kind of model of causation is entailed in Mannheim’s position has been widely accepted by his critics, presumably because it is taken for granted that no other model of ‘connectedness’ can do the job that a sociology of knowledge requires: ‘either Mannheim is saying that »thought« is causally determined by »social being«, the critics seem to conclude, ‘or else he is not saying much of anything.’” (Simonds 1978: 28.)

Simonds claims that Mannheim’s aim was to elaborate a sociology of knowledge working with a different, non-deterministic, *interpretive model of connectedness between “thought” and “social being”* (Simonds 1978: 33-38; see also Kettler–Loader–Meja 2009: 5). According to Simonds, Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge should be understood as a “socio-historically grounded method of interpretation” motivated by a “hermeneutic interest”

(Simonds 1978: 21, 38). Furthermore, he suggests that a prerequisite to grasp this orientation is the reconsideration of Mannheim's central category of the "*Seinsverbundenheit des Denkens*", literally: the "connectedness of thought to (social) being" or more simply "existential connectedness".

The first step of this reconsideration is the refutation of the commonly held belief that, for Mannheim, "existential connectedness" is a synonym of "*causation* of forms of thought by social forces" (Merton 1968: 499, italics in the text). As Simonds has shown, the only occasion where Mannheim explicitly speaks of *causal determination* is in his discussion of the *particular concept of ideology* and the psychological debunking associated with it, both of which are "sublated" ("*aufheben*") in the *total concept of ideology* and the specific form of critique it entails. The difference between these is that whereas the particular concept "assumes that this or that interest is the *cause* of a given lie or deception", the total conception "presupposes simply that there is a *correspondence* between a given social situation and a given perspective, point of view, or apperception mass. In this case, while an analysis of constellations of interests may often be necessary, it is not to establish causal connections [*Kausaldeterminanten*] but to characterize the total situation." (Mannheim 1963: 58, italics added.) Thus, even when Mannheim comes to an analysis of *interests*, it is not with the aim of unfolding the *causal origin* of ideas; the premise is rather that "interests" are themselves part of a constellation of *reasons* whose mapping can help to *understand* complex situations, in order to unfold the *possible* courses of action in them.

Existential connectedness ("*Seinsverbundenheit des Denkens*") – often rendered with the problematic translation of "positional determination" –, is Mannheim's formula for this *correspondence* between social situations and given perspectives on it. What is connected with what, according to this expression? To answer this question, I will follow a path different from Simonds', who (rightfully) emphasizes Mannheim's indebtedness to Dilthey on these matters. I take a different course because there are also hermeneutical aspects in Mannheim's sociology of knowledge gesturing not only toward Dilthey, but also toward Lukács, Marx and Hegel, whose importance is somewhat downplayed in Simonds' reading. An indication of the importance of authors other than Dilthey in this context can be found in Mannheim's last attempt at a synthetic presentation of his project of a sociology of knowledge, written between 1930 and 1933, titled "Towards a Sociology of the Mind", in which the expression "mind"

clearly refers to Hegel and not to Dilthey.¹² As Mannheim writes in that essay, “the solution lies in the open perspective of sociology rather than in the closure of hermeneutics” (Mannheim 2003a: 29), where “sociology” refers to the Marxian critique of political economy (see *ibid.*: 33-35). Presented as giving the “broader framework” for his previous endeavors into the sociology of knowledge (*ibid.*: 24), the last and most mature formulation of Mannheim’s project is thus undertaken in the frame of a confrontation with Hegel and Marx, not with Dilthey. It is on the basis of this formulation that I will try to clarify the meaning of the concept of “existential connectedness”.¹³

In “Towards a Sociology of the Mind”, Mannheim makes the following statement: “The sociology of the mind is not an inquiry into the social causation of intellectual processes, but a study of the social character of those expressions whose currency does not reveal, or adequately disclose, their action context.” (*Ibid.*: 44). The reason why the sociology of knowledge does not seek to establish the “social causation of intellectual processes” is that “[o]ne cannot separate the social from the mental domain of behaviour. It is senseless to pose questions such as whether the mind is socially determined, as if mind and society each possessed a substance of its own. (...) [The sociology of the mind] does not seek to relate two discrete sets of objects – the social and the mental – to one another, it merely helps to *visualize their often-concealed identity*” (*ibid.*, italics added).

How does Mannheim conceive the relationship between these two realms of which he poses the identity? What does this identity mean if they must nevertheless be distinguished? The first term, “society” is defined by Mannheim along Simmelian lines as the *totality of acts*

¹² “Let us insist at the outset that Hegel’s concept of the mind is still basic to the undertaking here proposed.” (Mannheim 2003a: 59.)

¹³ Because the German original has vanished in the hands of its English editors, this text of Mannheim poses notorious philological uncertainties to commentators. In addition, the translators and editors have admitted intervening in Mannheim’s text, leaving its readers in doubt as to the degree of authenticity of the translation. For this reason, some of the best Mannheim specialists (Kettler, Meja, Stehr, Loader, Simonds) have chosen not to refer at all (or very sparingly) to the writings collected in the volume *Essays on the Sociology of Culture*. Albeit understandable, this solution also has its own problems. If these texts are rejected as not being Mannheim’s, this rejection should also be based on tangible *evidence* of the *inauthenticity* of *concrete* passages. Clearly, there are such passages in the text (for e.g., there are notes referring to texts published after Mannheim’s death). However, a more important question is whether the *key ideas* of these texts can be considered as being Mannheim’s. Up till now I did not find evidence to the opposite. In particular, it seems unlikely that Mannheim’s socio-ontological theses (namely the consubstantiality of mind and society, on which I draw here), his numerous references to Marx (rather uncommon in his works), as well as his renewed interest in Hegel, would be the editors’ addenda.

of *sociation* involving the “coalescence of men into structured groups.” (*Ibid.*: 18.) These processes, which Mannheim resumes under the notion of the “interactive process” (*ibid.*: 44), are carried through via the *mediation of meanings*: “the acts of sociation which constitute society are inseparably fused with those acts in which ideas are conceived and reinterpreted.” (*Ibid.*: 19.) Inversely, “[a]s there exists no sociation without particular understandings, so there are no shared meanings unless they are derived from and defined by given social situations.” (*Ibid.*: 18.) Consequently, “[i]nasmuch as society is the common frame of interaction, ideation, and communication, the *sociology of the mind* is the study of mental phenomena in the context of action.” (*Ibid.*: 21.) In sum, “the principal thesis [is that] mental processes have a social dimension and hence the sociology of the mind is but a systematic attempt to articulate the social character of mental processes.” (*Ibid.*: 51.)

The anthropogenic bases of the intricateness of mind (meanings) and society (acts of sociation) are to be found, according to Mannheim, in what he calls the “cooperative situation”, that is, the process of *labor* and *material production* by which human groups incessantly recreate and alter their conditions of existence, as well as the structure of the social order in which they live.

“The original seat of meaning is, presumably, the cooperative situation. The identical manipulation of identical things opens up certain common avenues of approach. A log may be a potential canoe, spear, raft, or fuel – depending on the needs of those who intend to use it. It is the joint actions in given or potential situations which fix the common or variable view of a thing. Once the common approach to the thing takes hold, it only needs a common symbol to attain an objective import. The common appellative is therefore not an abstraction and not a derivative of individual significations, but the primary form in which the individual comes to attach meaning to the object.” (*Ibid.*: 66.)

If, as Mannheim says, “the impetus to objectify meanings is eminently social”, and “[m]eaning, therefore, is a sociological term (...) inseparable from some phase of sociation” (*ibid.*), it is because meaning, and the mind as its “seat”, are, first and foremost, *social functions* which must be performed to ensure the material reproduction of collective life and the social order.

Thus, not only are social situations “tacit components of all mental acts” (*ibid.*: 54) but, in turn, the mind permeates every level and aspect of social life: not just that of the narrowly understood domain of cultural production, but the totality of the productive and reproductive functions of a society, and in particular the sphere of economic activity. This hypothesis – first

formulated in the 1925 essay on the “Problems of a Sociology of Knowledge”, to be analyzed in more detail in Chapter 3 – allows Mannheim to formulate a non-reductionist interpretation of the fundamental thesis of historical materialism. The primacy of the economic substructure over the ideological superstructure does not “posit the primacy of matter over ideas, but the priority of one type of social interaction (the economic) over others.” (*Ibid.*: 35.) Thus, what Mannheim terms the “social context of action” must be conceived as a *meaningful context*. Consequently, when the sociology of knowledge relates mental products to social action-contexts, it relates a certain type of meaningful phenomena to another type of meaningful phenomena. Thus, *the sociology of knowledge is an intrinsically interpretive procedure* (in conformity with Mannheim’s own definition of interpretation, see Mannheim 1971a: 11). Thus, as Simonds had correctly concluded based on other texts of Mannheim, since “the entity which is posited as ‘standing behind’ thought is itself (...) invested with meanings (...), the charge of the genetic fallacy (meaning derived from unmeaning) misses the mark.” (Simonds 1978: 121.)

The reason why such thing as a sociology of knowledge is needed is not that we need to find the “causes” of our ideas, but that “ideas have a social meaning which their frontal – that is their immanent – analysis does not reveal.” (Mannheim 2003a: 15.) Social life, similar to Hegelian essence, at the same time manifests and conceals itself as appearance, in Mannheim’s terminology: as “immanent” meaning. As I will try to show in detail in the next chapter, Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge entails that, as members of certain groups and as dwellers of given social locations, human beings’ immediate understanding of the world manifests the power of those common contexts of shared meanings in which individuals are socialized, over the consciousness of these individuals. These contexts and locations implicitly prompt the developing individuals to enact *certain* interpretive acts, *certain* typical behaviors, in front of *certain* realities, always-already interpreted in a *certain* way. The uncritical self-subjection to standardized behavior-patterns through which members of a community interpret their world is the basis of what Mannheim calls *existential boundedness* (“*Seinsgebundenheit des Denkens*”), which can develop in a learnt and willfully maintained *incapacity to perceive the adequate action-contexts of given sets of meaning*.¹⁴

¹⁴ In a text I will analyze in detail in the next chapter, Mannheim formulates this idea in the following way: “the significance of something for [a] concrete life-space overspreads, hides, and draws itself into the determinations of pure existence. One relates to things not as they might be in themselves but only as they exist for the community. (...) [T]he individual who is uncritically absorbed in the collective representations of the community, does not notice that he sees the things of his experiential horizon only in so far as they fit into collective meanings.”

A need to transcend this first layer of appearance may arise when the orienting function of the “natural” pre-understanding of the world breaks down and confronts the individuals with practical or existential aporia. When the inherited frames of interpretation and behavior are unable to cope with a changed situation, the individuals may react by distancing themselves from their original universe of norms, by understanding its relativity to shifting social and existential contexts (Mannheim 2001a: 9-12). According to Mannheim, at the bottom, the sociology of knowledge is nothing else than the methodical cultivation of the impulse to transcend given sets of meaning toward other sets of meaning, understood as differential manifestations of a concretely structured, objective social reality. In this sense, the sociology of knowledge involves the idea of permanent self-formation or self-enlargement. The methodically cultivated sociological interpretation of mental phenomena amounts to the consciousness of the latter’s existential connectedness and results in the critical overcoming of one’s boundedness to one’s particular social contexts (Mannheim 1963: 282).¹⁵ This conception does not involve that the *prima facie* meaning of social phenomena is *false* or *illusory*, nor that the underlying social contexts are *more real* or of *higher cognitive value* than the immediate ones. Illusion and falsity do not lie in *this* or *that concrete* interpretation of the world (which are in general neither true nor false, but “particular”) but in the *incapacity to visualize the actual action-contexts of one’s interpretive activity*. The goal of the sociology of knowledge is not to uncover the “true reality” lying behind mere appearance, but to help visualize its multiple connections to the total context of meaning which conditions it.

Based on this reasoning, I therefore propose to understand Mannheim’s idea of *existential connectedness* (“*Seinsverbundenheit*”) as referring to the intrinsically social character of thinking, of which it is possible to become aware in the course of a *learning-process* implying a *confrontation with one’s limits* set by one’s concrete *social conditioning*. The idea

(Mannheim 1982b: 207, 213, transl. mod.). I note in passing that it would obviously be an interesting project to compare Mannheim’s notion of *Seinsgebundenheit* with the phenomenological idea of the “lifeworld” as developed by Husserl and Heidegger (and much later by Blumenberg), on whose works Mannheim may be drawing here.

¹⁵ Cp. (Mannheim 2001a: 72): “(...) we use insight, on the one hand, to understand how we are bound down in detail (*Detailgebundenheit*) but, on the other, also utilize it for self-expansion. In this process forces are liberated that stream from particular boundedness towards reality. (...) [W]hen we penetrate to the fact that life possesses structures of vitality in certain areas and when we penetrate to the necessity of stopping short from time to time, we enact this as a cognition, and we regard it as seeing ever more clearly and not as a degradation.” (The strange expression “*Detailgebundenheit*” can be understood as being synonymous with “*Seinsgebundenheit*”).

of *existential boundedness* (“*Seinsgebundenheit*”), in turn, is a *mode* of existential connectedness that completely or partially impedes the awareness of one’s social conditioning (and limitations). *Interestedness*, in turn, can be seen as a rationally – though often unconsciously – motivated refusal to perform certain interpretive acts which would put in doubt the legitimacy of one’s social position (and that would thereby hinder action necessary to the reproduction of such position). In this sense, interestedness is a *specific type* of existential boundedness, useful for the achievement of certain social and political ends. In this way, the idea of “motivation by interests” can be integrated in the framework of the sociology of knowledge as an interpretive practice, without reference to causality, and thus without running the risk of “reductionism”.

This, however, is not the main reason to refuse the accusation of class-reductionism levelled against Mannheim by some of his critics. What specifies Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge and intellectuals as compared with the class-bound approaches is not simply that he does not conceive interestedness in a deterministic fashion, but that he considers it as being only *one* possible – and not the most fundamental – type of functional relatedness of idealities to social dynamics (Kettler–Loader–Meja 2009: 5). As Mannheim puts it,

“[o]ne can be bound (“*gebunden sein*”) by interests to a certain economic system, certain political ideas can prove useful in certain interest-related situations as well. But it is certainly not an immediate interest that ties us (“*bindet*”) to a certain artistic style or way of thinking; and yet these entities also do not float in thin air but are functionally connected (“*funktional verbunden*”) to their sociological-historical bearers. If we call the immediate liaison (“*unmittelbare Verknüpftheit*”) to interests ‘interestedness’, then we can call the mediate connectedness (“*mittelbare Verbundensein*”) to given spiritual contents (...) ‘committedness’ (“*Engagiertsein*”) towards certain contents, and it is really noteworthy in history that a certain economy will always be embedded, at least in its origin, in a certain mental (“*geistliche*”) world, ensuring that the one who wants a certain style of economy (“*Wirtschaftstil*”), will also want the world corresponding to it. (...) Mediate committedness to spiritual contents appears thus as the most encompassing category of the functional relations between spiritual contents and social being.” (Mannheim 1971b: 108-109, transl. mod.; cp. Mannheim 1964: 376-377.)

This passage introduces the first of the two distinctive features which set Mannheim’s theory apart from class-bound approaches. This first feature is the idea of *committedness* as a functional relation between idealities and social dynamics more fundamental than interestedness. For Mannheim, while *interestedness* involves the establishment of a *direct*,

immediate, means-end type of relation between mental phenomena and social contexts, *committedness* entails the idea of *mediated* imputation between these two terms. The hypothesis of direct interest-relatedness is not done away with, though: it has a legitimate application in all cases where it can be shown that the attitude toward mental realities is directly motivated by one's position in the social and political order, for example when it appears that someone sees only those aspects of a problem-complex that justify one's privileged position. However, there are other cases where this hypothesis does not work. In Mannheim's example, it is meaningless to state that someone is "interested" in an artistic style or in a certain mode of communication: cultural choices and preferences involve another kind of existential connectedness, for which he coins the term of committedness (see also Kettler–Meja 2001: 104, 109).

The idea underlying this distinction is that one's sociopolitical conditioning entails existential connections and attachments which are tied only *indirectly* to one's position in the productive process and social hierarchy. Human beings live not as interest-realizing computers, but as dwellers of "worlds" they create through their (often conflictual) interactions.

"If we examine the history of knowledge and thought (...), seeking to understand how it is embedded in the history of the real, social process, then we shall find at each moment not only social strata with diverging interests combating each other, but also a conflict of opposed world-aspirations [*Weltwollungen*']. In the historical process, not only interests stand against interests, but 'worlds' struggle against 'worlds'. What is sociologically relevant in this confrontation is that these various world-aspirations (of which the different thought-styles are but partial aspects) do not oppose each other in a free-floating, arbitrary way, as one can oppose ideas to ideas, but each specific world-aspiration arises as historically and socially bounded [*gebunden*'] and develops in this boundedness [*Gebundenheit*']." (Mannheim 1971b: 110, transl. mod; cp. Mannheim 1964: 379.)

The second notion setting apart Mannheim's theorization of the link between ideation and social dynamics from alternative approaches is that of *world-aspiration* ("Weltwollung" and its variants: "world" [*Welt*'], "worldview" [*Weltanschauung*'], "world-image" [*Weltbild*'], etc.). The notion of *world-aspiration* is introduced as a *correlative term* to *committedness*: lifestyles, attachment to certain cultural models, religious and political ties, adherence to given systems of value, certain behavior-patterns, etc., are all manifestations of what Mannheim calls "worldview-committedness". Although worldviews are historically and socially bounded, rooted they are in the struggle for power of human groups occupying distinct

positions in the social hierarchy (Mannheim 1982a: 75), they are not the *direct* expressions of economic or political *interests*. As Mannheim puts it:

“we cannot assign a style of thought, a work of art, etc. to a group as its own on the basis of an analysis of interests. We can, however, show that a certain style of thought, an intellectual standpoint, is anchored within a worldview system which in turn can be seen to be related to a certain economic and power system; we can then ask which social groups are ‘interested’ in the emergence and maintenance of this economic and social system and at the same time committed to the corresponding worldview.” (Mannheim 1971b: 109.)

The *interests* that are at stake in the social and political struggle between human groups cannot be separated from the *whole social being* of these groups, i.e., from the basic mental frames through which they give meaning and value to the world which they inhabit. The totality of these forms and contents is what Mannheim names worldview and world-aspiration: he sees their reconstruction as the peculiar task of the sociology of knowledge (*ibid.*). The distinctive feature of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge (contrasting not only with the class-bound approaches but also, as I will show in Chapter 4, with the class-less ones) is its use of worldview as a *mediating category* between social stratification and cultural objectivation. Therefore, to grasp the peculiarity of Mannheim’s approach, it is necessary to look deeper into Mannheim’s conception of the edification of the cultural world in its relation to social dynamics.

Chapter 3 – The concept of “worldview” in Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge

§ 12. Aim and structure of the chapter

At the end of the first essay of *Ideology and Utopia* titled “Preliminary Approach to the Problem”, Mannheim describes the style of his work as “essayistic”. It is a style fit for a certain kind of topic, about which no textbooks and systems can be written: “[t]hey are those questions which an age has as yet neither fully perceived nor fully thought through.” (Mannheim 1963: 52.) Such topics are best treated through the essayistic method, which consists in “leaping into any immediate problem which [is] conveniently at hand and observing it for so long and from so many angles that finally some marginal problem of thought and existence [is] disclosed and illuminated by means of the accidental individual case.” (*Ibid.*) The essay does not seek to give definitive formulations of the problems it scrutinizes but rather seeks to circumscribe them without erasing the arising contradictions.

Although Mannheim says this in the context of *Ideology and Utopia*, the essayistic style is in general the hallmark of his work method. This is true also for the way in which he treats one of the central concepts of his sociology of knowledge and intellectuals, the notion of *worldview*. Between the essays “On the Interpretation of *Weltanschauung*” (1921) and “The Sociology of Knowledge” (1931), Mannheim tackles this problem afresh several times without ever reaching a conclusive solution to it. Following the shifts of his centers of interest and the gradual development of the basic categories of his sociology of knowledge and intellectuals, the concept of worldview itself shifts its shape and takes on various functions, while being constantly enriched and rearticulated. In this chapter, I will try to follow some of these shifts and rearticulations. Although my aim is not a genealogy of the concept, I will proceed in a chronological way because this will allow to distinguish the major successive stages in Mannheim’s elaboration of the sociology of knowledge in the 1920s, in which the concept of worldview functions as a linchpin around which the fundamental concepts of his project are articulated. By the end of this reconstruction, the reader should have in hand the conceptual prerequisites to clearly distinguish Mannheim’s project from the class-bound approaches, as well as from the so-called “class-less” paradigm.

§ 13. The methodological approach to worldview: “On *Weltanschauung*” (1921-22)

Mannheim’s first extensive treatment of the concept of worldview is in his essay “On *Weltanschauung*” (in German: “*Beiträge zur Theorie der Weltanschauungs-Interpretation*”), published in 1921-22. This writing is a methodological analysis of interpretive procedures in the cultural and historical disciplines of Mannheim’s time, characterized according to him by a shared aspiration to a synthetic view of their common objects. The *emergence* of the concept of worldview would be the *theoretical expression* of this spontaneously arising drive to synthesis. Its real-life reference is the *pre-theoretical, everyday cultural totality* which the specialized cultural sciences all presuppose in some manner, but which eludes them as such because they necessarily break this totality apart in order to create their own specialized fields, objects and methods as the conditions of a *scientific* treatment of cultural phenomena. Thus, “worldview” is in this sense the *non-theoretical totality* of all the interpretive acts that give meaning to events experienced by human beings in a given social context. It not only encompasses all areas and creations of the culture of an era, but also endows them with an identical imprint, which can be grasped intuitively through the experience of and familiarity with any concrete cultural artifact belonging to this context. As a *scientific concept*, worldview becomes a *theoretical-methodological device* providing mediation between the different planes of the human-scientific disciplines striving to reconstruct on a secondary, theoretical plane, that pre-theoretical totality which they implicitly presuppose and at the same time deconstruct, which thus they can never grasp directly because of their specialization in some of its peculiar cross-sections (Mannheim 1971a: 8-13).

Referring to Alois Riegl’s work based on the notion of art-aspiration (“*Kunstwollen*”), Mannheim asserts that the concept of worldview as a uniform pattern present in *all* the cultural objectifications of a given sociocultural context can be best made explicit via *stylistic analysis*. In a first approximation, *style* “designates a formal, compositional moment which appears repeatedly in many works of the same tendency” (Mannheim 1982a: 86, transl. mod.), or, better, “an identical, homologous pattern underlying a vast variety of totally different contextures of meaning.” (Mannheim 1971a: 32.) For example, one intuitively recognizes and distinguishes the Gothic architecture from the regular occurrence of the pointed arch, the ribbed vault, the flying buttresses, the pinnacle, but also from more general principles such as the search for light and verticality, etc.

Immanent stylistic analysis is *transcended* toward so-called *worldview-interpretation* (“*Weltanschauungsinterpretation*”) when the idea of the Gothic, initially referring to a certain *architectural style*, comes to qualify cultural artifacts pertaining to different artistic and cultural fields and media – music, sculpture, paintings, literature, lay arts and crafts, etc. – belonging to the *same* cultural sphere in which the Gothic architecture was born (*ibid.*: 11). This generalizing and transcending move is possible even though between, say, gothic *music* and gothic *painting*, there can be no similar elements in the same sense as between gothic official buildings, churches and palaces, because they are not realized in same *medium* (nor for that matter with comparable techniques and skills): in one case, the medium is of *acoustic*, in the other it is of *visual* nature. It follows that the *meaning* of the Gothic is, on the one hand, something that can be grasped only by intuiting the form of particular cultural artifacts realized in specific media but that, on the other hand, it can be reduced neither to the latter nor to former. By “the Gothic”, one thus understands a *meaningful totality* that embraces *and* exceeds plastic and musical expressions of a given period and space: it is manifested *through* them, but it also *transcends* any particular artifact and medium in which it is given (*ibid.*: 16-17).

This process of transcendence and generalization can go even farther than that. Not only do art historians and aesthetes speak of gothic style in different cultural domains, but they also speak of a “gothic *man*”, “gothic *era*”, or “gothic *spirit*” in general (cp. Mannheim 1971: 32-33, 51-53). In this process the new, more general meaning of the word is obtained through what Mannheim terms successive *acts of transcendence (or sublimation) of the conceptual content of less general totalities* (*ibid.*: 54). At the most general level, style gives way to worldview, which is the highest level of abstraction and generality attainable by a set of morphological characteristics whose coherence is guaranteed by such interconnected sequences of holistic intuitions. In the frame of this first formulation of the problem, worldview is thus understood by Mannheim as the most encompassing, meaningful cultural totality, which, on the one hand, gives the *deeper common meaning* of interconnected cultural manifestations, and, on the other, *helps reestablish in theory the respective relationships* between the different parts and cross-sections of said cultural totality.

§ 14. The *sociological* concept of worldview in “The distinctive character of cultural-sociological knowledge” (1922)

Mannheim further elaborates these intuitions in his essay on “The distinctive character of cultural-sociological knowledge” (“*Über die Eigenart kultursoziologische Erkenntnis*”), written in 1922, after his turn from a philosophical career toward sociology (the text was published posthumously in 1980 by David Kettler, Volker Meja and Nico Stehr). Its decisive insight is that insofar as styles are identified based on cultural artifacts, *stylistic analysis contains an implicit reference to social interactions*. Indeed, the unity and continuity of a given style supposes the unity and continuity of human groups producing the cultural manifestations in and through which styles are given. These producers of cultural artifacts have to be connected with each other in order to bring about a definite style. Albeit implicitly, stylistic analysis thus necessarily refers to *structured social interactions* that make the stylistic phenomenon possible in the first place.

Using the previous example, Gothic architects working in different times and places not only had to follow a set of *common norms* guiding their practices, but also had to share *structurally analogous experiences*, something that made them part of a *community* (“*Gemeinschaft*”) (Mannheim 1982a: 71). What is true for Gothic architects holds for the generalization of the Gothic architectural style to other fields of cultural creation; it supposes the sharing of structurally analogous experiences and the participation in a set of common social practices. “The purely formal characterization of the Gothic style is gradually transposed into the ‘Gothic principle’ which stands behind it, by recurring to that typical interconnection of lived experiences (“*Erlebniszusammenhang*”) whose ‘consequence’ it is that entire generations could be creative while sharing, as far form goes, a common definition of visual and representational problems.” (Mannheim 1982a: 87, transl. mod.¹⁶)

At this point, however, the question arises how it is possible that the “individual possesses a great part of his stock of experience in common with other individuals.” (*Ibid.*: 71.) How should this community of experiences be conceived? Mannheim answers this question by ruling out two kinds of individualistic explanations. The first kind of explanation is known from

¹⁶ It is noteworthy that Mannheim anticipates here both Panofsky’s (Panofsky 1951) and Bourdieu’s (Bourdieu 1967) researches on the mediating role of social institutions and practices linking social dynamics and cultural forms, leading eventually to Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus*.

the mass-psychology models of authors like Le Bon and Freud for whom “[g]roup existence (...) can only mean that a group of persons, either in their immediate reactions to the same situation or as a result of direct psychic interaction, react similarly.” (Mannheim 1963: 58.) Mannheim argues against this model by invoking the institutional and rational nature of such “mobs” as political parties, assemblies, etc. As he writes, “[i]t is not psychic contagion or imitation (...), but the collectively (“*gemeinsam*”) given experiential contexture and the collectively (“*gemeinsam*”) experienced situation, which forge masses into unity and make out of the isolated individual a microcosm which contains the social macrocosm.” (Mannheim 1982a: 73, transl. mod.) The second solution is typical of rational choice theories, which explain the community of contents present in different individuals’ consciousnesses as the result of a situation where individuals act according to a same *motive* (for example, in a stock market). Against this, Mannheim observes that, “[m]y membership in a group does not consist in my agreeing, fortuitously and occasionally, on the basis of my own pattern of motives, with the experiential contents of other individuals belonging to the same group, but rather in being able to complete a considerable stretch of patterned experience in common with the other members of the group.” (*Ibid.*: 71).

The core of Mannheim’s solution, what sets it apart from the models he criticizes, is the idea of a *structural interconnectedness of individual lived experiences*, which he understands as *an identical exposure to formative experiences* (mostly institutionally mediated), realizing a functional homology between individual consciousness and social structure.

“Communal experience (“*Gemeinschaftserlebnis*”) arises only where and when different individuals, in face of outer destinies, enact within themselves an identical pattern of experience. (...) These experiences, which are simultaneously present in all the individuals who belong to the same entities constituted by processes of socialization and community-formation, must be mutually interconnected in structure (...). [T]he cohesiveness of a group constitutes itself precisely in the fact that the range of possible modes of apprehension and attitudes with regard to destinies in prospect is, as it were, predetermined on the basis of past communal contextures of experience.” (*Ibid.*: 71-74, transl. mod.)

This *sociological* insight affects in return Mannheim’s conception of the *methodology* of what he has called worldview-interpretation:

“We should like to call this form of extending the concept’s contents, which enriches it not with new characteristics but with the relation of functionality that lies behind these characteristics, a transcendence of the conceptual contents. In other words, where a concept that first constitutes itself as relating to a norm abandons the level of these formal relationships and signifies the underlying functional relation, we are confronted with a transcendence of conceptual contents.” (*ibid.*).

In this perspective, “to comprehend an interconnection of forms and the corresponding interconnection of lived experience as ‘style’ amounts to impute the relevant aspects of a work as well as the corresponding interconnections of lived experience (...) to a corresponding group experience (...).” (*Ibid.*: 88, transl. mod.)¹⁷

This, in turn, drives Mannheim to a new, *sociological definition of worldview*:

“A worldview (of an era, a group, etc.) is a structurally linked series of experiential contextures (“*eine strukturell verbundene Reihe von Erlebniszusammenhängen*”) which makes up the common base upon which a multitude of individuals together experience and penetrate life. A worldview is then neither the totality of spiritual formations present in an age nor the sum of individuals then present, but the *totality of the structurally interconnected series of experiential contextures* that can be determined both from the side of the mental (“*geistliche*”) formations and that of the social *group formations*. What is presupposed here throughout is that (...) individuals who are classed together in the same group share a basic stock of experiential contents (...) that (...) possess an internal coherence and thereby constitute what may be called a ‘life-system’.” (Mannheim 1982a: 91, transl. mod., italics added).

Eventually, worldview is defined here as a totality (a “life-system”) of structurally linked series of experiential contextures (“*Erlebniszusammenhängen*”), on the basis of which a multiplicity of individuals can experience the world in unison. Therefore, to be able to (re)establish and visualize the connection between cultural and spiritual objectifications, on the one hand, and social groups and processes, on the other, a methodical access to the worldview in which these two aspects of the same reality merge together must be provided.

¹⁷ This then becomes the Mannheimian formula for *sociogenetic investigation*: “Whenever [mental] formations and the interconnections of lived experience pertaining to them are designated as belonging to a ‘style’, they are comprehended *socio-genetically* (...).” (Mannheim 1980a: 88).

However, despite this stronger sociological grounding, worldview as a mediating entity and category still retains some of the elusiveness that characterized it in Mannheim's earlier article "On the interpretation of *Weltanschauung*". Indeed, the problem is that worldview cannot be grasped immediately, in itself, but only as the functional correlate of a social group, or as a contexture of meaning underlying cultural objectifications (*ibid.*). I think that this elusiveness of the category of worldview is to be related to the neo-Kantian *mind/society dualism* that Mannheim has not yet overcome at this stage of his intellectual development, despite his search for a way to transcend this dualism. Neo-Kantian philosophy is built on the basic dichotomies of facts vs. values (or norms) and content vs. form. Values and forms pertain to the realm of validity, characterized by *supra-temporality*, *permanence* and *necessity*, while facts and content, the empirical-sensible matter of forms and values, are *temporal*, *changing* and *contingent*.

Mannheim's indebtedness to this doctrine is voiced in his conception of the double attitude ("*Einstellung*"), "immanent" and "genetic", that one can adopt in relation to configurations of meaning ("*Sinngebilde*") (Mannheim 1982a: 60-69). One's attitude is immanent when one *enacts* the rules and behaviors inherent in a given configuration of meaning pertaining to a given sphere of action: for example, one has an immanent relation to law when one participates in a legal debate and uses the appropriate procedures of legal reasoning to win the case (e.g., an immigration lawyer trying to gain the refugee-status for a client). The same lawyer can, however, adopt a different attitude toward law: for example, when questioning the preponderance of legal action in pro-immigrant activism, in favor of a more just legislation. In the latter instance, the lawyer thematizes *the social and ideological function of law as such* within the current sociopolitical system. For Mannheim, this duality of attitudes means that a same configuration of meaning can either be enacted as *valid meaning* or be considered as the "*result*" of a social configuration, in which law has its peculiar function, whereby the question of its validity is so to speak "bracketed".

Mannheim's neo-Kantian presuppositions become manifest when he defines the *logical* limits of what the socio-genetic attitude can achieve. Although all configurations of meaning can be subjected to socio-genetic investigation,

"[w]hat one arrives at in an immanent approach, the meaning-contents and their validity (...) does not enter into the sociological view and thus can be neither confirmed nor doubted. This also means, however, that sociological or other genetic explanation can neither confirm nor refute the truth or falsity of a proposition or of the entire theoretical sphere. How something

came to be, what functionality it may possess in other contexts, is entirely irrelevant to its immanent character of validity. This implies that it will never be possible to construct a sociological critique of knowledge or, as has recently been asserted, a sociological critique of human reason.” (*Ibid.*: 82.)

What is distinctly neo-Kantian in these propositions is the assumption of the context-independence of the validity of meanings and norms, their corresponding supra-temporality and binding necessity in relation to the individual consciousness that apprehends them. Correspondingly, the character of “result” of a configuration of meaning, its functionality, or its relatedness to stretches of collective experience, are associated with *factuality*, the *hic et nunc* of historical life, *contingency*. To give an example, in this perspective, the transhistorical “validity” of Ancient Greek tragedy would be explained not by virtue of historical continuities and reinterpretations motivated by the actual needs of the interpreters but rather through the hypothesis that it refers to something supra-human, and hence supra-historical, in human life. To use Kettler, Meja and Stehr’s very apt formula, at this stage of his thinking Mannheim does not yet “inquire into the functions of ideas *in* society, but rather their character as functions *of* society.” (Kettler–Meja–Stehr 1982: 16-17; see also Kettler 1967: 414.)

It is likely that, at this point of his intellectual development, a main factor retaining Mannheim from embarking on the way to a “sociological critique of knowledge” (i.e., a sociology of knowledge) is that he cannot yet see how a sociological approach to culture could avoid reductionism – in other words, how it would be possible to *conserve the claim to validity* and objectivity of cultural values while at the same time radically *historicizing* them. It is nevertheless symptomatic that in “The Distinctive Character of Cultural-Sociological Knowledge”, Mannheim allowed for an exception from under the rule that functionality cannot be related to the meaning and the validity of cultural formations. This exception is *art*, in which case it is true that “the relationship of functionality is simultaneously a constituent part of meaning” (*ibid.*: 69). Seeing the case of art not as an exception but rather as a paradigm would amount to saying that it is not the supra-historical and decontextualized character of cultural formations that explain their transhistorical validity, but the opposite: their objectivity and their significance stem from the fact that *they remain “functional”* (and *therefore* meaningful) *in* historically and socially *different contexts*. This is exactly the hypothesis that Mannheim will explore in depth in his second great cultural-sociological essay titled “A sociological theory of culture and its knowability (Conjunctive and communicative thinking)”, written in 1924 and

published posthumously by Kettler, Meja and Stehr in 1980 as the second essay of the volume *Structures of thinking* (see also Kettler 1967: 420).

§ 15. Historicism and the idea of “existence-connected thinking and knowing” (1924-25)

Although the intuition of an essential link between meaning and function was contained already in the earlier essay, it took a double encounter for Mannheim to actualize it. Mannheim’s rupture with the neo-Kantian perspective occurred under the double stimulus of Ernst Troeltsch’s *Historicism and its Problems* (1922) and Georg Lukács’s *History and Class Consciousness* (1923). Troeltsch’s book triggered Mannheim’s turn toward historicism and his abandonment of the philosophy of validity (a turn documented in Mannheim’s essay on “Historicism”, published in 1924). Concomitantly, the reception of Lukács’s book provided Mannheim with a non-reductionist understanding of historical materialism. Thus, while Troeltsch’s conceptions allowed Mannheim to do away with the hitherto indefectible correlation between validity and supra-temporality and made possible to conceive the idea of historical (and thus relative) validity, Lukács’s “essay of Marxist dialectics” completed the historicization of validity with its *sociologization* – an idea that Mannheim rejected as logically inconsistent in his previous cultural-sociological essay (Mannheim 1982a: 82).

Mannheim’s second cultural-sociological essay is an attempt at rethinking the problem of the methodology of the human sciences (“*Geisteswissenschaften*”) by generalizing and systematically applying to it the lessons learnt from the confrontation with Troeltsch’s historicism (the dynamic and relative character of truth) and Lukács’ interpretation of Marx’s thought (thinking and validity as functions of social struggle). It is in this context that Mannheim coins the formula of “existence-connected thinking and knowing” (“*existenzverbundene Denken und Erkennen*”), as the kind of thinking at work in the human- and social-scientific disciplines. This formula prefigures the fundamental idea of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge: the “existential connectedness of thought” (“*Seinsverbundenheit des Denkens*”), which is seen here as involving “a type of thinking which is expressly not knowledge of things, but knowledge of meaningful life, life which does not stand outside thinking, in contrast to it, but which forms a unity of being with it, always in a state of becoming.” (Mannheim 1982b: 180.) The aim of Mannheim’s text is to provide the theory of this specific type of knowledge and thinking, for which he borrows Victor von Weizsäcker’s

term of “conjunctive knowledge and thinking”. Insofar as conjunctive thinking is the prototype of the existential connectedness of thought, “A sociological theory of culture and its knowability” can be regarded as the founding document of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge.

Mannheim makes it clear from the outset that the articulation of the idea of “existence-connected thinking and knowing” (“*existenzverbundene Denken und Erkennen*”) necessitates a rupture with the neo-Kantian philosophy of reason, which denies any form of *genetic relation* between socio-historical life and the realm of idealities (or values) (*ibid.*: 180-81). The first, historical, part of Mannheim’s essay, goes directly against this principle of neo-Kantian epistemology and methodology by making the latter the object of sociogenetic interpretation as a historical concretion of the *natural-scientific style of thought* (“*Denkstil*”), whose historical fate is envisaged from the perspective of its decisive alliance with the social strata interested in the development of market-capitalism (*ibid.*: 156-58; cp. Kettler 1967: 422). Drawing on Lukács, Mannheim sees this style of thought as a manifestation and factor of *reification*¹⁸, the fundamental social-existential condition in market-society according to Lukács’ analysis. (Mannheim 1982b: 156-58).

In Mannheim’s view, the natural-scientific style of thought is characterized by five main features.

1) The progressive eradication from the field of the knowable (or of the “worth-to-be-known”) of everything not *quantifiable* or translatable into mathematical *function-relations* and the consequential *de-legitimization of qualitative methods* of knowing, as well as of any sort of *anthropomorphism* in theory (*ibid.*: 154). According to the maxim of this style of thought, “[o]nly where one can hope to learn something that is not bound to humanly experience is truth to be found, and only pure reason is, so to speak, superhuman in man.” (*Ibid.*, transl. mod.)

2) The second feature is the gradual suppression of any reference in knowledge to experiences pertaining to *peculiar existential contexts and situations*, a process Mannheim calls (using Tönnies’ terminology) the “socialization of knowledge” (“*Vergesellschaftigung des*

¹⁸ Mannheim follows Lukács’ account of reification (“*Verdinglichung*”). According to Lukács, the subsuming of use-value under exchange-value, that is, the organization of the whole of social life for the sake of commodity-exchange (“the market”), is at the root of the phenomenon of reification: the fact that all forms of human interactions tend to be mediated by the commodity-form and the act of commodity-exchange, resulting in the objectification and autonomization of these relations between human beings, eventually gaining the character of a thing (Lukács 1971: 85-87).

Erkenntnis”). This means that only those certainties deserve to be called “knowledge” which are demonstrable to *anyone* (i.e., to anyone in a reified society), abstraction made of any particular experiential context. Conversely, all forms of knowledge essentially linked to the knowing subjects’ participation in “localistic”, “use-value-oriented” *communal life* (“*gemeinschaftliches Leben*”) are to be excluded from the field of scientific knowledge (*ibid.*: 155).

3) Third, the previous thesis – which Mannheim qualifies as a “completely unproven prejudice” – according to which “man has knowledge only in so far as what he learns can be demonstrated to everyone” accounts for the indefectible association in natural-scientific thought between *universal validity* (“*Allgemeingültigkeit*”) and *truth*. The rhetorical efficiency of this link depends largely on its ability to depersonalize and de-communalize knowledge while *at the same time* relocating it (“translating” it) on a “conceptual level accessible to any conceivable subject”, resulting in the correlation: “the more abstract the elements of the object which are comprehended and emphasized (...) the more abstract the knowledge obtained and hence the greater the number of subjects for whom it has validity.” (*Ibid.*: 155). The coupling of universal validity and truth means that “[e]verything subject to assertion is to be identical for everyone in every assertion of it” and is to be “universally valid in two ways: referable to all objects of the same kind (...), and valid for all subjects who ever will utter it (...).” (*Ibid.*: 196).

4) Fourth, the coupling of universal validity with truth has far-reaching consequences for the *theory of the concept*. This theory has the function to justify and codify the separation of knowledge (and in general of idealities) from their embeddedness in concrete existential relations. In other terms, the natural-scientific theory of the concept is necessarily, albeit often implicitly, a *theory of decontextualization*. This theory operates with the idea of *exact concepts*, which it sees as arising in the process of a specific cognitive activity, that of *scientific-philosophical definition* (*ibid.*: 196). According to Mannheim, the utopian ideal of this type of concept-formation “would be the creation of a timeless conceptual level upon which every concept which occurs would have its place, would secure its unambiguous meaning and its contents from the other components, and would be defined once and for all through its relationship to these others” (*ibid.*).

5) Fifth, to this methodological ideal of a system of thoroughly de-contextualized concepts corresponds a specific conception of *subjectivity*. Mannheim calls it the “epistemological subject”, the “structural correlate of the universally valid cognitive results”, whose model lies in mathematics and theoretical physics (*ibid.*: 214). The epistemological subject does not have a real-world reference for it is a *constructive concept*. It is obtained not

on the basis of the “deepening” of subjective experience or of some speculation regarding the faculties of the human psyche: “The key and the starting point for this construction are, rather, certain results of the sciences which reached such a level of abstraction in their theoretical structure that all reference to individual or collective determinants was extinguished within their contents and which could just for this reason lay claim to validity beyond conjunctivity” (that is to say, beyond communal, “localistic”, or “use-value oriented” validity). (*Ibid.*).

Mannheim’s project of articulating a theory of “existence-connected thinking and knowing” (“*existenzverbundene Denken und Erkennen*”) then proceeds by systematically opposing each of the five previous features of the methodologies and epistemologies corresponding to the natural-scientific style of thought. He thus seeks to elaborate a theory of “conjunctive knowledge” which is

- (1) qualitative,
- (2) situational and contextual,
- (3) objectively valid without being universal,
- (4) producing context-related and action-oriented concepts,
- (5) correlated to a notion of subjectivity based on the Diltheyian idea of the “whole man”, understood as the intrinsic community-creating power of the human being.

§ 16. From “contagion” to “conjunctive knowledge”

Through the idea of conjunctive thinking and knowledge, Mannheim attempts to think the consubstantiality of “culture” and “society”, i.e., the fact that the cultural realm is a *function* of the process of “sociation”, and vice-versa, that social life always happens in the medium of meaning. To be more precise, Mannheim is interested in the *community-generating power of existence-related knowledge and thinking*, its capacity to bind human beings together and integrate them in unique spiritual and social configurations, as well as in the corresponding power of communities to create *conjunctive knowledge* as a necessary form of their historical existence. “Conjunctivity” is Mannheim’s formula for a type of thinking capable of articulating the incessant flow of life arising from social interactions by providing norms, schemes and values allowing for collective orientation and practice in contingent circumstances. For Mannheim, conjunctive thinking also plays a crucial role in how human groups define their identity, their unique historical “essence”. This is what makes them *at the same time* singular *and* comparable with other human groups. Mannheim thus conceives conjunctive knowledge as dynamic and transferable: through it, human groups learn how to compose with each other,

how to learn from each other, whether under the form of cooperation and fusion or that of competition, distancing, and conflict. Consequently, conjunctive knowledge is at play both behind the processes making for the *unity* and for the *fragmentation* of humankind, the general “struggle for social existence” characterizing human history (cp. Mannheim 1982a: 75).

At the bottom level of conjunctive experience and knowledge, one finds acts of “contagion”, a quasi-fusional existential relationship between two unique beings, the “entirely immediate taking up [into consciousness] of something *qualitatively unique*.” (*Ibid.*: 189). Contagion occurs “when, for example, there walks into our room a stranger whom we have never seen before, who has not yet spoken a word but from whose physiognomy and bearing, from whose gestures and movements we nevertheless take in his whole being in a distinct way and for once, while we truly ‘taste’ the distinctive properties of his soul.” (*Ibid.*, transl. mod.) Although Mannheim stresses the irrational and fusional aspect of contagion, he also maintains that “knowledge” in the epistemological sense of a symbolically and conceptually mediated relationship between a subject and an object in fact presupposes this kind of relationship: subject and object emerge only based on the split of the original unity brought about by contagion.

Mannheim argues that the *historicity* and *reflexivity* of contagious encounters prove that knowledge can be built on them. To take the previous example, the original situation of contagion can be reiterated “in its distinctive quality every time we meet the person in question” (*ibid.*: 189). If these encounters become regular, “[t]here arises a relationship having its own history, a relationship which is added as a new existential fact to the world of the already existent, and which is graspable not only by us but also by the Other, who grasps it and at once reacts to it in an appropriate way.” (*Ibid.*: 190, transl. mod.) In other terms, when the at-first fortuitous encounter with the Other becomes *frequentation*, something new, a third term emerges: *the relation itself*, graspable by both participants in the relationship (*ibid.*: 189-90). It is objective in two senses. First, each relationship with another person has an irreducible, peculiar quality, its own distinctive “coloration”, “atmosphere”, which can be grasped intuitively, similarly to a style. Second, such relationship has its own *historicity*: it lasts in time, it can be transformed and has its own “destiny”. Furthermore, such a relationship can also become an object of *reflection* (for example in the context of a discussion on “What went wrong between us?”). Thus, even though the experience of such relationship cannot be universal, and “even though there are as yet no objectifications in evidence”, there is knowledge about it for the participants themselves. It is “not knowledge for everyone, but only for the two of us.” (*Ibid.*: 191, transl. mod.)

A quality of conjunctive knowledge Mannheim stresses is its *perspectivistic character*, that is to say, the fact that it seizes only one aspect, only one perspective of the “object”, or as Mannheim writes, of the “*vis-à-vis*” (“*Gegenüber*”), “namely that which is embedded in all those personal dispositions through which I approach [it].” (*Ibid.*: 191; Mannheim 1980: 212).¹⁹ Although “[t]his knowledge is thus completely one-sided”, Mannheim does not think that this puts its status as knowledge in jeopardy (Mannheim 1982b: 191). He argues for this point by taking the example of a *landscape*. Since a landscape presupposes an immanent and subjectively determined position of observation, the idea of perspective is inherent in this concept. Now, despite its perspectival character, the perception of a landscape has a form of objectivity, since the image of a landscape (and in general of any conjunctive relationship) is *transferable* from one’s consciousness to the other’s, *provided that the other is co-present within the landscape in which the observers stand* and that the knowledge of the one allows for the other to orient themselves in the landscape in an effective manner (*ibid.*: 192).²⁰ This works not only for landscapes but for conjunctive knowledge in general. Insofar as the transferred knowledge offers chances to orient oneself in a situation, to adequately react to practical challenges, its objectivity and validity can be corroborated or disproven. Of course, the validity in question is still of a *conjunctive character* (“*konjunktive Gültigkeit*”), in contrast to the *general validity* (“*Allgemeingültigkeit*”) pertaining to universalistic assertions (*ibid.*: 191-193).²¹

¹⁹ This sentence has been omitted in the English translation.

²⁰ Mannheim had already made this point in an earlier text, the “Letter from Heidelberg” (1921): “The ultimate paradox in writing is that it aspires to be objective and realistic and to reproduce the complete blueprint of things, but that it is always only in a position to put one of their perspectives on paper. There is one help for this, which is to become conscious of this fact and acknowledge it freely, to *include a transformation table, the angle of observation, by means of some form of notation, so that the reader can add or subtract, expand or contract – in keeping with the key provided by his own soul and interest.*” (Mannheim 2001a: 82, italics added.)

²¹ Since Mannheim’s point is to *refute the idea that objective validity is the exclusive attribute of universalistic assertions*, the English translation of “*allgemeine Gültigkeit*” (“general validity”) by “objective validity” can lead to misunderstandings. Mannheim asserts that conjunctive knowledge is objectively valid, *despite* its non-universalizable character. True, Mannheim’s formulations are somewhat confusing (for example when he uses the depreciative turn of phrase “only conjunctive validity”), and more importantly because he himself speaks, in the next paragraph, of a “restriction of objectivity” in the case of conjunctive knowledge. However, on the basis of the context of that sentence, “restriction” should be understood by comparison with the pretense of natural-scientific knowledge to produce assertions valid *for all individual objects* of a given class of objects. Thus, it is not the

In the next step, Mannheim introduces the idea of *mediating structures* by directing the attention to those “items” of the environment which can become part of a community of two individuals (natural things, artifacts, other persons, social processes, etc.) Because these objects may also be involved in other persons’ conjunctive experiences, this creates a set of common objects which can serve as *mediators* between micro-communities based on contagion and thus help to establish further conjunctive connections between them (*ibid.*: 193).

“And this occurs in the following way: the third party enters into a specific existential relationship to me and to the other, and in this living together takes up into himself, so far as possible, the relationship between the two of us. Through living together with us, through stretches of life now lived jointly among three, he learns to know our way of seeing things and to join in it. He shares our experiential space and thus gradually builds up for himself a more expanded experiential space, based on the three of us. This experiential space is already closed off against the outside, accessible to others, to strangers, only in its superficial manifestations, and not in its concreteness with which it exists for us and about which we can come to an understanding because we are connected with one another through it.” (*Ibid.*: 194-95.)

A good example I can think of for a process of extension of a “conjunctive community” and its experiential space is the arrival of a child in the life of a couple. The infant, as the “third party” entering in the parental community and sharing their experiential space, must progressively learn their ways of seeing and doing things and how to participate in actions carried out collectively. Through participation, the child contributes to enrich and transform the opportunities to create and deepen the communal bonds uniting the three of them. In the course of this process their now trilateral relationship becomes a *mental object* with its own regulatory mechanisms, rules, habits, a history and a destiny of its own. In the infant’s case, this process of integration happens through the *appropriation* of meaningful behavioral patterns, abilities, wants, skills, styles of action, etc., as they are sedimented in definite *social practices* and, related to them, in *objects* of a human environment.

However, such process of appropriation rests equally on another crucial sort of objective *mediating structure*, which is not the creation of the parents themselves, namely *language* (“*Sprache*”) and *conceptual fixation* (“*begrifflichen Fixierung*”) (*ibid.*: 195). Their importance

objectivity of conjunctive knowledge that is said to be restricted, but only its *range of validity* (by comparison with natural-scientific knowledge.) (Mannheim 1982b: 193; cp. Mannheim 1980: 213).

stems from the fact that only they can ensure *duration in time* and *cohesion in space* for an enlarged community.

“Without language and conceptualization, a lasting relationship between the individuals could hardly come into being. It would be conditioned upon an uninterrupted existential being-together and upon purely instinctual relationships. (...) Language brings articulation and fixation into the conjunctive experiential stream. It pulls out commonly experienced stretches [of this stream], fixes them, and captivates the universal flow. It can even go so far as to stereotype that which has been learned in common.” (*Ibid.*: 200, transl. mod.)

The function of language is to *limit*, *fix* and *articulate* the boundless flow of experiences of contagion. It *pulls out* discrete units from this flow, preserving them from evanescing, conserving them and giving them temporal consistence. Eventually, language *stereotypes* these units, by abstracting and generalizing the relevant elements in experience. Mannheim insists that *two kinds* of conceptualization and stereotypization exist: a *general* one and a *conjunctive* one. General stereotypization follows the rules of scientific definition and leads to *exact* (or communicative) concepts. It considers only those aspects of a given phenomenon which can be thoroughly *detached* from the lived experiential contexture in which they initially arise, and ideally from *any* possible conjunctive context. They thus intrinsically tend toward *systematization* or the gradual establishment of all the existing meaningful connections between an immanent totality of decontextualized, de-communalized, supra-temporal and non-perspectivistic concepts (*ibid.*: 197).

By contrast, conjunctive conceptualization and stereotypization takes its point of departure in the *communally relevant* elements of contagious experiences.

“The type of stereotyping with which we are concerned [here] is distinguished by the fact that it does not generalize, does not move toward an ordering into genus and species (which attempts to abstract from every particular experiential space). Instead it leaves the relatedness to a specific experiential space and perspectivity untouched and strips from experience only the momentary and the one-time. Knowledge [thus] remains perspectivistic, bound to a particular experiential space, what happens is simply that this experiential space is now filled with iterabilities (“*Wiederholbarkeiten*”), which, however, can occur only in this experiential space.” (*Ibid.*: 201, transl. mod.)

Rather than definition, the original form of conjunctive conceptualization and stereotypization is the act of *naming*. For Mannheim, naming is a linguistic instantiation of the primordial conjunctive relation of “taking up” an object into consciousness: “what is to be understood by name in this case is the specific property of words whereby they designate a specific thing in a specific function in its unique relationship to us and to our specific conjunctive community. (...) In this case, the word does not register a general relationship inherent in a thing or an event, but only that face of the thing or the event which is turned toward the epistemic community [“*Erkenntnisgemeinschaft*”].” (*Ibid.*: 196-97, transl. mod.) To say it differently, naming is the integration of heterogeneous mental (“*geistiger*”) realities in our own life- and experiential space (cp. *ibid.*: 242).

This leads to another distinctive feature of conjunctive conceptualization, which is that the goal of the process is to “*reinvest*” at a different point the concept abstracted from the flow of communal life into the very same life of the community.

“Thinking is not only functionally anchored prior to and *in* its emergence, but the concepts have a lively existence also regarding their purpose, the sake for which they arise. (...) Life – and especially life in the conjunctive experiential space – does not create concepts for the sake of theoretical contemplation, in order to rest in them, but rather *to live itself in and through them*. They are an organ of ever-flowing life, and at the same time living activity. (...) [C]oncepts in conjunctive experiential space are not only functionally determined in their emergence (...), but these concepts are also subsequently retrieved back into life. They have a function as concepts for the furtherance of life, and this signifies not only an apprehension of reality but also its transformation. In the conjunctive life- and experiential space, every concept possesses this transformative impulse.” (*Ibid.*: 199, transl. mod.)

This passage situates the specificity of the conjunctive concept in its intrinsic relation to *praxis* understood as the *collective transformation of reality* based on conjunctive aspirations. Not only do conjunctive concepts keep the traces of their original context of emergence, but they also emerge *in view of* conjunctive aspirations. Consequently, the understanding of the “ultimate meaning” (“*letzter Sinn*”) of conjunctive concepts supposes that they be viewed in their embeddedness in their original discursive universe, which universe is itself a part of a larger existential totality (*ibid.*: 198). Mannheim clarifies this idea through the following example.

“It is known that particularly important revolutionary speeches, when they are merely read in printed form, often appear trivial and insignificant, while at the rally, where the conjunctive experiential space was still present, and where the speech had, so to speak, only the function of referring to what was commonly lived together, they were still experienced as the adequate expressions of the latter. In such cases the speech is no longer really understood when it is read, for we are scarcely able, in retrospect, to penetrate fully into the conjunctive experiential community, and can no longer adequately grasp the specific functional references of the verbal complexes. We grasp the words more or less exclusively in their general meanings, which are all that is accessible to us, and not in their unique reference to the experiential complex which was experienced in common, and which continues to vibrate in all the listeners at the time of the living address.” (*Ibid.*: 197-98, transl. mod.)

From this it follows that “it is only through [a certain kind of] interpretation that we can grasp these phenomena, i.e. by exhibiting the existential relationships meant by these concepts, which, however, can be brought to life only on the condition that we include into our endeavor all the other meanings correlative to the same experiential space, and if we ‘work our way into’ the experiential space of the historical community to be investigated.” (*Ibid.*: 202, transl. mod.) This formulation is remarkable in that it is the first expression in Mannheim’s work of the basic methodological maxim of what he will later call the sociology of knowledge understood as a “sociological method of interpretation”.

§ 17. Worldview as a “communally determined totality of conjunctive experiential contextures”

Working out all the (relevant) meaningful connections between different parts of a given experiential space amounts to grasping the structure of that community’s *world*. In Mannheim’s use, “world” is not an abstract physical space penetrable in any direction and manner, but a “particular contexture existing only for the community, a world of its own (*‘eine eigene Welt’*), to which only those can gain entrance who take part in it.” (*Ibid.*: 206, transl. mod.) With the idea of “world” understood as a totality of “contextures of significance” (*“Bedeutungsamkeitzusammenhangen”*), Mannheim pursues, “we have found a new ‘object’ for our investigation”, namely “the sum and system of all the collective representations and knowable elements actualizable in a given community in a given historical period.” (*Ibid.*: 217, transl. mod.) That this “new object” is the same as the previously discussed concept of

worldview is corroborated by subsequent passages of Mannheim's text, which perform a conceptual-argumentative move akin to the *increase in generalization* by which Mannheim initially mapped out the concept of worldview in his essays "On the interpretation of *Weltanschauung*" and "The distinctive character of cultural-sociological knowledge". As he now writes,

"no collective representation²² is ever postulated in isolation but rather is intimately related to and structurally connected with other collective representations postulated at the same time (...), so [that] a specific collective representation presupposes the whole experiential space of a given community in a given era. Thus, every collective representation is structurally connected with the remaining components of its experiential space. (...) We find as many spheres of significance as there are communally attached experiential spaces to be distinguished." (*Ibid.*: 217-18, transl. mod.)

To this he adds a couple of pages later:

"The changes underwent by given mental ('*geistigen*') entities occurring in the life-space of a given epoch are co-determined by the other elements filling that life-space. (...) A common spirit, a common tendency, is at work in the direction taken by change at any particular time. (...) [T]he general process of development within the different fields within a common life- and cultural space, though actualized by different individuals, moves in a common direction. In art history Riegl coined the useful term 'art-aspiration' (*Kunstwollen*). Art-aspiration refers to the tendency operating unconsciously in the creative artist which impels him to move in the direction of the dominant style even in his most spontaneous expressions and productions. Such a communally conditioned will resides in each field of culture and determines its attributions of meaning, its productions, and its language. For this reason, one could also speak of an 'economic-aspiration', a 'social-aspiration', and ultimately introduce the concept of a 'world-aspiration'. By this term we would understand not only the direction of the specific mentality [*Geistigkeit*] manifesting itself in works but also the deepest unity of style belonging to the consciousness of the community in all of its objectifications, conscious or unconscious. (*Ibid.*: 233, transl. mod.)

²² Here, Mannheim uses Durkheim's term as a synonym for conjunctive concept.

Mannheim grasps the *mode of existence* of worldviews and their components as “existence in the mode of significancies” (“*in der Weise der Bedeutsamkeiten existiert*”) (*ibid.*: 211), which involves the idea of *objectivity* and *objective structure*. Conjunctive concepts as the basic meaningful units of styles and worldviews are objective in that they are more than merely individual experiential contextures, since “they establish the significance (*‘Bedeutsamkeit’*) of the objects of possible experiences as being supra-individual and supra-psychic.” (*Ibid.*: 208, transl. mod.) Their supra-individual and supra-psychic character means, first, that although the totalities in question are enacted or actualized only by individual psychic acts, *no single individual* possesses *all* the constitutive elements of these totalities and, second, that the enacting of the latter can be performed only on the basis of the *cooperation* of several individuals performing *different* roles and functions.

However, the objectivity of conjunctive concepts is not that of the general or exact concepts, since “[t]hey are not supra-individual for all possible subjects, but only for the factually given members of a group.” (*Ibid.*, transl. mod.) In this way, Mannheim articulates the peculiar mode of existence of conjunctive knowledge by *disconnecting* the idea of *universal validity* from the idea of *significancy*: conjunctive concepts “are formations and symbols to which the characterization ‘to exist in the mode of significancies’ applies but which do not present themselves at the same time in the character of possessing validity beyond time and community.” (*Ibid.*: 212)

Having clarified the meaning of the objectivity of conjunctive formations, Mannheim offers a typology of these formations as the constitutive structural elements of worldviews. He distinguishes four types of such *mental realities* (“*geistigen Realitäten*”).

(1) “Prescriptive institutions” (the objects of predilection in Durkheim’s studies) can be defined as social relations and actions framed and regulated by compulsory, explicit, codified norms of behavior (*ibid.*: 231). Mannheim gives as examples religious cults, public ceremonies, but also the Greek *polis*, as a case for a larger and complex frame of prescriptive institutions.

(2) (Non-prescriptive) “sense-giving acts” (“*Sinngebung*”) are non- or pre-theoretical collective acts of conferring meaning to *given* phenomena, be them anthropological (sexuality, birth, death, etc.), natural (trees, sources, mountains, rivers, celestial bodies, alternance of seasons, etc.) or psychic (drives, desires, basic emotional reactions such as fear, etc.) (*ibid.*).

(3) “Works” (“*Werke*”) are defined by Mannheim as the products of the purposeful transformation of nature “used as means, as medium for realizing a contexture of meaning envisioned beforehand” (*ibid.*). The examples given here are sacred images, idols, utensils, clothing, dwellings, buildings, etc., that is, cultural artifacts largely understood.

(4) Finally, institutions without prescription are “self-regulating social relations, which are all totalities of meaning, all in a state of becoming, which arise spontaneously but can nevertheless not be identified with ‘works’ nor equated to a nature with significances superimposed on it” (*ibid.*: 232). Mannheim’s examples are *language* (“*Sprache*”) and *custom* (“*Sitte*”).

These mental realities (“*geistigen Realitäten*”) are not separated in a discrete fashion, but are simultaneously given elements of a continuum, in which they appear intermingled with each other in ways unique to each distinct “world” (*ibid.*: 235). Their main function is to serve as *mediating and integrating structures*, making possible, on the one hand, the experience of stretches of life lived jointly by communally connected individuals (i.e., their common existential integration into structurally interlinked contextures of lived experiences), and, on the other hand, the interpretative understanding of these stretches of experiences by third parties (for example historians, ethnographers, etc.), who can “work themselves into” the alien experiential spaces through the gradual appropriation and mastery of their conjunctive meaning-networks mediated by these structures. Thus, whereas individuation starts with the contagion-based “existential inclusion” (“*existentiellen Aufgenommensein*”) of the infant into the community by the appropriation of the peculiar mental formations making up its “world”, the historical interpretation of alien experiential spaces “follows the opposite course, starting out from memorials and formations, and proceeding gradually and step by step” toward the familiarization with an initially foreign experiential contexture (*ibid.*: 248).

The process of individuation, understood as the gradual integration of the infant into the life of a community through the appropriation of its conjunctive mental realities and the subjection to their prescriptions, involves a twofold existential movement whose terms are in a productive tension with each other. To take up the example of the infant again: something as a “world” opens up for the first time for the infant when they are capable of the understanding penetration of the contextures of significance *given* to them as *the* world of *their* community. It follows that a community’s world is given as the *unique* totality not only of factual, but also of *possible* experiences. In other terms, *relative closure* is a definitory feature of worldviews.

“The significance of something for the concrete life-space overspreads, hides, and draws itself into the determinations of pure existence. For man, things do not exist as they might be in themselves but only as they exist for the community. (...) Conjunctive significance attaches to things; and the naïve person, the individual who is uncritically absorbed in the collective

representations of the community, does not notice that he sees the things of his experiential horizon only in so far as they fit into collective significancies.” (*Ibid.*: 207, transl. mod.)

In sum, the same movement which opens up the world is also the one which tendentially closes it, which ensures the continuing reproduction of its basic structures. On the level of the life-community, based primarily on contagions and immediate understandings, worldview appears as a *productive limitation*, a set of interconnected interpretative frames which open up the world for its members as *the world* as such.

§ 18. Cultural communities and the task of mediation

In Mannheim’s construction, the next step of the edification of the cultural realm is the passage from the relatively close-knit life-communities to the larger, looser, and more open *cultural communities* (“*Kulturgemeinschaften*”). When close-knit communities encounter *alien experiential spaces*, the “communal spell” taking hold of the consciousness of their members is loosened. Confronted with its own particularism and historicity, the community as a whole becomes more reflective. Such situation occurs when a community “overgrows” its life-space and spreads to different locations, while maintaining connections between the newer colonies; or when two life-communities come to frequent each other regularly within the same geographical space, where they eventually merge into larger communal units (cp. Mannheim 1963: 282). Mannheim defines this new type of community, the cultural community, as a “conjunctive experiential community dispersed over time [and space – G.T.], united by cultural continuity, sharing a common qualitative directionality (...).” (Mannheim 1982b: 254.) Mannheim gives the example of the “European-American cultural community”, which exists “to the extent that it is living of common objective and subjective (aspiration-based) traditions. Within this entity, it constitutes nations, landscapes and mental dialects which are nothing but further developments of common seminal possibilities caught up in different specific life-communities.” (*Ibid.*: 236.)

The main difference between life-community and cultural-community is that while the former supposes *direct existential relations* between its members (contagion and immediate understanding) and is characterized by a univocal directionality, tension or world-aspiration, transpiring in the entirety of the consciousness of its members, the cultural community supposes the *common interpretative frequentation* of the *objectifications* stemming from these aspirations and original life-communal interactions. These aspirations are “contained” in the

objectifications as *potentialities* – with Mannheim words: as “seeds”, “germs” or “tendencies” –, allowing the interpreter distance vis-à-vis the validity-claims they enclose (*ibid.*: 235-36). It is important to understand that, for Mannheim, cultural community as a type is not a theoretical abstraction but a *real form of sociation*. A cultural community is always genetically linked to and dependent of its constitutive life-communities, but it is nevertheless a *sui generis* form of communal life, which “produces” its own, *sui generis* types of social interactions (“acts of sociation”), triggering corresponding psychic dispositions in the individuals belonging to it. The most important among these psychic dispositions is the above-described loosening of the hold on the individual’s consciousness of the interpretative schemata appropriated in the experiential spaces of their original life-communities (*ibid.*: 236).

More importantly, cultural communities raise *new needs* and *specialized functions* which were still collectively fulfilled in smaller-scale life-communities; these new needs and functions call for new roles and psychic types capable of performing the acts corresponding to them. The *connoisseur* (“*Kenner*”) is such a human type correlative to cultural communities. Mannheim defines it as “a person who can make his qualitatively oriented, specialized (...) experiential knowledge evident to a circle of individuals, with whom he is associated through a specific experiential community, directed towards the same common subject matter or field, and bound by tradition.” (*Ibid.*: 216, transl. mod.) The *connoisseur*’s task, his *raison d’être*, is the necessity to *mediate* between the qualitative experiences of the different life-communities constituting the cultural community. This mediating capacity is not supra-communal, since it supposes a communally formed and cultivated capacity for qualitative intuition which is present both in the connoisseurs and their public; however, the public living in different life-spaces cannot *spontaneously* accomplish the task of mediation itself. This mediation thus already implies a vertical *division of labor* between *connoisseurs* and laymen: in cultural communities, “[j]udgments concerning the value of works only flow into general consciousness from the critical assessment of connoisseurs, who gradually discover what is significant.” (*Ibid.*: 254.)

But how do the mediators know what is significant? This is an important question since Mannheim expressly stresses that the “directionalities” (or “aspirations”, or “intentions”) of the different life-communities constituting the cultural community are divergent: “any given epoch in the life of a cultural community is shot through with several competing ‘world-aspirations’, each of which having a specific intellectual-aspiration (“*Denkwollen*”) corresponding to it.” (*Ibid.*: 241.) The consciousness of the connoisseurs is no exception from under this rule: they “only apprehend as much in foreign formations and in foreign existences as is encompassed within the directionality toward which [t]he[y] tend.” (*Ibid.*: 244, transl. mod.) Were this not

the case, were the connoisseurs entirely detached from all such tendencies, they would have no access to those criteria of interpretation which are necessary for them to fulfill their vocation of mediation between these tendencies. In other terms, the mediators must themselves be grounded in the tendencies making up the “contexture of contextures” in which the diverse communities meet and where their aspirations are to be mediated.

At the same time, the connoisseur’s consciousness cannot be *entirely* under the spell of his own world-aspiration either, since this too would hinder the fulfilling of the task of mediation: some detachment is necessary if one is to establish contacts with other connoisseurs, differently located members of one’s community, as well as with members of other life-communities. Thus, since the difference between the connoisseur and the laymen cannot be broken down to the *presence* or *absence* of volitional tendencies in the subject’s consciousness, it must reside, rather, in the *modalities of their connection to their respective aspirations*, the *modi* of their existential connectedness.²³ It must be stressed that the thinking of *both* the connoisseur and the laymen are *existentially connected* (“*seinsverbunden*”), so that they differ only in their respective ability (and of course their concrete possibilities) to transcend certain forms of existential and situational *boundedness* (“*Seins- und Standortgebundenheit*”). Of course, this very difference (due to the above-mentioned social division of labor in cultural communities between connoisseurs and laymen), and the corresponding possibility to (tendentially) overcome existential boundedness are strictly correlated to the structure and state of development of the overall socio-historical process, in which the connoisseurs are the human type able to perform certain socially necessary intellectual functions.

²³ I suggest understanding the idea of “world-aspiration” (“*Weltwollung*”) on the model of Mannheim’s other constructive concepts. I see “world-aspiration” as the structural-subjective correlate of an articulation of reality through collective human activity. The notion of the “will” must be taken here as a metaphor expressing the unitary character of those structured sets of continuously enacted social performances whose objective correlates are “worldviews”, understood as cross-sections of systematic phenomenal articulations of reality. In this sense, Mannheim’s notions such as “tendency”, “tensions”, “intention”, “directionality”, etc. are all terminological variations of the concept of “world-aspiration”.

§ 19. Modern culture, dynamic mediation, rationalization: the role of the “cultivated elite”

Remarkably, Mannheim treats the “strain” or “tension” characteristic of world-aspirations as an *anthropological invariant*. As he writes: “every member of a cultural sphere and every subject within it constantly exists in a state of spiritual tension, and (...) this is no less the case for static cultures.” (*Ibid.*: 244-45.) Thus, the fact that a culture is “static” does not mean that it lacks an inner tendency, directionality, or intention; rather, a “static” culture changes at a pace that allows for an interpretation of newly arising elements either as mere *variations* on an already accessible stock of conjunctive knowledge and experience or as peculiar *instantiations* of a cosmic system functioning according to its own immutable laws (*ibid.*: 245). In contrast to “static” societies, Mannheim depicts “dynamic” societies as equipped with a dynamic conception of historicity. In them, “[t]his tension takes the form of a hovering, anticipatory vision of a world that is sought, and it takes its departure from a worldview in a state which either has already been or is about to be left behind.” (*Ibid.*: 245, transl. mod.²⁴)

Although belonging to the dynamic type, Mannheim considers that the modern idea of culture as *progress*, as the ordering of events and formation into a unique, teleological developmental sequence (a philosophy of history), is a qualitatively different, historically unique, form of thinking. Drawing here implicitly on Hegel’s conception of Enlightenment and the culture of *Bildung* (“*Bildungskultur*”), he submits that this idea of history as the dynamic, gradual unfolding of a universal and unitary process became possible only when one did not “merely live poised in a certain intention, but when this intention (...) became graspable by *reflection*.” (*Ibid.*, italics added.) Mannheim does not elaborate this insight in these passages, but it is likely that the idea of the *reflexive bent of modern culture* means that, in contrast with non-modern cultures, “we do not regard the manner of our life and the way we interpret the world around us as something unproblematically natural or preordained, but conceive of them as belonging to some ‘culture’, that is, as something made by earlier human generations and re-makeable by our own activities (...). Our culture is a culture that conceives and knows itself as culture and as *one* among many: a culture for which ‘culture’ has become a theme of reflection and a practical problem.” (Márkus 2011: 306.) The idea of progress supposes this reflective self-relativization and objectivation of culture because only this makes possible the thesis of a

²⁴ Mannheim brings the example of prophetism in Ancient Israel, but prophetism can also be understood as a type of spiritual attitude emerging in different socio-historical conjunctures.

pattern of development going from *less cultivated states of culture* toward *fully cultivated* ones (modern and especially contemporary stages) (*ibid.*: 314-15).²⁵

Conjunctive thinking, which has become dynamic and reflective, produces a new, distinct form of cultural community, “*cultivated culture*” (“*Bildungskultur*”). This transforms the figure of the Humanist connoisseur into that of the *learned* or *cultivated person* (“*Gebildete*”), who becomes the bearer of a new, corresponding type of conjunctive concept: “*utopia*” (*ibid.*: 246). In its generic form, utopia is defined by Mannheim as the “theoretical anticipation of the world-aspiration, toward which the intention is directed”, adding that “every cognitive penetration of social and cultural experiential space is enacted within this tension, this expectant straining (“*Hinngespanntsein*”) toward a utopia” (*ibid.*, transl. mod.²⁶) In modern societies, not only several world-aspirations, but also “[s]everal possible futures are simultaneously present at any given point in time.” (*Ibid.*: 254, transl. mod.) Consequently, in this historical phase, the intellectual activity of mediation of meanings involves an anchorage in a utopia. This implies, in turn, that the function of mediation realized by the cultivated strata extends to that of *mediating between the past, the present and the future states of society*: it

²⁵ Following Mannheim’s logic, it should be added that the reflective bent of modern culture is to be related also to the process of rationalization (“disenchantment”) of the world. Understanding “rationalization” as the “rationalization of the irrational” – i.e., as the gradual “purification” of social interactions, representations and meaning-complexes of their conjunctive, communally embedded dimensions according to the world-aspiration of bourgeois-capitalist strata –, it involves the setting up of a specific type of relationship between *subject* (the operator of this rationalizing enterprise) and the *object* to be transformed (the culture of society considered in its disparate totality, including the operator itself).

²⁶ Here, Mannheim distinguishes between two types of “utopia”: the “idea” and the “ideal” (Mannheim 1982b: 246). The first refers to the experience and expression of intentionality which gave rise to the Platonic conception of a supra-mundane, perfect realm of pre-existent ideas, in which our world participates and toward which it tends, but not in a philosophico-historical fashion. By contrast, the “ideal” dynamizes the “idea” as a goal toward which the world is said to be developing in a rational progression. At this point, however, Mannheim’s classification becomes somewhat inconsequent insofar as he speaks about utopia as a peculiarly modern phenomenon, but then goes on to characterize a pre-modern form of intentionality (the Platonic idea) as a subtype of utopia. This may result from the fact that in 1924-25 Mannheim does not yet distinguish sharply between utopia as a literary genre – distinguished by the *theoretical-anticipative* suppression of the inherent flaws of present-day society and their corresponding rationalistic redressment in an imagined, “ideal” polity – and the *philosophy-of-history* concept of utopia he will develop in his essay on “Utopian consciousness” in *Ideology and Utopia*, where “utopia” stands for the *real formative principle of modern history and society*, as well as for the *condition of their knowability* (Mannheim 1963: 209).

ensures the cumulative *passage* from one historical state of a given social-cultural formation to the next stage of its existence (cp. Mannheim 1963: 154; cp. Kettler–Meja–Stehr 1989: 68).

Anchorage in a utopia explains the cultivated persons' ability to know which cultural goods are "true" values, what deserves to be pursued further and how it ought to be interpreted. Nevertheless, as was the case with the connoisseurs, here too the mediators' intellectual-mental activity must achieve a degree of *independence* vis-à-vis the original volitional inputs between which they seek to mediate (and among which they themselves are situated). In other terms, to be efficient, their activity must involve more than offering a direct, unmediated "reflection" of a given worldview: the mediating activity of the cultivated strata must be indirect in that it has to be reflective regarding its situation within the total contexture of utopias. Albeit they are ultimately situated in *one* of the existing currents, the cultivated persons experiment simultaneously with a variety of "seeds" ("germs", "tendencies", etc.), imported into cultivated culture from smaller-scale cultural and life-communities. On the other hand, the very passage of these "seeds" into cultivated culture is made possible by the fact that they contain in a condensed form stocks of *potentially transferable knowledge* (Mannheim 1982b: 266).

The *fact* that the cultivated persons are capable of this performance is not a matter of personal talent but the objective structure of *Bildungskultur*, which provides *structural opportunities* for the "loosening of the exclusivity of [one's] own worldview", leading to the emergence of the phenomenon of intellectual empathy ("*Einfühlung*"), the ability to penetrate the conjunctive logics of foreign, alien experiential spaces (*ibid.*: 248). Since, in modern societies, the concrete possibilities for a given set of individuals at a given time to seize such opportunities and develop the according skills are unequally distributed – with some social strata predisposed by their socio-economic position and their prior historical practice to the corresponding experiences, while others are excluded from this opportunity (*ibid.*: 269, 248) – , it is no surprise that, contrary to the culturally more homogeneous medieval and Humanist cultural communities where, in Mannheim's view, the laymen's sense of quality was not drastically inferior to or different from that of (elite) cultural producers, in Modern times "the conjunctively integrated community of connoisseurs has detached itself as a separate organ from the mass, from the underlying community", becoming a sort of "cultural *avant-garde*" characterized by the privileged frequentation of *high culture* (*ibid.*: 255, transl. mod.) In this sense, cultivated culture becomes *separated from* those life- and cultural-communities from which it derives its volitional and intellectual inputs and between which it is supposed to mediate. This process corresponds to the basic social distinction between the "cultivated" and

the “uncultivated”, or the “intellectual” and the “non-intellectual” (and hence socially “lower”) strata.²⁷

However, this trend toward the growing detachment and autonomization of cultivated culture is counterbalanced by what Mannheim later calls the *democratization of culture*. In Mannheim’s use, “democratization” in general refers to the historical process in which middle and lower strata (the capitalist bourgeoisie, first, followed by the working class, the peasantry as well as by other, not class-based social groups such as women, or racialized minority groups) gain “an increasing share in social and political influence.” (Mannheim 2003c: 176.) By “democratization of culture”, in particular, Mannheim understands the change in the “shape, the physiognomy of a culture” that occurs “when the strata actively participating in cultural life, either as creators or as recipients, become broader and more inclusive.” (*Ibid.*: 175, italics omitted). “Democratization”, then, “means essentially a reduction of vertical distance, a de-distantiation” (*ibid.*: 209) of the culture of the cultivated elite (the intelligentsia) vis-à-vis the “less cultivated” culture of lower social strata, a process made possible by the relative permeability of cultivated culture to individuals and groups belonging to hitherto socially marginalized groups (Mannheim 1982b: 268).

As György Márkus reminds, this democratizing dimension of cultivated culture is already inherent in the paternalistic Enlightenment project of making the “‘uncultivated’ the *object* of a social-cultural pedagogy and thereby raise them to the status and dignity of genuine, rational subjecthood.” (Márkus 2011: 316) As he elaborates: “Through the concept of culture the emerging bourgeois society announced its claim to historical superiority as a form of order able to ensure the fullest development and unlimited perfecting of all human abilities – but it was also the idea of culture through which this claim becomes challenged and found unjustified. The first two genuine theories of culture, both announced in the same year of 1750, those of Turgot and Rousseau, stood symbolically for the ambiguity of an affirmative and a critical power pertaining to the same concept, an ambiguity which would accompany its whole history” (*Ibid.*: 316). Thus, cultivated culture is affected by a *constitutive ambivalence*: on the one hand, it postulates a fundamental social and cultural divide between the “cultivated” and the “uncultivated” strata; at the same time, however, it asserts the possibility and the necessity of a free access to cultivation for everyone, regardless of social origin (*Ibid.*: 313). Cultivated culture

²⁷ See also (Mannheim 2003c: 211-12): “The ‘cultivated’ speech of these sheltered upper strata separates them from the common man; this is one of the most important social barriers between classes in stratified societies. Where ‘high’ and ‘low’ speech exist side by side, full intercommunication is no longer possible.”

“then signifie[s] both that in which the various social groups and societies differ from each other *and* what unifies them all.” (*Ibid.*: 326.)

However, since at the present historical stage, only *difference* is what is really *given*, the *unity* of culture is, in fact, a *utopia*, a normative statement, a “theoretical anticipation”, or a *task*, “the task of achieving genuine social cohesion and integration through the largely spontaneous interplay of diverse processes and practices of socialization.” (*Ibid.*: 328.) And it is precisely by virtue of this “partly hidden and strained relation between normativity and facticity” (*ibid.*), constitutive of the concept of cultivated culture, that the latter could assume the function of the *sociocultural integration* of modern bourgeois societies, whose increasing dynamism, fostered by the plurality and the relative autonomy of its constituent parts, could partly be regulated through the gradual “co-optation” and integration of the world-aspirations of ascending strata, emerging from the constant shifts in the social structure. Obviously, this process of “co-optation” was not based on invitation by those in dominant positions, but on the self-imposition by the marginalized groups of their own world-aspirations through social, political, and ideological struggle. Nonetheless, the fact remains that, for a significant period of time, cultivated culture, as the field of confrontation between the dimensions of facticity and normativity, was able to assume the function of mediation between the incompatible aspirations of social groups.

It must be underlined that this is the problem-context in which Mannheim first formulated his theory of the freely bound intellectuals. Mannheim’s ruminations on cultivated culture in 1924-25 anticipate the passages of *Ideology and Utopia* I have analyzed above in § 7. In that essay, Mannheim located the peculiarity of modern culture in the fact that “it preserves the multiplicity of the component elements in all their variety by creating a homogeneous medium within which the conflicting parties can measure their strength”, and in that modern culture is, “from its inception a living struggle, a replica, on a small scale of the conflicting purposes and tendencies which rage in society at large.” (Mannheim 1963: 155-56.) This is why Mannheim is entirely clear regarding the fact that not even cultivated culture is free-floating (“*freischwebende*”). As he insists in the earlier essay, the cultivated bearers of *Bildungskultur* “always come from the various existential communities and introduce the tendencies which originate in those communities into the common stream of cultivation, which is why that stream is not uniform but polyphonic and dialectical in constitution.” (Mannheim 1982b: 267.)

Although “*freischwebende*” is not yet associated here with the notion of *intelligentsia* but with the less specific denomination “the cultivated” (“*Gebildete*”), it is likely that the

following citation is a preliminary formulation of the above quoted excerpt from the 1929 essay “On the prospects of scientific politics” in *Ideology and Utopia*.

“Although it is most natural and common that each individual who makes his way into the ranks of the cultivated should continue to work and create in the direction of the world-aspirations (“*Weltwollungen*”) which have entered into him from his community of origin in the course of his life, there remains a certain freedom of choice concerning the world-aspiration (“*Weltwollen*”) to which one attaches oneself. Biography and convictions can bring it about that experiences at the cultivated level modify the original intention (“*Urintention*”) and world-aspiration (“*Weltwollen*”), so that the individual puts himself at the service of a group-aspiration (“*Gruppenwollen*”) different from that of his origins. And because the intention (“*Intention*”) has become somewhat free-floating at this level, it is possible to take sides with a different intention (“*Intention*”), either out of conviction or interest, especially for socially free-floating existences, such as impoverished gentry or Jews. (...) [A]nd it is precisely because this intention (“*Intention*”) has become free-floating, and because cultivated culture lives on germinal elements and not directly on the basis of existence, that it is possible for individuals from other strata to make it their own.” (*Ibid.*: 268-269, transl. mod.)

Mannheim repeatedly insists that the possibility of free floating, i.e., experimenting with and mediating between worldviews, exists because the intellectual does not experiment alien world-aspirations in their original, conjunctive setting, but in a germinal form, as non-binding but nevertheless normative potentialities, recoded into the language of cultivated culture. As he puts it, “at the level of cultivated culture one lives on the germs and volitions that flow from communal life and not directly on the strength of the particular community itself.” (*Ibid.*: 266, transl. mod.) As I have indicated above, from a historical perspective, the possibility to “live on” these seeds and volitions depends on the process of *fundamental democratization* (Mannheim 1940: 44-49) in the course of which hitherto marginalized strata – the original bearers of those worldviews which slowly penetrate and gradually transform the outlook and inner structure of cultivated culture – impose the *legitimacy*, if not the hegemony, of their respective world-aspirations. Since, according to Mannheim’s thesis, cultivated culture is *structurally unable* to produce utopian seeds and germs of its own, it is definitively contingent on the volitional inputs of those conjunctive experiential spaces in integrates into a common

framework.²⁸ In this sense, modern culture structurally depends on the “continuability” of the process of the democratization of culture.

In 1924-25, Mannheim does not yet draw the fateful conclusion that will become increasingly central to his thinking during the following years (and culminate in the last paragraph of the essay “The Utopian Mentality”): namely that if, either because the original conjunctive communities from which they sprung were disintegrated or because the (selective) inflow of the volitional inputs was institutionally hindered, that is to say, if the utopian energies somehow dried up, cultivated culture – modern culture – as such would also cease to exist, its integrative functions possibly taken up and exerted by other types of apparatuses of ideological-cultural integration. These concerns will become pervasive in Mannheim’s thinking during his English period and – at least partly – account for his turn toward the idea of “planification” (cp. Mannheim 1940: 39-114).²⁹

From the beginning of the 1930s, Mannheim will formulate the logic of this disintegration by introducing the idea of a fatally growing *disproportion* between *substantial rationality* and *functional rationalization*. While the former denotes the capacity of the individuals to act *autonomously* by following one’s own “intelligent insight into the inter-relations of events in a given situation” – involving *qualitative, situational, conjunctive knowledge* –, the latter refers to the process of rationalization of human interactions through their systematic organization according to a definite goal (rationalization in view of profit-maximization) *imposed externally* on the individuals (*ibid.*: 53). The thesis of the disproportion between these two ideas of “rationality” means that the more society becomes functionally rationalized, the less weight the substantial rationality – based on one’s own “cultural individuality” – will bear on the democratic organization of collective life (*ibid.*: 58-59; see also here Chapter 6, § 43).

As I have alluded to it above, these ideas from the thirties are already prefigured in the earlier essay on “Utopian consciousness”, published in 1929 in *Ideology and Utopia*, and thus

²⁸ “Cultivated culture cannot in fact generate new germs, a new intention (“*Intention*”), on its own; and that is why the absorption of new motifs flooding in from existential backgrounds is constantly taking place.” (Mannheim 1982b: 267, transl. mod.)

²⁹ See Mannheim’s heavy-hearted admission, after his second emigration, of the failure of cultivated culture: “It once looked as if the intensifying conflict of interests in the world to-day might culminate in an integration of interests which, although originally antagonistic, could be led to a rational compromise or fitted into a rational form of organization. But now it seems as though the irrational is to prevail after all.” (Mannheim 1940: 45.)

closer in time and spirit to the 1924-25 text. The thrust of Mannheim's argument there is what I would call the *tragic paradox* of modern culture, namely that its foreshadowed disintegration does not come about from outside, external, hostile forces, but *from its inner logic*, from its *internal dynamism*. It is the thoroughgoing self-rationalization of utopia (and the corresponding rationalization of social life itself), its "immersion" into reality, its very success in transforming it, which may lead to its self-liquidation (Mannheim 1963: 248-63). The gradual disappearance of utopian consciousness manifests itself first and foremost as the renunciation to the category of *totality* and in the obsolescence of *historical consciousness*, the two *par excellence* dimensions of qualitative thinking in modernity (*ibid.*: 252-53). The prosaism ("Sachlichkeit"), the matter-of-factness or the "realism" characteristic of contemporary life (*ibid.*: 256-57), pervading all spheres of social activity, are but the expressions of the ongoing (*functional*) *rationalization of all the qualitative (conjunctive) elements of knowledge culminating in the utopias* that have so far been the motors of Western history and culture.

§ 20. Communicative thinking and the two ways of the sociology of knowledge

I believe that both diagnoses of present-day society proposed in "Utopian consciousness" and in *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* have their origin in Mannheim's genealogy of cultivated culture in his 1924-25 essay. Indeed, both are based implicitly on the concept of *communicative thinking*, introduced by Mannheim in the last chapter of "A sociological theory of culture and its knowability (conjunctive and communicative thinking)", but tacitly presupposed throughout the text, for instance, it is implied in the discussion and critique of the *natural-scientific style of thought* in the first section of the essay but not yet made explicit there. However, these two concepts are not synonymous because they are on different levels of generality. As the essay's subtitle suggests, communicative thinking is on the same conceptual level as conjunctive thinking, with which it constitutes a dichotomy. This conceptual pair is historically less specific than the opposition between natural-scientific and human-scientific (i.e., historical) *styles of thinking*, but are nevertheless intertwined insofar as styles of thinking are defined among other things by the weight they give to conjunctive and communicative elements of human interactions and discourse.

Mannheim locates the historical origin of communicative thinking in the establishment of *martial domination* of one group over another in a community initially based on the equality of its members (Mannheim 1982b: 256). In such a situation, the dominants maintain their domination by institutionally separating their experiential space from that of the oppressed. Thereby, they regulate and minimize the occasions of contagion and common conjunctive experiences with the members of the oppressed group (*ibid.*: 257). In state-regulated societies, the plurality of worldviews, as well as their conceptual articulation, are based on this original experience of the “splitting of the communal consciousness” via the establishment of distinct experiential spaces within one framework-society. However, the power of the dominants cannot rest on institutional separation alone, since domination also supposes the organized, unequal transfer of resources from the oppressed toward the dominants: a too strict institutional separation of conjunctive spaces would prevent those regular contacts which are necessary to organize the exploitation and the obtention of consent on the part of the oppressed.

Communicative language is the answer to these two requirements (separation *and* communication), in tension with each other, in that it “provid[es] a connection among the various conjunctively integrated groups belonging to the same framework-community” without summoning knowledge based on the common, horizontal experiencing of shared contexts of action (*ibid.*: 263, transl. mod.) Communicative is the knowledge which can “enter into and to be understood by every single consciousness in the larger group” (*ibid.*), without (or scarcely) drawing on common stretches of lived experiences. According to Mannheim’s genealogy, this sort of knowledge came about not as an artificial invention but rather as the *effect* of the radical *divergence of perspectives* held by the dominants (seeing everything “from above”) and the oppressed (seeing everything “from below”) on those *institutions* which were responsible *at the same time* for the *separation* of conjunctive experiential spaces, *and* for their *integration* into a *unitary* framework-society (Mannheim gives the example of the relationship between aristocracy and peasantry in the Middle Ages) (*ibid.*: 257).

Communicative language and knowledge thus emerged as the language and knowledge which both dominants and oppressed used to negotiate the institutional rules regulating the transactions between the two groups. It is only at a later historical stage that communicative knowledge acquired a more general function, not directly related to situations of domination: that of a “language serving to connect participants in different conjunctive communities who do not have in common the experience requisite to mutual conjunctive understanding. Devised to secure and express the constrained, shared understanding required for certain limited objectives, especially practical ones, such a language [is] restricted to the narrowly material or

utilitarian aspects of things.” (Kettler–Meja–Stehr 1982: 23.) Since it works by *reducing the conjunctive meaning-content* of those mental-cultural formations involved in transactions between the two communities to arrive at a *purely functional understanding* of mental-cultural formations, communicative thinking lacks the spontaneity and vicariousness of conjunctive knowledge and, in a sense, presupposes the existence of the latter.

There are situations and social contexts, such as urbane civilizations, where communicative exchanges become more current, and even predominant. In these cases, human beings tend to maintain a communicative relation to larger segments of the environment for longer stretches of time. This fosters a somewhat “profaning” (de-distantiating) tendency in the approach to those kinds of cultural realities that a society considers sacred, noble, or of a “higher level” (art, religion, science, philosophy, etc.) (*ibid.*: 259). Implicitly following a suggestion of Lukács (1971: 110-111), Mannheim intimates that such moments of preponderance of communicative exchanges were not altogether rare in the history of Western civilization: they occurred in Greek philosophy and were not absent from the Middle Ages either (Mannheim 1982b: 260). To those who, in such social settings, are thoroughly immersed in communicative thinking, “the world itself emerges upon a level of concrete spiritual alienation, relatively independent from concrete experiential space.” The knowledge thereof “becomes transmissible through communication, and the accumulated experiences, detached from the community, can be furthered within alien communities. This is the origin of the sphere of civilization.” (*Ibid.*, transl. mod.)

Although this depiction clearly resonates with that which is given of the natural-scientific style of thought in the first section of “A sociological theory of culture and its knowability”, as I hinted at before, Mannheim insists on distinguishing them because they are not on the same conceptual level. This is important to understand a peculiar feature of Modern times. While communicative thinking is a necessary counterpart to *all* political societies (i.e., societies involving some form of state-power, domination, and a social hierarchy), the only known historical period where it tends to become the *principle of organization of the entire life of a society*, its “universal form of existence” (Lukács 1971: 111), is Western modernity. As writes Mannheim, “[t]his supra-conjunctive and theology-less thinking becomes an autonomous power only when it is appropriated by the world-aspiration of the rising bourgeoisie.” (Mannheim 1982b: 260, transl. mod.) Communicative thinking could become the organizational basis of society only because it fed on the world-aspiration of the bourgeois capitalist strata in its revolutionary upheaval of productive forces, social structure, and political power.

In Mannheim's eyes, the development of natural-scientific rationalism is correlated to successive stages of the rise of the bourgeoisie to political power and the consequent systematic reorganization of the entirety of social life. The new style of thinking emerged first in the struggles against the old order waged *within* theology and religion; it then gathered enough strength to turn *against* theology and religion; in a next step, it had to do away with its own pantheistic, mystic, anthropomorphic, etc. – still qualitatively oriented – tendencies; this development resulted in the reduction of the physical world to “mere spatial objects and their relations”, mathematically understood, on the one hand, and of the world of the soul, of inner experience, naked to “the pure intentional act and functions devoid of meaning that are studied by physical psychology only in so far as they can be related to measurable external things and events”, on the other (*ibid.*: 261).

In this development, *sociology* emerged late and came to occupy a special position since, contrary to psychology, it owed its rise *directly* to the development of natural-scientific rationalism and to the practical necessity of the rational reorganization of society by the triumphant bourgeoisie (*ibid.*). However, as Mannheim elsewhere explains (Mannheim 1971d: 263-64), this is not entirely true of *German sociology*, which emerged from the outset as a *synthesis* of three different styles of thinking, equally (though differentially) critical of natural-scientific rationalism: Hegel's constructive-historical thinking, Marx's historical materialism, and Dilthey's philosophy of life (Mannheim 1953c: 210-13). German sociology is thus driven, according to Mannheim, by an eminently *qualitative orientation* transcending the disciplinary limits of sociology toward *philosophy* on the one hand and *political activism* on the other.

This characteristic of German sociology owes to the practical and spiritual necessity to respond adequately to the specific challenges stemming from the deep transformations underwent by German society in the course of modernization and political unification in the 19th and early 20th centuries (Mannheim 1971d: 263). Precisely because German sociology emerged as a (non-homogeneous) reaction of a segment of the intelligentsia to the culture-threatening effects of the growing *functional rationalization* of all spheres of human life, including scientific and intellectual production, did modernization become one of its central objects of study (cp. Kettler–Meja–Stehr 1982: 14). But this is also why German sociologists had to become *reflective* regarding their own stance toward the different tendencies and possibilities of rationalization *within* sociological thinking and had to gain sensitivity to the different styles of thinking trying to tackle this problem from different standpoints, themselves polarized by contradictory social aspirations.

This very broadly sketched context, in which “the question is whether it is possible to have a sociology that will serve culture, a study of man in his socialized being and development which will not strengthen the forces of social objectification” (*ibid.*), is the direct background of Mannheim short but significant discussion of Max Weber’s methodology in the last chapter of “A sociological theory of culture and its knowability”.³⁰ In his critique, Mannheim focuses on *one* specific methodological aspect of Weber’s “generalizing sociology”: the systematic, “purposive reinterpretation of non-rational social formations.” (Mannheim 1982b: 261.) By this, Mannheim means the tendency to consider all meaningful social formations only from the point of view of their functionality “for any cohabitation in general”, which makes “generalizing sociologies” (such as Weber’s), in Mannheim’s eyes, *par excellence* manifestations of the natural-scientific style of thinking (*ibid.*).

“While it even approaches actual quantification on occasions, the dissolution of every spiritual reality into a functional connection (where the maximum result with the most economical means is the ideal of construction) is in any case well qualified to constitute a supra-conjunctive principle of demonstration, which stands in far-reaching affinity with quantification and causal inquiry in the physical sciences. This affinity consists first of all in the fact that this type of rationalization makes it possible to eradicate everything that is conjunctively determined, qualitative, and, accordingly, not to represent the existence of ‘institutions’ and spiritual realities ‘seen from the inside’, as they are present to the particular community. An additional affinity to physical science is that this rationalization contains within itself the possibility of trans-conjunctive generalization, since all human transactions can be viewed as in a means-end relationship, and, just as the consideration of external connections can always be fitted to the schema of causality, so every ‘transaction’ can be examined schematically for its purposive-rationality.” (*Ibid.*)

The methodological ideals of these “generalizing sociologies” bear most of the marks of the natural-scientific style of thinking. They operate with the implicit anthropological conception of the *homo oeconomicus*, a timeless human individual acting as a rational, autonomous social unit whose behavior can be described as “interest-realizing behavior” (Mannheim 1971: 109). These general, supposedly timeless, attributes of humanness are then used “to explain any concrete historical situation as a complex of such characteristics.” (*Ibid.*: 82.) To this type of sociology, “every historical individual is merely a complex of general,

³⁰ For other fragmentary remarks about Weber’s methodology, see (Mannheim 1982a: 60-63).

changelessly recurring properties, and the ‘rest’ which is not reducible to these properties is disregarded.” (*Ibid.*) But the disregard for this “rest” means a disregard for the *conjunctive-functional relationships* of the object of study, those experiential contextures in which, and in view of which, the object has emerged in the first place. This inevitably entails a renunciation to the *singularity* (“*Besonderheit*”) and *concreteness* of the object, instead of which the sociologists “merely let themselves be guided (...) by models and structural relationships prevailing in the dead, mechanized world of mere ‘things’, and the schemata so obtained obscure the peculiar nature of the living.” (*Ibid.*: 82-84.)

A further problem with the natural-scientific propensity to break down historical totalities to a “combination of abstractively distilled, unchanging characteristics” (*ibid.*), to sever all conjunctively determined relationships to the surrounding socio-historical life, is the *lack of self-reflexivity* it entails on the part of the sociologist. Indeed, the latter conceives the forms applied to the historical material to be “objectively perceivable relations” devoid of valuation and volitional (conjunctive) elements (Mannheim 1963: 186-87). For Mannheim, practicing sociology along these lines makes the sociologist forget that “even apparently purely formal presuppositions of historical research depend on a valuational and social standpoint” (Mannheim 1971b: 91), and that “we are inclined to accept as ‘objective’ those categorical structures and ultimate postulates which we ourselves have unconsciously read into our experience, and which, for the sociologist of knowledge, are revealed only subsequently as the partial, historically-, and socially-conditioned axioms of a particular current of thought.” (Mannheim 1963: 187.)

It is important to stress that, while Mannheim criticizes Weber’s methodological model for operating with a notion of knowledge drawing unilaterally on the model of communicative thinking – which amounts to reduce cultural (“communal”) realizations to civilizational (“social”) ones –, he does not reject Weber’s methodology as a whole. When he writes that this methodology is based on a *fiction*, he does not mean that purposive-rational behavior is not an existing, and potentially predominant, pattern of social action, but that it cannot be considered as the *only* form of human sociality. The tendency of “functional rationalization” to penetrate all forms of social organization is an existing, and maybe even a hegemonic one, possibly destined to a complete triumph, but as far as the present is concerned, this process has not yet reached its endpoint (*ibid.*: 190). Therefore, interpreting all human interactions as means-ends relationships is a unilateral enterprise motivated by a specific utopia, which receives a very

peculiar coloration in Weber's case.³¹ Thus, Mannheim's criticism of Weber is less a refutation than the *relativization of an attitude* recognized as a legitimate but partial intellectual stance in "an era in which our way of considering life itself has become predominantly purposive-rational." (Mannheim 1982b: 262.)

It ensues from what precedes that Mannheim's criticism of the generalizing tendencies in sociology does not aim at the latter's *functional orientation*. On the contrary, the attunement to the functionality of cultural phenomena is the very foundation of the sociology of knowledge, whether it is practiced in a "static" and "generalizing" way, as in M. Weber, or in a "dynamic" and "individualizing" fashion, as in Mannheim. For Mannheim, there is an obvious affinity between the "projection of purposive-rationality into all past conditions and the explanation of the spiritual by reference to the economic and social", which is "itself a perspective on things that is most closely connected with where we stand today." (Mannheim 1982b: 262.) This affinity is grounded in the common acceptance and furthering of the processes of *rationalization* (correlated to "fundamental democratization") as a definitory feature of modernity.

"The existentially related truth content of a given stage of the development of thought resides precisely in that it performs a definite form of 'rationalization' of the social and the mental ('geistige') world, namely in the direction required by the next step of becoming ('Werdens'). Working out this functionality of social, existentially connected thinking for the different stages of Being is the task of the sociology of *knowing* ('Erkenntnissoziologie') (for this is how we ought to call our conception)." (Mannheim 1971b: 101-102, transl. mod.)

However, it is equally clear that the different utopias do conceive the "next step" differently, according to what they deem to be the ultimate goal of the historical process. Thus, although all utopias are involved in the rationalizing process, they understand "rationality" under different guises, stressing different aspects of it. This is the reason for the eventual *disjunction* between different kinds of sociologies (and sociologies of knowledge), which follow distinct methodological principles, sometimes in opposition to each other, despite their common commitment to the project of modernity. Thus, while the static, generalizing trend *acquiesces* in the increasing *functional rationalization* of social life, the dynamic,

³¹ Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre describe Weber and Tönnies as "resigned romantics". See (Löwy-Sayre 1992: 99ff.)

“individualizing” one seeks to preserve and foster *substantial rationality*, thus counterbalancing the first tendency. Consequently, generalizing sociologies of knowledge tend to consider only the communicative elements of knowledge. Their guiding question is always: “for what *rational end* was this knowledge employed *as means*?” Or, to put it differently: “what *interests* have been rationally fostered through the enactment of this or that piece of knowledge?” By contrast, a *qualitative* sociology of knowledge, such as the one Mannheim seeks to develop, will inquire into the broader *conjunctive functions* of a given idea in a given social constellation, not excluding an analysis of the constellations of interests present in it (*ibid.*: 108). Understanding the *conjunctive function* of a given set of knowledge means to understand its meaning and function *for* a specific community *in a unique historical constellation* – and not, as with the research on the communicative function of ideas, for *any* possible community (of a certain type) at *any* given time in history.

Another important difference between the two types of sociologies (of knowledge) can be expounded by focusing on a passage in “A theory of culture and its knowability” where Mannheim distinguishes between three basic ways to relate to objectifications of temporally remote experiential spaces (i.e., to past historical realities) (Mannheim 1982b: 246). The first way, labeled as *naïve*, characterizes static and un-reflective cultures, which treat these foreign or past experiential spaces (and their objectifications) as if they were their own temporal extensions, as if they were contemporaneous with them. The second way is dynamic: it amounts to understanding the world as in a state of becoming, as in a constant movement through hierarchically related stages, whose directionality coincides with one’s own “basic intention” (“*Grundintention*”). This approach, although better equipped to understand historicity, “grasps only as much of past formations as fits into this retrospective prolongation of our tension”, while it tends to be less receptive toward other dimensions in them (*ibid.*: 247-48.) (Since Mannheim gives as example Hegel’s and Marx’s philosophies of history, I assume that this kind of relation to the past corresponds to the stage of cultivated culture.)

A third way to grapple with past mental realities (also possible only in the context of cultivated culture) is the *immanent understanding and interpretation* of alien experiential spaces. The peculiarity of this third way is to understand the formations of an experiential space *from the latter’s own perspective* (*ibid.*: 248). Mannheim calls this *immanent interpretation* and specifies that it is “most intimately linked with the general intention of the contemporary will.” (*Ibid.*: 249.) It supposes that kind of “loosening of the exclusivity of our own worldview”, that kind “opening oneself to receiving ‘from the inside’ the contents of other experiential spaces”, which could develop only in the conditions of Western modernity distinguished by its

reflectively dynamic character (*ibid.*: 248). Now, this characterization can seem paradoxical at first sight since, as early as 1922, Mannheim had clearly defined the sociological attitude and interpretation *in contrast to immanent attitude and interpretation*, by the fact that it brackets immanent validity and takes the phenomena as mere *functions* and *results* of processes of social interaction (Mannheim 1982a: 64-65). The paradox is, therefore, that the sociology of knowledge appears as a *non-immanent* (i.e., external) method of interpretation whose goal is the *immanent* understanding of the phenomena investigated.

That this contradiction is only apparent can be shown via the category of *function-change* (“*Funktionswandel*”), qualified by Mannheim as a “central concept of all sociology of thought and culture” (Mannheim 1971b: 113). The concept of function-change is based on the everyday observation that “a ‘meaning’ (“*Bedeutung*”) acquires a new sense (“*Sinn*”) when it is applied to a new life situation” (*ibid.*, transl. mod.), for example when a given concept (Mannheim’s examples are “ego”, “money”, “romanticism”) passes *from a given field of knowledge to another*. In this case, Mannheim speaks of *immanent* function-change. There is, however, another, more fundamental type of function-change: the *sociological* one. This is a type of meaning-change which occurs when a given concept is “adopted by a group living in a different social environment, so that the vital significance of the concept becomes different.” (*ibid.*) More precisely: “[w]hen new strata take over systems of ideas from other strata, it can always be shown that the same words mean something different to the new sponsors, because the latter think in terms of different aspirations and existential configurations.” (*ibid.*³²)

The concept of function-change solves the apparent contradiction between the qualification of the sociological method as *external* (non-immanent) and the claim that the sociology of knowledge is nevertheless a method for *immanent* understanding because it allows for the hypothesis that, from the moment that it becomes a method for the reconstruction of worldviews understood as “communally-determined totalit[ies] of conjunctive experiential contextures” (Mannheim 1982b: 218), *sociology (of knowledge) itself changes its function*. Initially a method congruent with the world-aspiration of strata interested in the further functional rationalization of society (i.e., in the further liquidation of conjunctive knowledge),

³² An interesting implication is a correlation between *function-change*, *intellectual creativity* and *democratization*, since in Mannheim’s view it is the new intentions and world-aspirations introduced into the already existing stock of “seeds” or “germs” by the emerging and ascending social strata that are responsible for those “incalculable, creatively new” meaning- and function-changes of concepts which are the marks of intellectually creative historical conjunctures (Mannheim 1971b: 113).

it is *taken up by strata wishing for a balance between functional and substantial rationality*, attuned and attached to certain forms of qualitative knowledge (cp. Mannheim's views on the specificity of German sociology expounded above). In other terms, *Mannheim's sociology of knowledge undertakes the extrinsic interpretation of mental formations as fulfilling conjunctive functions within unique historical experiential spaces*.

The key assumption here is that the *change of meaning* of concepts is a manifestation of the underlying social dynamism, more precisely, of the *changed situation* of certain groups within this dynamic totality. Understanding concepts – and their totality given in worldviews – as conjunctive realizations of certain social groups is what Mannheim calls *immanent understanding*. It does *not* mean the “experiential enactment” (“*erlebnismässige Vollzug*”) (Mannheim 1982a: 63, transl. mod.) of the interpreted contextures of meanings, for this would involve an experience of *contagion*, i.e., sustained, direct, first-person appropriation of that “world” via the collective “living-together” of common stretches of experiences. Immanent understanding already entails a *distancing* vis-à-vis the object of interpretation; this distancing, however, is such that it reveals best “the whole phenomenon in its intervowenness with and engagement in the totality of life and experience.” (*Ibid.*: 64, transl. mod.) This means, again, that Mannheim's sociology of knowledge is a method of *extrinsic* interpretation of contextures of meaning *as fulfilling conjunctive functions*; this is what Mannheim calls worldview-interpretation, which results in the immanent understanding of these life-spaces.

This is also the meaning of Mannheim's claim that *the sociology of knowledge realizes a synthesis between the natural-scientific and the human-scientific styles of thought*. Indeed, sociology of knowledge takes up and transforms a basic instrument of the natural-scientific style of thought – functionalization of all meaningful phenomena – in order to achieve immanent understanding (the goal of the human sciences), a task that would be impossible to fulfill without the concept of “*function*” *itself going through a function-change*. Still in search for the suitable denomination for his project, Mannheim expresses this by writing that “sociology of culture or ideology-critique taken as a whole represents a combination and connection of natural-scientific and human-scientific methods. It joins a natural-scientific theory of the social process with a particularly oriented interpretation of the entire cultural superstructure.” (Mannheim 1982b: 276.)

This synthesis combines two distinct tendencies into a higher-level unity: on the one hand, the “conservative-idealist” tendency to reconstruct worldviews as free-floating contextures of meaning; on the other hand, the “progressive-materialist” tendency of the “generalizing sociologies” to deal only “with those ideational contents that can be considered

as immediately determined by th[e social] process (i.e., that are definable in accordance with means-ends relations).” (*Ibid.*). Importantly, this second progressive tendency is itself divided in two main types: the burgeoning academic discipline of sociology, showing a strong tendency toward the generalizing natural-scientific style of thought, and the extra-academic intellectual forces gathering under the banner of Marxism, centering their efforts on the ideological debunking of class-interests encrypted in the manifestations of bourgeois thought. The common element of the latter two, politically divergent, intellectual orientations (academic sociology and historical materialism) is their propensity to engage in the *communicative reinterpretation of ideas as theoretical means to extra-theoretical ends*, as devices for the realization of *material interests* (Mannheim 1982b: 275).

To distinguish his own approach from the latter two, Mannheim introduces (in the “Appendix” to “A sociological theory of culture and its knowability”) the category of *mediated committedness* (“*mittelbares Engagiertsein*”) as a concept that could do justice to those dimensions of meaningful social life which were left out of consideration because of the exclusivity of the category of interestedness, taken by general sociology and Marxism as the only possible type of existential connectedness of ideas. As he writes, the sociology of knowledge properly understood “only begins when one goes beyond these points of departure and attempts to show that every political aspiration (“*politisches Wollen*”) is anchored in a world-aspiration (“*Weltwollen*”) (...).” (*Ibid.*) Yet this does not amount to deny the legitimacy of the category of interestedness. Indeed, Mannheim asserts that there are many “elements of political ideology, economic theory and historical representation that can be shown to be completely determined by interest”, which must therefore be uncovered and analyzed (*ibid.*: 273; cp. Mannheim 1971b: 109). The point is rather that *there exist different kinds of communally structured modes of relatedness to the world*, and that these modes are far more varied (and complex) than the means-ends relationship between a “subject” and an “object” postulated by the category of interestedness.

“Mediate committedness” is the umbrella-term Mannheim uses to grasp the rich network of attachments to the world individuals develop during their individuation (which is always and at the same time the process of their socialization). Reducing these multifaceted connections to purposive-rational action and interestedness, amounts, according to Mannheim,

to a wholly unscientific *brutalization* of the most basic social facts of the theory of history (Mannheim 1980: 305;³³ cp. also Simonds 1978: 120).

§ 21. Intellectual and social stratification: the problem of transposition (“*sich-umsetzen*”) (1925/1928/1932)

In 1925, the year he was still working on the posthumously issued “A Sociological Theory of Culture and its Knowability”, Mannheim published an essay titled “The Problem of a Sociology of Knowledge” (“*Das Problem einer Soziologie des Wissens*”), using for the first time (a version of) the term “*Wissenssoziologie*”, which will characterize his project from then on. This essay picks up the thread where Mannheim dropped it in the earlier, unfinished, manuscript. It is plausible that the acquaintance with Max Scheler’s essay on the sociology of knowledge (*Versuche einer Soziologie des Wissens*), published in 1924, played a role in the suspension and consequent reorganization of Mannheim’s project laid out in “A sociological theory of culture and its knowability”. I believe Scheler’s text contributed to opening theoretical possibilities yet unforeseen by Mannheim by creating an intellectual tension-field within which he could locate his own project and further specify it. What he had called in the earlier essay with different terms – “sociology of thought”, “sociology of knowing” – would now receive a “brandname” guaranteed by Scheler’s scholarly prestige and at the same time define a *field of forces* within which Scheler represented just *one* possible perspective, alongside that of Lukács and Mannheim’s own (cp. Kettler–Meja 2001: 100).

Mannheim carried out this triangulation between the positions of Scheler, Lukács, and his own, by centering his discussion around the problem of the base-superstructure model of society, which he had already called in “A sociological theory of culture and its knowability” “the inescapable foundation of every modern sociology of culture.” (Mannheim 1982b: 177.) The longest part of the 1925 essay is dedicated to a criticism of Scheler’s understanding of the relation between base and superstructure. This gives the occasion for Mannheim to lay down his own basic frame for the sociology of knowledge. The point of Mannheim’s critique is that Scheler’s model eventually makes it impossible to cope *theoretically* with the *core problem* of all sociology of knowledge worth the name: the fact of the existential connectedness of *all*

³³ The German edition reads “brutalization” (“*Brutalisierung*”), where the English translation gives “vulgarization” (Mannheim 1982b: 273).

thought, the *constitutive role* of social processes for both the meaning *and* the validity of *all* ideational performances (Mannheim 1971b: 86-87). Mannheim also reproaches Scheler his incapacity to tackle the *empirical* problem of the sociology of knowledge, which is to correlate intellectual standpoints and styles of thought with “certain tendencies embodied by social strata.” (*Ibid.*: 108.)

The difference with Lukács – which is not yet made explicit here – resides in the introduction by Mannheim of the concept of “*intellectual strata*” (“*geistliche Schichten*”), described as a “constructive mediating category”, fundamental to the sociology of knowledge (Mannheim 1971b: 111-12). Mannheim introduces this category after having argued – against “vulgar Marxism” – for the necessity to complement the category of interestedness with that of committedness, to which the former is logically subordinate (*ibid.*: 109). The core ideas in these passages closely follow the end-section (“Appendix”) of “A sociological theory of culture and its knowability”, analyzed in the previous paragraph, where the idea of committedness was first introduced. Yet, a novel core methodological concept of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge appears only in the later text: the notion of “*imputation*”, which closely relates to the distinction between interestedness and committedness. This concept will allow Mannheim to articulate the problem of the *correlation* between *styles of thought* and *intellectual standpoints* (“mind”), on the one hand, and *social strata* (“society”), on the other (*ibid.*), in a non-reductionist manner. This idea is expounded first in the following – still sketchy – formulation of the basic steps of what an empirical investigation into the sociology of knowledge should look like.

“We cannot assign a style of thought, a work of art, etc., to a group with the connecting category of interest. We can, however, show that a certain style of thought, an intellectual standpoint, is anchored (*‘verankert’*) within a worldview-system (*‘Weltanschauungssystem’*). And this worldview-system itself, in turn, can be shown to belong to a certain economic and power system. It is from this point on, then, that we can ask which social strata are ‘interested’ in the emergence and maintenance of this economic and social system and at the same time ‘committed’ to the corresponding world-aspiration.” (*Ibid.*, transl. mod.)

In this passage, Mannheim distinguishes three steps of gnosiso-sociological analysis. The first step consists in working out relations of part to whole between cultural artifacts belonging to a common style and worldview as the larger totality of meaning. The second step involves the elaboration of the correspondences and affinities between this worldview, on the one hand, and systems of economic and political organization, on the other. In the third and last step, one

establishes relations between this economic-political organization and the social strata *interested* in its maintenance. It is of utmost importance that Mannheim recognizes that the *second* moment of this scheme – the passage from a *thought-style* to an *economic system* – remains problematic, namely due to the “tremendous richness of the historical world.” (*Ibid.*: 111.) To bring justice to this richness, Mannheim sees it necessary to introduce a further distinction, between *intellectual strata* (“*geistiger Schichten*”) and *social strata* (“*sozialen Schichten*”). Mannheim makes it clear that the latter, in fact, stands for the Marxian concept of *class*, i.e., categories of population defined by their role in the production process. In his view, the problem is that while the Marxian notion of class is monolithic, the world of the mind presents a variety of contending positions, often based in *one and the same class*. It follows that a direct imputation of intellectual standpoints, styles of thought, etc., to classes, would amount to sweep out this internal differentiation of the world of the mind.

It is to tackle this difficulty that Mannheim introduces the “intermediary concept of intellectual strata”, whose function “consists in making a co-ordination of spiritual totalities (“*geistliche Totalitäten*”) with social groups possible without blurring the inner differentiation either of the world of mind or of social stratification.” (*Ibid.*: 112, transl. mod.) This modifies the previously expounded steps of gnosiso-sociological analysis in the following way.

“It is only once we have (retrospectively) identified such conflicting world-aspirations, worldview-systems, in the historical process, and once we have thus allowed for the social differentiation to be determined by the spiritual differentiation, can we ask which ‘social strata’ should the so-elaborated ‘intellectual strata’ be assigned to. (...) We can understand the transformation of the various ideologies only on the basis of changes in the social composition of the intellectual stratum corresponding to them.” (*Ibid.*: 111, transl. mod.)

This “functional” definition of “intellectual strata” – as a constructive category of mediation necessary for an adequate, non-reductionist, sociological interpretation of mental phenomena – is complemented by a more “substantial” definition: “[w]e mean by ‘intellectual stratum’ those human groups (“*Menschengruppen*”) which are connected by virtue of their ‘world-aspiration’ (as parts of which we may mention economic-aspiration, thought-aspiration, art-aspiration, etc.), who are committed to a given economy and a given style of thought at a certain moment within a certain social unit.” (*Ibid.*, transl. mod.) This definition is remarkable in that, contrary to the conceptual genesis of the “cultivated strata” in “A sociological theory of culture and its knowability”, the emphasis goes here to the intellectuals’ commitment to

particular world-aspirations and does not say anything about their conjunctive vocation to synthesis. In this sense, Mannheim seems to adopt here a definition of intellectuals as “formulators of class-ideologies”, resonating with the class-bound perspective. It is also coherent with the disillusioned description he gives of Adam Müller as the prototype of the free-floating intellectual-ideologue in his *Habilitationschrift*, on which he was working more or less concomitantly with “The Problem of a Sociology of Knowledge”.

Yet, despite these parallels, it is crucial to note that intellectuals in “The Problem of a Sociology of Knowledge” are defined neither by their *class-affiliations*, nor by their economic or political *interestedness*, but indeed by their *commitment to a world-aspiration*, whose identification by the researcher gives access both to the class-affiliations and interestedness of the intellectual groups. This suggests that the intellectual stratum is, in fact, the social sphere where a certain process, essential for the sociology of knowledge and intellectuals, takes place: the *transmutation of interests (class-positions) into commitments (spiritual-intellectual standpoints)*. Borrowing Scheler’s terms, Mannheim speaks of the “self-transposition” (“*sich-umsetzen*”) of “something real” into “something mindful” (“*geistiges*”), which he calls “the most mysterious event in the historical process.” (Mannheim 1971b: 87; cp. Mannheim 1964: 344.³⁴) It thus appears that, to understand what “intellectual strata” means for Mannheim, it is necessary to first clarify the concept of this “most mysterious event” of “transposition”.

Mannheim introduces the concept of transposition in the frame of his criticism of Scheler’s Platonist tendencies, which criticism coincides with Mannheim’s first public endorsement of the historical materialist thesis that “social existence determines consciousness”. However, Mannheim underscores that the dualism of “mind” and “matter” (“body”) has not much to do with the Marxian thesis of the primacy of economic system – identified somewhat questionably with “*Produktionsverhältnisse*”, *relations of production* – in the reproduction and outlook of society. The real difference between “material” (“economic”) and “mental” (“intellectual”, “spiritual”, “cultural”, etc.) activities is between *two types of productive activity both involving thought and meaning*. Mannheim correctly understood that this difference is rooted not in an ontological dualism between “mind” and “matter” but in the *division of labor* between “physical and mental work (both uniting, generally speaking, ‘the labour of the hand with that of the head’), and between their products: material and cultural (*geistige*) objectivations.” (Márkus 1986: 43.) With Mannheim’s words: “the insistence on the

³⁴ The English translation renders “*sich-umsetzen*” with the expression “conversion”. I will translate it rather with the not religiously connoted term of “transposition”.

primacy of the economic ‘substructure’ over the ideological ‘superstructure’ does not posit the primacy of matter over ideas, but the priority of one type of social interaction (the economic) over others. Both species of action involve ideation, communication, as well as biological needs and a material apparatus.” (Mannheim 2003a: 35.)

For a sociology of knowledge based on this perspective – for which Márkus gives the generic name of “paradigm of production”³⁵ –, the fundamental question becomes the relation between these two types of productive activity, more precisely, the status and function of cultural production vis-à-vis “the structured-differentiated totality of all those social activities by which men reproduce and change conditions of their existence and with it themselves.” (Márkus 1986: 44.) In other terms, the interrogation concerns the manner in which material (re)production is “paradigmatic” for all manifestations of human life, and how this conception impacts our understanding of ideas and social consciousness (*ibid.*). To say it in yet another way: since historical materialism considers consciousness as always being the “consciousness of the existing praxis” (*ibid.*), the central issue of the sociology of knowledge becomes the way in which different forms and products of thinking correlate with the “basic practical attitudes open to the typical actors of the historical process under the given conditions of their social existence.” (*Ibid.*)

In light of these clarifications, the function of the concept of “transposition” appears to be that of grasping the *passage of one type* of productive activity – the “material” – into the *other type* – the “mental”. Mannheim does not conceive this relation in a reductive way, as a passive “representation” or “reflection” of the extra-theoretical facts of socio-historical life in ideal constructs, but – to use again Márkus’ words – as the “active articulation of this life-content in a process of communicative self-understanding” (*ibid.*: 42), which is itself a

³⁵ According to Márkus, there are two philosophically significant paradigms of anti-subjectivist and anti-foundationalist thought: the “paradigm of production” (basically: historical materialism and its variants) and the “paradigm of language”. Both are “theories of objectivation, i.e., attempts to give an immanent explanation for human life, to interpret the variety and multiplicity of historical forms of life through social activities and the uninterrupted social appropriation of their results.” (Márkus 1986: 37-38.) The difference is that, whereas for the paradigm of production, “the *origin and telos* of cultural activities and cultural products [reside] in the real conflicts of social life as these emerge ultimately from the historically specific forms of material productive activities” (*ibid.*: 43), for the “paradigm of communication” (to which Márkus imputes authors with significantly divergent views such as Karl Popper, Wittgenstein, Lévi-Strauss, Gadamer, Habermas, etc.), “[a]ll forms of human community of life are forms of linguistic community: even more, they constitute a language.” (H.-G. Gadamer, quoted by Márkus 1986: 27.)

necessary and *constitutive* part of the process of social reproduction as a whole. Following a suggestion made above, *transposition* can thus be described as the *process by which interestedness “turns into” committedness*. The concept of “intellectual strata” would then refer to those human groups who happen to be the actors of this passage.

How should this passage from intellectual strata to social classes be conceived *methodologically*? The answer to this question obviously depends on the conception one has of the passage from social to cultural stratification: what does the idea of the “priority” of economic interaction over other types of social interactions mean *in concreto*? With Mannheim’s words, the question is “how a structural change in the substructure shapes (*mitgestaltet*) a structural change in the superstructure.” (Mannheim 1971b: 88, transl. mod.) The most articulated answer to this question can be found in the already mentioned, later text of Mannheim: the essay “Towards a Sociology of the Mind”.

“The materialistic interpretation of history, so understood, may mean one or all of these three things. It may first imply the claim that the functions which meet the basic, biological wants of man have a greater urgency and are less amenable to postponement and sublimation than are those which meet the so-called secondary needs. Second, economic activities have a more limited scope of variability than others, and, therefore, it is the latter which are subject to the ‘strain of consistency’ with the former. Finally, economic activities have an absolute continuity and in that sense they form the primary basis of social integration.” (Mannheim 2003a: 35.)

Another theoretical-methodological requirement for tracking down class-interests within the different modalities of worldview-committedness is to have a consistent concept of *social class*. Mannheim produces such a concept in his 1932 essay on “The problem of the intelligentsia”. There, he employs a conceptual strategy he had developed earlier in his essay on “The Problem of Generations” (1928) (Mannheim: 1952c: 290-91). This strategy consists in distinguishing between three senses of the notion of “class”. These three senses are: “class position”, “class” and “conscious class”. The most basic notion among them is “class position”. It is itself based on a yet more general notion, that of “social location”, which is a “general term of reference to the continuing exposure of individuals to like influences or to the same opportunities, inducements, and restrictions.” (Mannheim 2003b: 106.) Social locations can be described as “nodes” around which individuals gather to form different social groupings – strata, classes, generations, professional categories (Wessely 2003: 285). As to *class position*, it is a specific type of social location implying “a certain affinity of interests within a diversified

society which selectively allocates power and distributes differential prerogatives and economic opportunities.” (Mannheim 2003b: 107.).

Yet, *theoretical affinity* between like interests and like positions of a manifold of similarly located individuals does not yet constitute a “class”. Mannheim insists that one may speak of a class only “if individuals *act* uniformly in accordance with their like interests and like position in the productive process.” (*Ibid.*, italics added.) It is legitimate to talk about a class when it is possible to empirically register and attest the existence of specific *types of behavioral and motivational patterns pertaining to a given social location*, what Mannheim calls “*positional behavior*”. As he writes, “a position is actualized and becomes discernible only through the behavior of its holders. (...) Class as distinguished from class position cannot be thought of independently of the actions of individuals, but only as a *group which homogeneously reacts to an identical economic position*. Only his class motivations make an individual a member of a class.” (*Ibid.*: 107-109, italics added.³⁶)

Of all the possible social locations, Mannheim sustains, “class stratification is the most significant, since in the final analysis all the other social groups arise from and are transformed as parts of the more basic conditions of production and domination.” (Mannheim 1963: 276.) At the same time, Mannheim underscores that “[p]ractically everybody has ambivalent motivations and more than one social habitat” (or social location), and that “[c]lass position, therefore, is *one* of several locations and *one* of several motivations for action.” (Mannheim 2003b: 107-108, italics added.) From this it follows that, when sociologists of knowledge pass, so to speak, from intellectual to social strata (or social classes), or, to put it differently, when they identify the transposition of class-interests into worldview-committedness, they basically *identify positional behaviors or orientations (and their results) understood as “class-motivations” at work within specific world-aspirations*.

In what sense does class-position “motivate” action and thinking, according to Mannheim? In “The problem of generations” (1928), he gives his clearest answer to this interrogation, foreshadowing Pierre Bourdieu’s notions of *habitus* and *class-habitus*.³⁷ Class-

³⁶ Although it does not play a role here, for the sake of completeness I mention the third sense of the notion of class: *conscious class*, “constituted by the tendency of its members to act collectively in accordance with a *conscious evaluation of their class position* in relation to all other strata of society”, under such forms as “class parties, unions, and pressure groups.” (Mannheim 2003b.: 107, italics added.)

³⁷ In *La distinction*, Bourdieu defines *habitus* as an “[i]ncorporated necessity, converted into dispositions generating meaningful practices and perceptions capable to give sense to the practices thus engendered (...).”

motivation (and in general motivation by social location) has two dimensions: a negative and a positive one. It is negative in that it entails a *limitation* of the “range of potential experience, predisposing (...) for a certain characteristic mode of thought and experience, and a characteristic type of historically relevant action. Any given location, then, *excludes* a large number of possible modes of thought, experience, feeling, and action, and *restricts* the range of self-expression open to the individual to certain circumscribed possibilities.” (Mannheim 1952: 291, italics added.) These negative functions have their positive counterpart: “[i]nherent in a positive sense in every location is a tendency pointing towards certain definite modes of behavior, feeling, and thought. We shall therefore speak in this sense of a *tendency ‘inherent in’ every social location*; a tendency which can be determined from the particular nature of the location as such.” (*Ibid.*, 290.) Thus,

“for any group of individuals sharing the same class position, society always appears under the same aspect, familiarized by constantly repeated experience. It may be said in general that the experiential, intellectual, and emotional data which are available to the members of a certain society are not uniformly ‘given’ to all of them; the fact is rather that each class has access to only one set of those data, restricted to one particular ‘aspect’. Thus, the ‘proletarian’ most probably appropriates only a fraction of the cultural heritage of his society, and that in the manner of his group, etc.” (*Ibid.*)

In his 1931 essay “The Sociology of Knowledge” (taken up in most editions of *Ideology and Utopia* after 1936 as the fifth chapter of the book), Mannheim tackles this issue afresh, but coins a new term to name the constitutive, structuring role of social position for individual and collective consciousness: “*Aspektstruktur*”, translated in English as *perspective*. By perspective, Mannheim understands “the manner in which one views an object, what one perceives in it, and how one constructs it in his thinking.” (Mannheim 1963: 272.) It is “more than a merely formal determination of thinking. It refers also to qualitative elements in the structure of thought, elements which must necessarily be overlooked by a purely formal logic.” (*Ibid.*) Perspective can be defined as the qualitative factor explaining that two persons applying the *same* formal-logical rules to a common problem but belonging to different social locations

(Bourdieu 1979: 190.) In turn, *class-habitus* is defined as the “unifying and generative principle of practices (...), the incorporated form of class-conditions and the conditionings they impose”, resulting in “homogeneous systems of dispositions”, as well as “classificatory schemes” regulating the actions undertaken by individuals belonging to a certain class (*ibid.*: 112).

may arrive to *opposite* judgments regarding the common problem. Also, it is the tacit knowledge about the perspectival character of existentially connected knowledge that makes one able to “see from most of the concrete assertions of human beings when and where they arose, when and where they were formulated.” (*Ibid.*: 270.) Perspective can thus be said to be a mental-behavioral configuration replicating the social structure of a given society at a given time *as it is given for* the subjects living in a certain social location within this structure.

This prompts to reformulate the previous question in the following way: how can the sociologist concretely identify class-motivations *within* the perspectives (which are themselves parts of world-aspirations) he reconstructs in the frame of worldview analysis? Although Mannheim does not have a single theoretical answer to this interrogation, his intuitions drive him close to Bourdieu’s sociology of culture and its more elaborate terminology. Reading Mannheim’s proposals through Bourdieu’s terminological lenses can help in making the former’s assumptions more explicit and answer the above question on his own grounds.

As I stated above, like Bourdieu (1979: 545-47), Mannheim held that the mere fact of the existence of radically divergent perspectives in a stratified society is a consequence of the *split between dominant and dominated* groups, a fundamental divide characterizing all political societies (Mannheim 1982b: 257). The existence of perspectives and their concrete configuration are a function of what Mannheim calls the “struggle for social existence” (Mannheim 1982a: 75). Another common element in Mannheim’s and Bourdieu’s sociologies is the idea that “perspective” and “class-habitus” build up as incorporated systems of mostly implicit and unreflective *distinctions* which, on the one hand, *separate* social classes by opposing them according to dominant cultural standards, and, on the other hand, mutually *link* them together, making a given perspective (or *habitus*) definable only *vis-à-vis* other perspectives.³⁸

The point where Bourdieu goes a step farther than Mannheim is where he makes it explicit that the *distance to the primary necessities* of the natural and the social world, the degree of *refinement* and *sublimation* to which the primary needs and wants are submitted, is in fact the common denominator of all possible distinctions (Bourdieu 1979: vi, 56). The most fundamental class-relations, those between the most oppressed and exploited groups and those best purveyed in economic and cultural capital, can be “read off”, according to Bourdieu, from the historically specific variations of a transhistorical set of metaphors and dichotomies (high

³⁸ There is also a significant difference between their approaches, however. Indeed, in Mannheim, besides “distinction”, there is also “conjunction”, a more fundamental mode of sociality.

and low, spiritual and material, refined and crude, light and heavy, free and constrained, large and narrow, etc.), whose combinations and variations are used in everyday life as implicit or explicit *classificatory schemes* allowing for the spontaneous, not necessarily conscious, identification and judgement of the others' (as well as one's) position in society (Bourdieu 1979: 545-46). Of course, these mostly implicit schemes, albeit seemingly consensual, are the expressions of class-struggle (*ibid.*: 83-87). This is why, when internal or external strain befalls the social order, upsetting the *status quo* between dominants and dominated and intensifying the so far implicit power- and class-struggles, the habitual *classificatory schemes* turn into explicit, theoretical *systems of classification*, used as *weapons* in political-ideological strife. Their function thereon consists, on the one hand, in undermining the very habitual bases of the adversaries' social activity and, on the other hand, in solidifying and dignifying one's own's (*ibid.*: 559-64).

It is noteworthy that such a situation of heightened political and ideological conflict waged by competing classes is the object of study in Mannheim's *Conservatism*, his only published empirical investigation into the sociology of knowledge, in which he reconstructs the emergence and development of conservative ideology in Germany between the last decades of the 18th to the first third of the 19th centuries. In that work, Mannheim describes the political and intellectual struggle between strata interested in the maintenance of feudalism, mainly the landed aristocracy, on the one hand, and the ascending bourgeois strata interested in the capitalistic rationalization of the economy and the development of the centralized, modern bureaucratic state apparatus, on the other (Mannheim 1986). To this effect, Mannheim's book systematically maps the network of concepts and metaphors – concrete-abstract, organic-mechanical, analytic-synthetic, atomistic-holistic, qualitative-quantitative, etc. –, different from Bourdieu's above given examples only in their greater sophistication and historical concreteness, which made up the characteristic opposition between liberal and conservative styles and modes of thought (their "perspective") from the late 18th to the early 19th century in Germany.³⁹

³⁹ According to Mannheim, in its opposition to liberalism, the conservative worldview puts forth "its experience of the qualitative, its concrete rather than abstract ways of experiencing, its experiencing on the grounds of what is and not what ought to be, its experience of imaginary spatial relationships in contrast with the linear experience of historical development, its substitution of landed property for the individual as the substratum of history, its preference for 'organic' associations over 'classes', and others." (Mannheim 1986: 100.)

Based on the results of this study, Mannheim's 1931 essay on "The Sociology of Knowledge" proposes a non-exhaustive list of traits and criteria "by which the perspective of an assertion may be characterized, and (...) which aid us to attribute it to a given epoch or situation." (Mannheim 1963.: 272.) These traits and criteria include the *different meanings* that variously located groups give to the *same concept*; the phenomenon of the *counter-concept*; the gradual development of *distinctive categorial apparatuses* and *different models of thought* employed to understand the same phenomena; differing *levels of abstraction* and *different ontological assumptions* at work when tackling a given problem (*ibid.*: 272). Although Mannheim's essay gives an example for each of the above-mentioned criteria, I will cite only the differential meaning of the concept of *freedom* in progressive-liberal and conservative hands to show how he intended his proposition to function in practice.

Whereas the liberal, in an egalitarian fashion, understood freedom as "freedom from privileges", he was referring to "those privileges which to the old-style conservative appeared the very basis of all freedom", i.e., "the right of each estate to live according to its privileges (liberties)." (*Ibid.*: 273.) The *reason* of this difference lies in the irreconcilable political utopias of the contending social classes to whom these concepts can be imputed.

"The liberal conception of freedom was that of a group which sought to overthrow the external, legal, non-egalitarian social order. The conservative idea of freedom, on the other hand, was that of a stratum which did not wish to see any changes in the external order of things (...). That the liberal saw only one, and the conservative only another side of the concepts and of the problem was clearly and demonstrably connected with their respective positions in the social and political structure." (*Ibid.*)

Considering these developments in the light of Bourdieu's useful distinction between *classificatory schemes* – through which the conditions of existence in given social locations, via social conditioning, become systems of practice-orienting habitualized dispositions externalized in symbolic forms – and *systems of classification* –, through which classificatory schemes become the explicit objects and means of political struggle –, it can be hypothesized that the "transposition" of "real factors" into "ideal factors" happens simultaneously at two *distinct levels* of social interaction.

The first level is that of the "dialectic" between conditions of existence and *habitus*, which is "at the foundation of the alchemy that transforms the distribution of capital, balance-sheet of a power-relationship, into a system of perceived differences, of distinctive properties,

i.e., into a distribution of symbolic capital, legitimate capital, unrecognized in its objective truth.” (Bourdieu 1979: 192.) Both in Mannheim and Bourdieu, it is at this first level that the mysterious “alchemy” of the process of transposition generates those lifestyles, and styles in general, which, as systems of practices, become the primary objects of study of the sociologists of knowledge when they undertake the task of world-view-analysis.⁴⁰

The second level of social interaction where transposition plays a key role is where the open political-ideological contestation of the established order takes place: those situations where the hitherto tacitly accepted limits incorporated by the different social classes rigidify and are transmuted into weapons of political struggle. As I said above, the dynamic evolution of one such constellation was Mannheim’s object of study in his monography on conservatism. In such situations, against the “heretical” reinterpretations of the system of classificatory schemes, based on mental schemata implying the illegitimacy of the ruling social order, the latter’s spiritual guardians must “make explicit, systematize and codify the principles of production of this order, of the real as much as of the represented one, in brief, to constitute the *doxa* into orthodoxy.” (*Ibid.*: 559.) Ideological struggle – with Bourdieu’s expression: “classification-struggle” – means the re-elaboration and transposition of everyday classificatory schemes in the context of political struggle. For Bourdieu, the ultimate function of “classification-struggles” is the *mobilization* and *demobilization* of groups, accomplished through the work of political imagination, making people able to perceive hitherto unseen constellations and opportunities, or the same ones but from different perspectives (*ibid.*: 559). In Mannheim, this mobilizing capacity pertains to utopian consciousness, the active principle of negation of the necessary character of the present order, to be replaced with an alternative

⁴⁰ It is noteworthy that both authors do figure this process as *metaphorical transference*: Mannheim voices such a conception each time he refers to and uses the method of *transcendence* or *sublimation of the conceptual content* (see above my discussion of the concept of style in §§ 16-17; the textual references are Mannheim 1971a: 54, 135-36; 1982a: 87; 1982b: 217-18, 233). It is this same idea of metaphorical transference which is at work in Mannheim’s conception of the *sociological function-change* of concepts, referring to the meaning-change occurring in the transference of mental products (ideas, concepts, systems of thought, etc.) from one social group to another (Mannheim 1971b: 113). In Bourdieu’s writings, *habitus* is defined from the outset not only as a general but also a *transposable* disposition: “all practices and works [*‘oeuvres’*] of a same agent are objectively harmonized among themselves, without any intentional research for coherence; and they are objectively orchestrated, without any conscious concertation, with those of all the members of the same class: *habitus* constantly generates practical metaphors, or, to say it differently, transferences (...), or even better, *systematic transpositions* imposed upon it by the peculiar conditions of its application [*‘mise en pratique’*] (...).” (Bourdieu 1979: 190, italics added.)

one, better suited to the standards of the custodians of utopian representations (cp. Tverdota 2014: 125-127).

In Mannheim, it is possible to identify a *third level of transposition*, missing from Bourdieu's theory because of his idea of the "Break", the assumption that sociology constitutes itself as a science in its *separation from* "the distortions caused by immersion and involvement in practices", hindering reflexivity and self-objectification (Bourdieu 1990: 91-92). In contrast to Bourdieu, Mannheim stresses that the practice of sociology (in particular of the sociology of knowledge), albeit situated on a different level of abstraction, is founded on a spontaneous capacity shared by an increasing number and types of social actors (because of the modern experience of social mobility) to distinguish between different lifestyles and styles of thinking and to relate these differences to external, social-political factors. For Mannheim, sociology of knowledge as a practice is *continuous* with the self-orienting practices of everyday social actors, without being, however, *homogeneous* with them. (Mannheim 1963: 282).⁴¹

It follows that this relationship of "heterogeneous continuity" between everyday social practices of interpretation and the sociology of knowledge entails a third form of transposition I suggest calling "*reinvestment*". It is at work when, in *Ideology and Utopia*, Mannheim puts forth that the stage of the general-total ideology-critique is dialectically superseded by the sociology of knowledge, thanks to which the method of interpretation characteristic of ideology-critique could be separated from its initial destructive purpose and be used as a universal instrument for the scientific understanding of everyday life and culture, now perceived in its intrinsic politicity (Mannheim 1963: 264-66). Sociology of knowledge is thus itself part of the social struggle, which is expressed, first, as classificatory schemes, second, as classification struggle.

This three-step model of the edification of the sociologically functionalized cultural realm significantly overlaps with the three-level model of cultural interpretation expounded in "A sociological theory of culture and its knowability". The following correspondances can be

⁴¹ To quote Mannheim's example: "When the urbanized peasant boy, who characterizes certain political, philosophical, or social opinions to be found among his relatives as 'rustic', he no longer discusses these opinions as a homogeneous participant, that is, by dealing directly with the specific content of what is said. Rather he relates them to a certain mode of interpreting the world which, in turn, is ultimately related to a certain social structure which constitutes its situation. (...) The sociology of knowledge goes beyond what, in some such crude way as this, people frequently do today, only insofar as it consciously and systematically subjects all intellectual phenomena without exception, to the question: In connection with what social structure did they arise and are they valid?" (Mannheim 1963: 282.)

established between the two models. At the first, basic level of the constitution of modern culture (*Bildungskultur*) stand the life-communities where interactions take the form of contagion and direct understanding, and where the confrontation with different and/or adverse perspectives is carried out mostly as if they were just the extensions of one's own worldview (Mannheim 1982b: 246-49). In Bourdieu, this is the level of the "native world" ("*le monde natal*"), which involves an "immediate adherence to the tastes and distastes, to the sympathies and aversions, the phantasms and phobias, deeply embedded in the habitus, which, more than the declared opinions, unconsciously found the unity of a class." (Bourdieu 1979: 83.)

The second level is that of historical-philosophical reflexivity, where the world-aspirations combat each other in an explicit fashion, through direct ideological confrontation or in a more sublimated – for example theoretical or artistic – fashion. This level *makes explicit* and *reorders* the first-level *conjunctive knowledge* according to developmental schemes which construe the image of the world and its becoming in conformity with particular worldview-commitments and the interests they sublimate.

The third level, that of the immanent understanding achieved by the double reflexivity characteristic of the sociology of knowledge, is distinct from the first-level infra-political struggle, as well as from the second, more directly political contest based on it, insofar as it sets as its goal the "understanding [of] the formations of an experiential space from its own perspective", and not, as is the case with the first- and second-level interpretations, to judge and assimilate them symbolically "by taking them up within our own experiential space." (Mannheim 1982b: 248.)

From this it follows that the distinction between the second and the third level resides less in the latter's greater "scientificity" or "rigor", but rather in a difference of *perspectives*, involving different *attitudes* of the actors toward their objects: what distinguishes the freely bound intellectuals, as the bearers of the sociology of knowledge, within the broadly understood intellectual strata, is that their aspiration or intention is oriented not toward *particular* world-views, but the *cultural totality* (cultivated culture or, as Mannheim calls it elsewhere [Mannheim 2003b: 170], the "intellectual process") as the *frame-form* within which the different world-aspirations can confront each other in the first place (cp. here Chapter 6, § 42). Mannheim thus conceives the cultivated culture of his times as having a social function *presupposed* by all the different classes struggling to actualize their utopias. This function is *cross-contextual communication* and *mediation*, which makes possible the democratization of culture as the frame of modern political struggle. Thus, the freely bound intellectuals distinguish themselves from their peers in that, besides their unavoidable commitment to this or that

particular intellectual and political current, they discover themselves as the bearers of the intellectual process *as a whole*, as a frame-form, in the continuability of which they also recognize their own peculiar *interest* (Mannheim 2003b: 170).

Above, I referred to the fact that, from 1929 on, Mannheim diagnosed the political polarization of society at the stage of the general-total ideology-critique as a direct threat to the possibility of trans-contextual communication and to the rational negotiation of social conflicts, and this precisely in a conjuncture of an ever-increasing frequency of interactions between hitherto self-contained social groups (classes, religious, linguistic, and cultural communities, etc.) (Mannheim 1963: 280-81). In the critical situation of his times, Mannheim saw the sociology of knowledge as the practical tool employed by the community of the freely bound intellectuals for the restoration of the conditions of authentic *cross-contextual communication* – in the sense of “competition, negotiation, and constitutional settlements, not conversation” (Kettler 2002: 33) –, for the overcoming of the “talking past another”, signalling the breakdown of intellectual intercourse between socially heterogeneous actors.⁴² Obviously, the prospects of such an intellectual strategy depend on the ability of the freely bound intellectuals to demonstrate the existence of a common, albeit unspoken, *commitment* of groups with antagonistic *interests* (liberals, conservatives, socialists, communists) to the “project of Modernity” – against Fascism as a direct and explicit negation of Enlightenment and as the conscious destruction of the mental dispositions sustaining it (this is the leitmotiv of Mannheim’s Frankfurt lectures of 1930, which I will address in the second part of this dissertation in Chapter 6; see also Kettler 2002: 42).

The theoretical problem of transposition, as I expounded it above, should be understood in this sociopolitical context. The intellectual strata of the 1925 text, whether consciously or not, and despite their inevitable commitment to lifestyles, political tendencies and, *in fine*, worldviews, are also, and in a more general way, the “functionaries of transposition” on the above-sketched *three levels*. Albeit under sensibly different forms, and through social practices differing in accordance with the level of social interactions where they take place and the attitudes they suppose, “*intelligence*” is *active on all three levels*, and not just in the most sublimated exchanges within the so-called “intellectual elites”. Mannheim’s assertion in “The

⁴² “The sociology of knowledge seeks to overcome the ‘talking past one another’ of the various antagonists by taking as its explicit theme of investigation the uncovering of the sources of the partial disagreements which would never come to the attention of the disputants because of their preoccupation with the subject-matter that is the immediate issue of the debate.” (Mannheim 1963: 281.)

problem of the intelligentsia” (written around 1932) that “[t]he intellectuals who produce ideas and ideologies form the most important of the connecting links between social dynamics and ideation” (Mannheim 2003b: 122; cp. Mannheim 1971b: 111-12), is not about *intellectual elites* but about the *intellectual function* understood as the *enactment of transposition* in the different contexts and levels of social interaction, including those with which the idea of “intelligence” is usually not associated.

In light of what precedes, if the sociology of knowledge is defined as the reconstitution of the implicit links between social dynamics and ideation, this means that, strictly speaking, the sociology of knowledge is *one* with the sociology of intellectuals. Yet, it must be emphasised that this idea of the “sociology of intellectuals” largely exceeds the scope of the study of intellectual *elite groups*. An extended and reformed concept of “*intellectual*” is involved here, which includes *any human group or individual taking part in the processes of transposition of class-struggle into classification-struggle*, to use Bourdieu’s expressions. The interest of the sociology of knowledge, as one with the sociology of intellectuals, goes for these processes *in general*, whatever be the concrete action-contexts in which these processes are enacted (political organizing in and outside of the factory *or* intellectual debates within the university, etc.) This entails furthermore that the *factual existence* of human groups (“intellectual elites”) *specializing in* and *monopolizing* the *legitimate* exercise of the intellectual function, far from being simply a *fact*, should rather be seen as a *problem* that the sociology of knowledge must address. In the event, in view of Mannheim’s organicist theory of culture according to which the highest levels of the “intellectual process” are structurally dependent on the most basic forms of conjunctive interactions (themselves actualizing acts of transposition), the ultimate task of the sociology of knowledge is the exhibition and explication of the imbrication of and the passages between these different levels of the “intellectual process” (whether in a bottom-up or a top-down way).⁴³

⁴³ These ideas will be developed in more detail in Chapter 7 of this dissertation.

Chapter 4 – Mannheim’s place in the contemporary sociology of intellectuals (Part 2)

§ 22. Aim and structure of the chapter

Building on the results of Chapter 3, this chapter takes up the thread where Chapter 2 had dropped it: at the demonstration and explanation of why Mannheim’s sociology of intellectuals should not be considered as belonging to the class-bound paradigm, and in what it differs from it. The first step of the present chapter is to complete the reasoning began in the second chapter by confronting Mannheim’s conception of the sociology of intelligence to an elaborate and strenuous contemporary variant of the class-bound paradigm, Robert J. Brym’s “theory of the shifting ties of intellectuals” (§ 23). The fundamental concepts and categories of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge explicated in the third chapter will be used to show not only in what respect Mannheim’s approach *differs* from what I consider to be the best contemporary realization of the class-bound paradigm, but also what its *theoretical advantages* are over the latter.

The remaining paragraphs (i.e., the bulk) of this chapter are dedicated to the confrontation of Mannheim’s conceptions with the so-called *class-less* paradigm, represented here by Randall Collins’ monumental work titled *The Sociology of Philosophies* (and subtitled *A Global Theory of Intellectual Change*). The case of the class-less paradigm is of importance not only because Kurzman and Owens assigned both Mannheim and Collins to it, but more importantly because, notwithstanding significant overlaps, the approach of Collins and other authors working with the class-less paradigm is, ironically, at the antipode of Mannheim’s conception of the sociology of knowledge. As a matter of fact, Collins and authors belonging to the so-called “new sociology of ideas” (NSI) expressly develop their approach against what they call the “Mannheim/Marxian” line of inquiry (Collins 2000: 117), which they describe as a “class-reductionist” and “externalist” method. Exposing in what respects Mannheim’s and Collins’ approaches are at the same time similar and mutually exclusive gives a second occasion to put to test the categories elaborated in the previous chapter, show the strengths of Mannheim’s sociology of intelligence, and argue that it is much more “actual” and consistent than its critiques generally believe.

§ 23. Robert J. Brym on the “shifting social networks” of intellectuals

The discussion of the concept of worldview in Chapter 3 allows to give more precise contours to the previously expounded critique of the class-bound paradigm. I ended Chapter 2 with the contention that the main problem with the approaches giving an exclusive importance to the category of interest – and the reason for this exclusiveness – is that they tend to overlook the intermediary link of worldview-interpretation (to which I can now add the corresponding concepts of committedness, world-aspiration, conjunctivity and intellectual strata). By relying too heavily on the category of interestedness, i.e., by relating mental formations to socioeconomic reality in an *immediate* fashion and, thereby, by interpreting them as the offshoots of purely communicative interactions, they eventually condemn themselves to a form of reductionism. Yet, this is the case not because they commit the so-called “genetic fallacy” – reconducting meaningful to meaningless phenomena by a type of causal imputation –, but because they jump over the said intermediary categories and interpret conjunctive experiences with communicative categories.

This general criticism of the class-bound paradigm can be concretized by analyzing a remarkable and methodologically self-reflexive example of these approaches: Robert J. Brym’s sociology of intellectuals. Brym, who names his own approach “theory of shifting social networks” (Brym 2015: 279), explicitly founds his methodology on Gramsci’s thought (Brym 1987: 204-5), whereby he makes clear his adherence to what Kurzman and Owens call the “class-bound” paradigm. However, as I will show, Brym’s attempt actually transcends many limitations of the class-bound approaches and comes close to Mannheim’s model, yet without achieving the same degree of theoretical clarity as the latter regarding the necessity of the worldview-category (and the corresponding network of concepts) as a mediating link between ideational processes and social dynamics.

The main topic of most of Brym’s writings on the sociology of intellectuals is the issue of *intellectual radicalism*. His investigations put forth two major questions: 1) In what circumstances and for what reasons intellectuals do become politically radical (i.e., revolutionary)? 2) What are the roots of ideological divergences among radicals? Brym’s point of departure is a critical investigation of the “theory of class marginality” of intellectuals, according to which “intellectuals, whether members of a clerisy or radical counterculture, are partially exempt from the operation of many ordinary social forces.” (Brym 1987: 203.) Like Kurzman and Owens, Brym perceives this as a common element of the two seemingly contradictory approaches within the class-in-themselves paradigm: the idealist tradition of

Benda, Brinkmann, and von Martin, which insists on the “intellectual’s transcendence of worldly interests” (*ibid.*, 200), and the “New Class” models, which also emphasize the social uniformity and distinctive character of intellectuals but infer that, precisely for this reason, the intelligentsia has or at least could have its own power-aspirations.⁴⁴

The axiom of a “common alienation [of the intellectuals] from existing society, and a common belief in the sovereign efficacy of ideas as shapers of life” (Wolfe 1948: 33, quoted in Brym 1988: 361) puts the emphasis on what Brym calls the “social *rootlessness* of intellectuals (or malintegration or marginality or alienation), rather than their social *rootedness*.” (Brym 1988: 360.) I agree with Brym that it is problematic to call “sociological” a study of intellectuals conducted on such premises: how, indeed, “can one show precisely how the social positions of intellectuals determine their ideas – or even demonstrate the existence of an elective affinity between positions and consciousness – if we have no sense of their social locations?” (*Ibid.*) Although Brym – along with other scholars – mistakenly attributes such an idealistic position to Mannheim (Brym 1987: 200; 1978: 3-4; 1980: 2), the previous chapters of this dissertation have shown that, on the issue of rootlessness *versus* rootedness, Brym and Mannheim are in fact on a same platform.

However, Brym’s critical stance toward certain uses of the “theory of class marginality” does not amount to the plain dismissal of this theory. Indeed, Brym reminds that the “marginality thesis”, besides being the point of departure of the rejected “class-in-themselves” approaches, is also the inescapable point of departure for any attempt at a sociological explanation of the phenomenon of intellectual radicalism (Brym 1978: 5). The marginality-thesis says that “economic malintegration within (or into) the middle class”, as well as political malintegration “caused by a scarcity of occupational positions in which intellectuals are allowed to exercise ‘bourgeois’ freedoms, or by low levels of intellectual recruitments to establishment political parties (...), incites intellectuals to cross class lines ideologically”, and thus to become “radical” (Brym 1988: 360). Yet, as Brym points out, while this “argument fits the facts remarkably well” (Brym 1978: 5) and is thus a necessary condition for understanding the phenomenon of intellectual radicalism, it is *not* a *sufficient* condition since it fails to account for three important observations.

⁴⁴ Brym considers the work of Alvin Gouldner as representative of the “New Class models”. He summarizes Gouldner’s position as follows: “Briefly stated, Gouldner holds that intellectuals form a class because they share a common relationship to the means of production: they control ‘cultural’ or ‘human’ capital, that is, languages, techniques, and skills that allegedly generate income and status.” (Brym 1987: 203).

1) First: not all marginalized intellectuals become radicals (Brym 1987: 202).⁴⁵

2) Second: radicalized intellectuals do not exhibit a homogeneous ideological outlook (“ideological divergence”) (*ibid.*, 203.)

3) Third: intellectuals do not automatically become more moderate when a more suitable economic or political conjuncture takes the place of the one driving them toward radicalization (Brym 1988: 365-6).

Brym’s hypothesis is that, of these three points, the second is the central one in that it accounts for the other two: the first – not all marginalized intellectuals do become radicals – and the third – the prospect of leaving behind one’s marginalized status does not necessarily de-radicalize intellectuals – have their common ground in the ideologically differentiated outlook of the radicalized intellectuals. As Brym writes: “left-wing intellectuals in given historical settings often associate with different or even opposing parties. Yet, we have no theory that explains why, from the vantage point of their social relations, intellectuals on the left become divided ideologically.” (Brym 1988: 360.) Brym’s solution to this puzzle is to study the “early variations of embeddedness” of intellectuals in their respective communities (in the case of the Russian Jewish intellectuals, in the Jewish communities), on the one hand, and the “later regional variations in working-class embeddedness”, on the other, the coefficient of the two accounting for party (and more generally, political) choice (*ibid.*, 368), which then helps clarify the first and second points.

What this means concretely is that the sociologist must reconstruct “a number of stages in the paths of social mobility that intellectuals typically follow in the course of their careers and outline how each of these stages may influence their political orientations.” (Brym 1987: 205.) The peculiarity of Brym’s approach, which also brings it close to Mannheim’s sociology of intelligence, is the insistence on the *enduring impact of early socialization processes* on the career-path of an intellectual. Brym’s observation that “the most fundamental component of

⁴⁵ According to Brym’s definition, “[i]ntellectuals are people who produce, evaluate, and distribute culture” (Brym 2015: 277). Within this category, in his earlier study on radical Jewish intellectuals in Tsarist Russia around the turn of 19th-20th centuries (Brym 1978: 118), Brym made a distinction between two sorts of intellectuals: (1) “Intellectuals” understood as “an occupational group within, and ideologically supportive of the middle class”, whose role is “to produce, distribute and exchange ideas”, and (2) “‘intelligentsia’ as an occupational group of persons who (i) are structurally divorced from the middle class and (ii) produce, distribute and exchange ideas which are supportive of non-dominant classes”. In Part 2, Chapter 7 of this dissertation, I will argue against the definition of intellectuals as an “occupational category”.

political socialization is the sense of identity one develops as a child” (Brym 1988: 366, 363) evidently echoes Mannheim’s formulation in the essay on generations according to which,

“in estimating the biographical significance of a particular experience, it is important to know whether it is undergone by an individual as a decisive childhood experience, or later in life, superimposed upon other basic and early impressions. [Indeed,] [e]arly impressions tend to coalesce into a natural view of the world. All later experiences then tend to receive their meaning from this original set, whether they appear as that set’s verification and fulfilment or as its negation and antithesis.” (Mannheim 1952c: 298.)

According to Brym, however, the work of reconstruction should not stop at factors related to early experiences.

“What makes this picture all the more complicated is that the determination of intellectuals’ ideological outlooks is really a problem of multivariate causation. That is to say, social origins, schooling, and economic and political opportunities are independent causes of political allegiance, and one variable may reinforce or, at the other extreme, cancel out the effects of another. (...) First (and most obviously) political orientations are powerfully affected by intellectuals’ social origins – that is, by the social-structural locations into which they are born, and which delimit their early experiences and initial exposure to culture. Class, ethnic, and other group memberships help define intellectuals’ sense of self-identity, color their affinity to particular beliefs, symbols, and values, and thereby influence their subsequent ideological outlook.” (Brym 1987: 206.)

Mannheim’s posthumous essay on “The Problem of the Intelligentsia” from the early 1930s goes in the same direction of enlarging the list of factors accounting for the typical behavior-patterns and allegiances of intellectuals.

“An understanding of this stratum [the intelligentsia] will, unlike the analysis of a clear-cut class, require that we consider a large complexity of factors which bear on the situation of intellectuals. Of those, the most important are: the social background of the individual; the particular phase of his career curve – whether he is on the upgrade, at a plateau, or on the downgrade; whether he moves up individually or as a member of a group; whether he is blocked in his advancement or thrown back on his situation; the phase of a social movement in which he participates – the initial, the middle, or the terminal shape; the position of his generation in

relation to other generations; his social habitat; and, finally, the type of aggregation in which he performs.” (Mannheim 2003b: 158.)

To show the points of bifurcation between the two authors, and to show in what respect Mannheim’s approach better explains certain problems confronting Brym, I will now consider the way in which Brym tries to solve the third puzzle of his sociology of intellectual radicalization, namely: *why intellectuals do not “de-radicalize”* once the situation that had initially driven them to radicalism favors their (supposed) interests. Indeed, while Brym’s remarkable empirical study of Russian Jewish radicals of 19th and 20th centuries shows how and why certain intellectuals took the path of radicalization, as well as why, at crucial juncture points, the radicalized intellectuals tended to divide ideologically, as expressed by their subsequent party-affiliations (ranging from Bolsheviks, through Mensheviks and Bundists to Poalei-Zionists), the *persisting radicalism* of the intellectuals poses an enduring challenge to Brym’s explanatory model.

To tackle this issue, Brym introduces the idea of *intellectual networks*, a phenomenon of fundamental importance for the whole process of radicalization (and in general for intellectual life as such). Indeed, radicalization does not occur in isolation but in specific social settings, among which intellectual networks, understood as more or less cohesive, durable, and semi-institutionalized aggregations of intellectuals. As Brym puts it, “[r]adical action and ideology constitute only one of several theoretically available alternative reactions to malintegration. I submit that only if malintegrated individuals are able to create *a dense network of social ties* among themselves will they experience sustained radicalism.” (Brym 1988: 365-366, italics added.) The existence of *intellectual networks* thus appears, in Brym’s eyes, *as the sufficient condition of radicalization*. Moreover, Brym estimates that the phenomenon of intellectual networks also accounts for the difficulty of the persisting radicalism of intellectuals in situations where they do not seem to have any *interest* in remaining tied to radicalized political currents.

“From the 1870s on some students *refused* to accept opportunities for professional employment or they accepted jobs and *remained* active in the revolutionary movement. These individuals were exceptions to the rule that the existence of opportunities for middle-class integration automatically results in decreased radicalism. Their actions must be explained on the basis of the fact that a radical counterculture had become a highly organized and institutionalized feature of Russian political life by the 1870s. This counterculture consisted of a most elaborate network

of organizations: intellectual discussion circles, student communes, loan banks, journals, courts, libraries, cooperatives, public meetings, and so forth. In fact, it amounted to the existence of what Brower calls an independent ‘school of dissent’, which (...) provided a virtually uninterrupted supply of recruits to the revolutionary movement, independent of the lure of job opportunities.” (*Ibid.*)

Brym suggests that what must be explained in this case is the fact that radical intellectual networks, initially created as a response to, or an attempt at changing unfavorable economic and political circumstances (thesis of class-marginality), should liquidate themselves once that these circumstances significantly ameliorate, insofar as their members’ *interests* – their opportunities for social advancement – are not hampered anymore by outside circumstances. With the amelioration of their life conditions (economic, social, and political), intellectuals should de-radicalize and their networks, henceforth *functionless*, should disappear. The disturbing fact is that these intellectuals do not de-radicalize as expected and their networks do not disappear either. This is the situation Brym tries to explain by referring to the highly developed condition of the semi-formal “counter-cultural” network of the 1870s Russia, which made possible the persisting radicalization of intellectuals amidst improving living conditions.

While I accept the core of Brym’s argument (no sustained radicalization without intellectual networks), the other aspects seem more problematic. First, the bare existence of network ties does not better account for radicalism than does the fact to be in a marginalized position. Brym himself does recognize this by saying that those who become radicals could as well “join political sects that are substitutes for the world rather than means of changing it, or they may temper their discontent with various philosophical rationalizations.” (*Ibid.*: 365.) This holds for the networks too: there is no reason for a once radical political network not to transform itself into a mere intellectual debate circle, or even in an esoteric sect tending to cut itself from the world. That the Russian intellectual networks did *not* meet this fate is a fact needing further explanation. Second, there is, in fact, no clue in Brym’s writings as to *why the networks themselves survive once they become functionless*. Brym seems to suggest that the networks have a sort of natural-organic tendency toward self-reproduction. But this is mere speculation which simply postpones the initial problem of why individual intellectuals do not de-radicalize: what is now not explained is the reason for the continued existence of radical networks.

A similar difficulty burdens a second implication of Brym’s argument. This implication is that the Russian students of his example seem to have “traded” their job opportunities – more

broadly: their interest for social advancement – for the perspective of their (continued) participation in diverse social, political, and intellectual networks. Despite the fact that, as Brym suggests, over time, these networks were able to give some material compensation for some of the jobless radicals, it would be mistaken to think that the “deal” for radical intellectuals was to trade a “bourgeois job-opportunity” for a “revolutionary job-opportunity”. It seems more likely to me that they were trading “goods” incontrovertible in nature. While the nature of the first “good” – bourgeois vocation, social status, and material security – is quite evident, the nature of the second – the advantages of a revolutionary “career” – is less easy to grasp, especially based on Brym’s conceptual apparatus. I believe that the main lack of this apparatus is an explicit concept of worldview, such as the one elaborated by Mannheim. Indeed, even though Brym’s analyses do contain elements of what Mannheim called worldview-interpretation, they suffer from want of an explicit notion and a systematic application of this concept. I would like to show this by taking a couple examples from Brym’s book.

I will begin with Brym’s captivating analysis of the background for the political organizing of the Russian “protoproletarians”. By protoproletarians, Brym understands a category of industrial workers who “move[d] frequently from the factory to the village and back again.” (Brym 1978: 21.) In the early phases of market capitalism, the obtaining of a permanent pool of “free” labor force was a central condition of industrialization. The masses previously bounded by their communal-legal ties to the land had to be detached from their peasant “lifeworld” and from their landlords’ grip, to be driven into the urban factory-complexes (Polanyi: 2001). According to Brym, the peculiarity of the Russian situation was not so much the temporal length of the period of transition, in which former peasants worked only seasonally in the industry and returned regularly to the land, than the fact that the commuting condition of the workforce was willingly maintained by the political elite. Apart from the insufficient salary, which did not allow even for the bare reproduction of the workforce of the workers, there was also a concerted unwillingness on the side of the government to secure the necessary institutional conditions for the breaking up of the communal ties binding the workers to their rural communities.

According to Brym, one of the reasons was the belief that “this would prevent the creation of a radical western-style proletariat” in Russia (Brym 1978: 22). As Brym shows, this belief was without reckoning with the high degree of solidarity developed traditionally in the village among the peasants, a solidarity based on the communal ties that they brought with them to the city, alongside modes of rural social organizations they adapted to their new urban setting. Thus, freshly arrived rural masses found already functioning organizations such as mutual

assistance funds and politically conscious comrades with whom they could directly and easily communicate.

“Protoproletarians thus formed extremely dense networks of association at work, at home and in leisure time activities. (...) Peasant communalism and its derivatives did not, as the conservatives believed, ensure social stability. (...) Nor was *extreme* radicalism (...) a function of the protoproletarian’s ‘rootlessness’ in his new urban environment. Rather, level of radicalism appears to have been a function of density of social ties among workers. The protoproletarians brought transmogrified communal institutions to the city and were therefore more radical than more urbanized workers for whom village ties and associations were probably already meaningless.” (*Ibid.*: 23.)

Brym is right to emphasize the role of the *social ties* and their density in the ability to think and act radically. Yet, he does not seem to consider the fact that even very dense social ties do not account *in themselves* for radical activity, nor for the genesis of political ideologies. Not all dense social ties result in sustained intellectual activity and become the basis for dissent. To function as levees for radical political and/or ideological awareness, network ties have themselves to be cemented by something less directly tangible, what Mannheim calls a common *world-aspiration*. In the case of the protoproletarians, the very possibility of the *conjunctive understanding* they found in the factory did not originate in personal connections prior to their encounter in the city, but from their *common worldview, founded on the structural interconnectedness of their lived experiences stemming from their shared class location and historical destiny*.

Yet, this too was still only a common *basis*, which does not account in itself for the development of an *ideology of their own* making possible concerted oppositional actions appropriate to their new urban, industrial environment (actions for which their peasant counterparts lacking knowledge of the urban-industrial setting would not have been prepared). The emphasis is not on the bare fact of partaking in a common worldview, but on the fact that this worldview – also including concrete, transferable organizational knowledge – *prepared them to interpret and react to a totally new situation in a similar way*. With Mannheim’s words, “[t]he cohesiveness of a group constitutes itself precisely by the fact that the range of possible modes of apprehension and attitudes in the face of destinies in prospect is, as it were, predetermined on the basis of past communal interconnections of lived experience.” (Mannheim 1982a: 74, transl. mod.) In other terms, the protoproletarian experience of the

modern world was based on a communal worldview transcended in the direction of a *new* world-aspiration, resulting in a *new* worldview – Brym speaks of a “counterculture” –, to which the protoproletarians became *committed*. It seems logical to conclude that it was precisely this commitment to a new world-aspiration that made the reproduction of the protoproletarians’ networks not only possible, but outright necessary. Indeed, *intellectual networks* (and more broadly, intellectual strata) *exist precisely with the aim of carrying out world-aspirations*.

Herein lies also the reason why radical networks do not become functionless once the initial situation which called them to life changes or vanishes. We see this in the case of the protoproletarians: the communal networks with initially limited aims undergo what Mannheim calls a *function-change* (“*Funktionswandel*”) (Mannheim 1971b: 113) by becoming the carriers of a full-fledged revolutionary utopia aiming at replacing the current *world* with another, better one. In Chapter 3, I have noted that, for Mannheim, function-change of spiritual phenomena is among the main conditions of creativity in history: it occurs when “unpredictable new situations, emerging in the all-encompassing creative matrix of social being, provide unpredictable new bases for existential relatedness to already existing ideas.” (*Ibid.*, transl. mod.) In turn, the creative potential of the intellectual strata is itself derived from the aspirations of social strata struggling for “social existence”, who in the frame of this struggle “introduce new intentions, a new ‘*tensio*’ (a new directionality of the spiritual tenseness), a new world-aspiration into the already developed contents of existing spiritual strata.” (*Ibid.*, transl. mod.) In the case of the Russian protoproletarians, worldview and world-aspiration can be found “upstream” (in the rural-communal worldview) as well as “downstream” (in the protoproletarian worldview) of the networking process, whose function appears to be the *realization of the newly developed revolutionary world-aspiration of the networked individuals*. This is, I believe, the explanation for the enduring existence of the networks once the initial circumstances that made for their creation change.

But how does one concretely arrive to the point where one is not only seeking to reform particular aspects of a social system but desires replacing it as a whole by a brand-new “world”? Trying to answer this question on the basis of another example found in Brym’s book will allow to offer a possible solution to another difficulty of Brym’s sociology of intellectual radicalism, namely the question of *what* exactly is traded *for what* by the young Russian radicals when they refuse employment opportunities – and thus social integration – for revolutionary “careers” in the intellectual networks.

According to Brym, one royal path to intellectual radicalization led through the Russian gymnasium or *Realschule*. These were indeed “[s]taffed by petty, bureaucratic types, who

exercised strict and arbitrary disciplinary power within their satraps”, making for a secondary school environment that “bored and frustrated students rather than offering them a sound education.” (Brym 1978: 56). Because of this, especially the brighter students took their education in their own hands: “Bored students thus formed the *kruzokhs* [circles] in order to read and discuss foreign literature, social philosophy and political economy.” (*Ibid.*: 57.) *Kruzokhs* were also the sites where contact with extra-scholar radical worldviews came first about through the family or proxy connections of some of the members: “a father, uncle, brother or former private tutor”, all of whom “had at one point been a radical or at least read and appreciated radical literature.” (*Ibid.*) Students with such connections introduced the stories and the readings these exemplary figures suggested to them into the *kruzokhs* where they were consumed greedily. “Acts of rebellion against oppressive school authorities soon followed.” (*Ibid.*)

Thus, as Brym writes, “[s]tudent discontent first emerged because the students’ elevated sense of dignity was insulted. Anything which offended students’ honour and sense of intellectual purpose became an issue worthy of protest.” (*Ibid.*: 52.) This remark confirms that the proneness to what Brym calls radicalization depends, from the outset, on the perception of and reaction to the *incongruities* between the ideals, needs, capacities and abilities persons develop in a given social setting, on the one hand, and the effective possibility of realizing and fulfilling them, on the other. “Interestedness” does not play a role here – it is rather the painful experience of an inner split of the individuals’ selves, incorporating the self-contradiction of the social reality they have been given to live in, that seems to be driving the process of radicalization (cp. Márkus 1978: 22).

Brym’s information that this experience was first lived by the students having aristocratic origins and that dissenting attitudes “were most widespread among children of the nobility”, so that “the institutions first to develop traditions of dissent were (...) those with the highest percentage of children from that class”, is barely surprising, given that members of the nobility were the socially and intellectually less constrained persons in 19th Russian society, as well as those with the widest knowledge of radical Western thought. Yet, the culture of dissent developed in the younger generations of noblemen soon spread to other educative institutions, namely to professional schools where commoners formed the majority. When, amidst the wave of discontent and student emancipation developing in the 1850s, the Russian government decided to crack down on the organizational networks and on the leaders, this again “served only to inflame student opinion.” (Brym 1978: 52.) Student associations, whether legal or illegal, continued to thrive as “small island[s] of freedom” within an unfree university. “These

associations eventually gave birth to (...) a ‘school of dissent’ consisting of radical discussion circles, communes and *artels* (workers’ cooperatives) which sought to create in miniature form the egalitarian society envisaged for all of Russia.” (*Ibid.*: 53.)

The conclusions Brym draws from this historical reconstruction reflect the difficulties stemming from the lack of an explicit concept of worldview in his sociology of intellectuals. Indeed, he explains the persistence of the “school of dissent” – which he describes as a “fully formed social institution (...) aimed specifically at producing radicals (...) permit[ing] many students to refuse [bourgeois] job opportunities” – with the following reasons: “[b]ecause they had formed strong ties with one institution (the school of dissent), the ‘pull’ of other institutions (in the form of employment opportunities following graduation) was often no longer able to deradicalize them.” (Brym 1978: 53.) This tendency went so far that, “beginning in the 1870s, the school of dissent actually began to employ *déclassé* radicals”, who “became ‘professional revolutionaries’.” (*Ibid.*).

I do not wish to question Brym’s assertion regarding the ability of the revolutionary shadow-institutions to employ a certain (presumably not very high) number of radical intellectuals, but it still seems problematic to me to infer – as a class-bound approach is logically compelled to do – that the fidelity of the radicals to their cause was due to the (probably fairly scarce) material opportunities offered by these alternative institutions. The problem with this assumption – besides the contradiction that it eventually attributes a bourgeois and utilitaristic mentality to radicals who were precisely combating such mentality – is that Brym takes Brower’s metaphor of a “school of dissent” literally, as if such “school” were the revolutionary counterpart of bourgeois educative institutions of higher learning, delivering technical knowledge and official degrees attesting the ownership of some form of “human capital” by their bearers. Obviously, this was not the case. That Brym nevertheless drew this conclusion stems from the lack, in the class-bound approach, of categories offering an alternative model to that of interestedness as an explanation for the behavior of social actors. Indeed, it appears that Brym cannot understand the *logic* of radicals’ choice of life otherwise than as an exchange of one type of *interest* – bourgeois career and social integration – for another type, embodied in the idea of a revolutionary “career”. Yet, this idea is a metaphor, and I believe it would be mistaken to take it literally. Indeed, precarity, illegality, persecutions, exile, marginalization and social rejection, prison, the constant proximity of death, the impossibility of having a normal family life, and so on, these factors form the exact opposite of what people usually associate with the idea of a career.

Had Brym had at his disposal the categories developed by Mannheim, he could have envisaged a different explanation for the radical intellectuals' motivations. He could namely have considered that *what was "traded" in the case of the Russian radical intellectuals was not an interest for an interest but a "world" for a "world"*. What the radicals wanted to bring about was another "world" – virtual but "true" – replacing the actual one – real but "false". During the formative process of their selves, the revolutionary individuals gradually detached themselves from a world of incoherence and falsity, in which people followed their bourgeois "interests" – those that normally motivate young persons to go through the bourgeois educative institutions in order to earn the degrees that will make them become the "human capital owners" entitled to a good social status and income in bourgeois society – and in which they simply could not live and breathe any longer. This process of detachment coincided with one of attachment, namely to the alternative world they created with their companions in their intellectual networks and militant activities. It is for the sake of this new *commitment* – much stronger than the inherited and rejected one because earned through personal experience of perseverance, solidarity, and true self-enlargement – that the young women and men accepted a life of hardships, deprivations and fear.⁴⁶

The foregoing reasoning leads to a contrasted assessment of Brym's theory. On the one hand, Brym makes an astute but sporadic and implicit use of the category of worldview in his sociological reconstruction of the processes of radicalization of a part of the Jewish intelligentsia in Tsarist Russia and of the reasons for the splitting of the radical intelligentsia in different ideological orientations. Because of this, he fails to identify the deeper logic driving the intellectuals out of bourgeois society and toward revolutionary "(anti-)careers", thus losing sight of the fact that the *raison d'être* of intellectual networks is to serve as a basis for the realization of world-aspirations. The point I tried to make is that a mere aggregation of shifting ties cannot account for the structured and structuring quality for social action of worldviews

⁴⁶ On several occasions, Brym quotes Alvin Gouldner's *bon mot* (Gouldner 1985: 22-27) according to which, because of their structural social position and weakness, intellectuals eager to change social structure often "go 'shopping' for an historical agent with which they can ally themselves" (Brym 1987: 207), either to look for employment opportunities or, as the New Class approaches would suggest, to seize political power. This may of course be true in some cases, but it is undue to draw general conclusions from these particular instances regarding the motivational structure of intellectuals' social and political activism. Indeed, there are many examples in history where the intellectuals' "alliance" with oppressed social groups does not provide any tangible material interest but rather expresses the rejection of the social order as a whole and a striving for an alternative world from which these oppressions would be banned.

and world-aspirations. A model leaning toward purposive-rational (i.e., “communicative”) interpretation of actions tends to erase precisely those qualitative, situational, and conjunctive elements which must be taken into account especially when one is to explain seemingly irrational behavior-patterns. Although Brym tries to avoid this pitfall by enlarging the meaning of the category of interest (by considering subjective attachments which are in fact irreducible to interestedness), his purposive-rational logic eventually wins over. The reason why I consider Mannheim’s sociology of intellectuals more robust than Brym’s theory is that the former recognizes the centrality of worldview-committedness while it also successfully integrates the most important insights of the class-bound approaches.

§ 24. The class-less paradigm and the challenge of the “internalist” sociology of intellectuals

In the subsequent paragraphs, I will turn to the discussion of Randall Collins’ sociology of intellectuals as the representative of the third, “class-less” paradigm in Kurzman and Owens’ typology. Besides Collins’ work, the last two decades saw the publication of important contributions to the field made from this point of view (Gross 2002; Frickel–Gross 2005; Gross 2008), sometimes referred as the “new sociology of ideas” (“NSI”; see Camic and Gross 2001). This tendency is important in the context of the present study because it is expressly aimed against what Collins’ calls the “Mannheim/Marxian” line of inquiry (Collins 2000a: 117). Collins characterizes Mannheim’s approach as an “externalist” attempt to “reduce knowledge produced by intellectuals to the ideological claims of external groups outside the [intellectual] network, for example, as reflection of class interests in the surrounding society” (Collins 1998: 1034, note 12), that is, as a “mere reflex of economics and politics” (*ibid.*, 324). To this he (and more generally the NSI) opposes an “internalist” sociology of intellectuals, which concentrates on the internal dynamics of those *networks* within which intellectuals exert their creative activities, offering a different account of the relations between “macro-level” (modes of production, State-power, class-stratification, etc.) and “micro-level” social interactions (specifically intellectual activities), and “ideas” as their results.

However, precisely because of their competitive relationship, even a superficial glance at Collins’ (and the NSI’s) approach and the “Mannheim/Marx line of inquiry” shows that they have in fact several features in common. They both endorse the thesis of the *trans-individual character of thinking* (Collins 2000a: 3; Mannheim 1936: 3). 2) They have a shared

understanding of the subjects of intellectual history as collective, dynamic entities: “intellectual networks” in Collins, “intellectual strata” in Mannheim. They also share the thesis of the non-immanent character of intellectual history, i.e., that the “destiny” of ideas, the peculiar developmental lines of intellectual currents, the rhythmicity of their history, etc., are dependent on extra-theoretical factors. Both strongly insist that conflict and competition are a central motor of intellectual life, and also that the historicity of intellectual life is essentially linked with the sociological phenomenon of generations. Finally, the idea that the intelligentsia is best defined by its position between “community” and “society” (in Mannheim’s terms borrowed from Tönnies), or *between “organic” and “mechanical” solidarity* (in Collins terms, borrowed from Durkheim). Besides these commonalities (as I will show below), Mannheim and Collins also arrive to significantly similar formulations regarding certain key sociological characteristics of the intellectuals.

As I suggested above, and as I will detail below, these numerous and significant overlaps are partly due to the fact that Collins’ project is an attempt to provide a *wholesale alternative* to Mannheim’s program. The apparent contradiction between significant theoretical overlaps on the one hand and a strongly negative attitude toward Mannheim’s paradigm on the other is removed if one understands that Collins’ (and the NSI’s) express goal is to replace Mannheim’s far too politicized conception of the sociology of intelligence with one that avoids from afar the consideration of any action-context that is situated outside the immediate institutional framework of elite intellectual groups. Therefore, the above-mentioned similarities are superficial, since the meaning of the concepts invoked are turned by Collins into the opposite of what they meant in Mannheim. The subsequent paragraphs will show more concretely that Collins’ proposition for a thoroughly internalist sociology of ideas is, in fact, a very consequent, natural-scientific reinterpretation of intellectual life as a purely communicative process, an undertaking which he conducts in an a-historical, analytical, generalizing manner, dissolving the qualitative aspects of intellectual life into purposive-rational, means-ends type relationships. To paraphrase Mannheim’s formula, Collins’ undertaking could be defined as a sociology of “thinking *disconnected* from social existence” (“*mit der sozialen Existenz **nicht** verbundene Denken*”), a sociology whose goal is to present thinking as entirely severed from any other conjunctive life-context than that of its immediate producers. Showing this in detail in the following paragraphs should contribute to dispel a number of misunderstandings regarding Mannheim’s paradigm and show its advantages over Collins’ program.

§ 25. Collins' "internalist" sociology of ideas

Collins' sociology of ideas seeks to uncover those few *trans-historical causal factors* and *regularities* (which he calls "laws") that *determine*, in the strong sense of the term, the *form* and *content* of (philosophical) *ideas*. It also seeks to apply these categories to a very large, though carefully selected and prepared material from the history of philosophy. Collins' determinism is *integral*. For him, the proposition that social factors causally determine the genesis and content of ideas means literally that, equipped with the right knowledge concerning a concrete context of ideation, it is possible to *predict* the *exact* form and content of emerging ideas (Collins 2000a: 53; Collins 2000b: 317). The fundamental thesis of the *Sociology of Philosophies* is that the basic constituents – the true "actors", as he writes (Collins 2000a: xviii) – of the history of philosophical thinking are not the individual philosophers but their *intellectual networks*. These are defined as "the social links among those thinkers whose ideas have been passed along in later generations", those "pattern[s] of linkages among the micro-situations" in which philosophers do live and work (*ibid.*). According to Collins, "if one can understand the principles that determine intellectual networks, one has a causal explanation of ideas and their changes." (*Ibid.*). To this, he adds a provision that makes clear *against whom* this program is directed: "[t]he network dynamics of intellectual communities provides an internal sociology of ideas, taking us beyond the reductionism of traditional externalist sociology", whose archetypal representative is, of course, Karl Mannheim (*ibid.*).

Collins' proposition for a thoroughly *internal* sociology of ideas takes as its point of departure the consideration that, to understand the dynamics of intellectual history, not the creative individuals but the *network-settings* making for their creativity should be put to the fore. These networks are *intergenerational* and essentially thrive on *conflict*. The importance of the notion of "generations" is evident for a historical undertaking seeking to grasp the lawfulness of intellectual dynamics across *long stretches of time*, as well as the unitary development of trends of thought. The reason why the philosophical problems are not reinvented *ex nihilo* with the wake of every new generation is that these problems, the way to address them, etc., are *institutionally transmitted* by the older generations to the newer ones, who contribute to their reformulation (whether creatively and "critically" or "uncreatively", in a dogmatic or traditionalist fashion), a process that occurs in philosophy mainly in the form of *master-pupil chains* and of contending receptions among peers of the same generation.

The thesis of the *conflictual character of intellectual life*, which is at the core of Collins' sociology of intellectuals, has a more complex explanation. At the bottom lies Collins'

anthropological theory. According to Collins, “human beings are active, excitement seeking, magnetically attracted to where things are happening”; more precisely, “human beings are *emotional energy seekers*, thereby linked to those interactions and their derivative symbols that give the greatest EE [Collins’ abbreviation of “emotional energy” – G.T.] in the opportunities presented by each person’s social networks (...).” (Collins 2004, 373.) At first sight, this proposition seems to be situated on the same plane as other theories of human motivation involving some form of “rational choice theory” (hedonism, utilitarianism, relative deprivation theory, psychoanalysis, will-to-power theories, etc.), or at least it seems to draw on these. Yet, Collins’ attempt should rather be seen as a *meta-theory* of human motivation in the sense that what he calls “emotional energy” (“EE”) is something like the common denominator – as well as the reason for the partial validity – of all these theories: if human beings seek to avoid frustrations, if they seek joy, if they desire power, if they pursue their economic interests, etc., it is *because* they all invariably seek to augment their levels of “EE”, obtainable in what Collins names “interaction rituals” (abbreviated as “IR”) (Collins 2004), a concept I will make explicit below.

The problem I see with this conception is that it broadens the notion of “emotions” to the point of making it void: the “emotiveness” of human beings – to my knowledge, nowhere defined by Collins – in fact becomes the equivalent of “sociability”. In the event, and despite Collins’ protestation, his notion of “emotion” is not only “vague, hypothetical and tautological” (*ibid.*: 133) (these are Collins’ words with which he resumes the criticisms addressed to his theory), but also, more importantly, *mythological*: they refer to an invisible and directly indemonstrable quantum of “energy” strongly recalling the idea of *mana*, of which the whole capacity to sociality of human beings is then speculatively derived.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ As a matter of fact, Collins himself admitted the validity of the criticism that the entity named “EE” is purely speculative (with Collins’ word: “inferential”): “[m]y argument that EE builds up or declines over a series of interaction rituals depending upon the ups and downs of one’s experiences of power and status, is inferential. There is little direct evidence for it.” (Collins 1990: 50.) In his 2004 book on *Interaction Ritual Chains*, Collins reflected on some assertions he made in earlier articles (1981, 1983) according to which it is possible to *measure* “EE”. Yet, this more recent statement adds little to the crucial question of the *methods of measurement* of “EE” and carries the same inconsistencies as the prior formulations. The project to measure – that is: to quantify – obviously *qualitative* data (modes of speech, facial expressions, bodily postures and movements) in order to reduce them – i.e., strip them off their qualities – to a purely hypothetical, irrationalist-mythological construct (“emotional energy”) is also problematic in that it entirely leaves out of consideration the crucial issue of (sociological) *interpretation* (cp. Goodman 2001: 97).

According to Collins, the exclusive motivation of intellectuals (their Collinsian definition will be given at a later point of this discussion) to participate in intellectual life is the increasing of their levels of “EE”, which happens through “successful participation” in intellectual encounters taking the form of specific *interaction rituals*. “Successful participation” means above all, for Collins, *to be at the center of attention* in these “rituals”.⁴⁸ The ritual character of these encounters means that they involve the enactment of a certain number of invariants leading to the institution of typical interactive situations producing “EE”, and with it, group-solidarity. For Collins, who builds here on Goffmann, Durkheim’s religious rituals are a *specific case* of the *general ritual character of social interactions*: besides religious rituals, there is also a wealth of “*natural rituals*” composing ordinary, everyday social life (Collins 2000a: 22; 2004: 47-50). Intellectual rituals are themselves a specific case of such “natural rituals”.

According to Collins’ conceptual genesis (Collins 2000a: 22-23) – akin to Mannheim’s genealogy of the conjunctive community in “A sociological theory of culture and its knowability” –, interaction rituals build up as follows. A group of at least two people assembled physically focus their attention on a common object while sharing a common mood or emotion; in the next step, the two “become attuned into a shared rhythm”, becoming “temporarily united in a shared reality”, experiencing “a boundary or membrane between that situation and whoever is outside it”: this is the starting point of *group solidarity* (*ibid.*). However, in order to “institute” this group solidarity and to make it last, it is necessary for the two persons to transfigure the original object of attention into a *sacred object* akin to religious symbols. The source of this transfiguration is not the peculiar quality of the object itself but the relationship that it happened to foster and for which it stands thereafter. The fortune of *symbols* – their survival and the creation of new ones – depends entirely on the possibility and the will of the group-members to “reassemble periodically” in order to “worship” them – that is, in fact, to worship the group itself (*ibid.*: 23). However, the opposite also holds to a certain degree: “[s]ymbols which are sufficiently charged with feelings of membership carry the individual along certain courses of action even when the group is not present.” (*Ibid.*). Borrowing the *term* (but not the concept) from Bourdieu, Collins calls this “store of charged symbols” that the individuals bring away

⁴⁸ A proposition that triggered the incisive critical remark of Michèle Lamont (2001: 88) according to which Collins’ theory posits “as an ideal type of the self that of an other-directed high school student, who is primarily motivated by, and vies for, popularity among classmates, the ability of locating her- or himself in the middle of the ‘hot center’ of group attention”. On the related problem of Collins’ ethnocentrism, see (Hall 2000).

with them from each ritual interaction and which constitutes the “symbolic resources” based on which a group endures in time, *cultural capital* (that he abbreviates as “CC”).

The inevitability of conflict in the intellectual sphere stems from the structure of the “*attention space*” which limits the number of those contenders – both individuals in their own groups-settings and their collectives in their macro- or meso-setting – who may receive serious attention from their peers. Given that on Collins’ account humans are “emotional energy-seekers”, a competitive situation arises in which creativity – the capacity to do something relatively new or different or important – becomes the principal asset for success. The capacity of individuals to become creative depends less on personal talents than on their situation in the already ongoing intellectual process in a given network-structure, viz., on their access to “EE” and to (the right) “CC” by the frequentation of high-profile thinkers in well-working groups and networks. The “optimization” of “CC” and “EE” levels depends largely on the situation of the individual “in relation to the local social structure, the networks in which one participates” (*ibid.*: 29), that is, their *opportunity structure*.

For intellectuals, the main structural constraint in a given opportunity structure is the structure of the *attention space*, that is, the *objective possibility* for an individual or a collective performance to receive serious consideration in a given network-setting. The main characteristic of the attention space is that it is *limited*. On Collins’ account, a working attention space, that is, an attention space that gives rise to intellectual creativity, cannot provide for more than six strong positions, but declines when the number of positions lastingly falls or remains under three. This is Collins’ thesis on the trans-historical “*law of small numbers*” (*ibid.*: 30), considered by him to be the main distinctive feature of the intellectual field as compared with other social fields of interactive ritual practices. Thus, the career-fortune of an individual intellectual – carrying their “CC” and “EE” – depends mostly on the state of the attention space they are seeking to penetrate, as well as on their ability to find the right spot, moment, method, and level to enter into it and make their way in it.

What are the qualities that set apart intellectuals’ rituals from other types of interactions? The common feature of all interaction rituals is the attachment of the groups to their symbols. However, important differences can be noted in the modes and degrees of this attachment, in the nature of the symbols, as well as in the self-awareness of the members in relation to them. Collins suggests that these criteria form a continuum definable by its extremes. On the one hand, symbols can be reified and treated as if they were concrete objects or personified actors capable of agency. On Collins’ account, this configuration is typical of isolated tribes and communities. On the other end of the continuum, symbols are more abstract, and group-

members are more dispassioned vis-à-vis them. In this latter case, “encounters take place at the shifting nodes of far-flung networks, where a changing cast of characters negotiates fleeting relations with a mixture of cultural capitals.” (*Ibid.*) The latter pattern tends to “result in abstract symbols, which participants treat with detachment and reflexive awareness of their social relativity.” (*Ibid.*) Intellectual circles, closer to the latter, more open type of networks, are described by Collins as a

“peculiar combination of the intensely localistic and the detached and cosmopolitan, of Durkheimian mechanic and organic solidarity.⁴⁹ Intellectual sacred objects are created in communities which spread widely yet are turned inward, oriented toward exchange with their own members rather than outsiders, and which claim the sole right to decide reflectively on the validity of their ideas. Purely local groups such as the tribe or the circle of friends are primarily concerned with their own solidarity and identity; they do not make the kind of universalistic and transcendental claim for their symbols that intellectuals do for their ‘truth’. Intellectuals are much more reflexively and self-analytically aware of their group identity than are lay groups. Intellectuals look on themselves from the abstract standpoint of historical, philosophical, or even sociological or psychological reflection.” (*Ibid.*: 24.)

According to Collins, intellectuals can be defined also through their peculiar *performance* consisting in producing “decontextualized ideas (...) meant to be true or significant apart from any locality, and apart from anyone concretely putting them into practice.” (*Ibid.*: 19.) This process of de-contextualization – both in the sense of transcending local contexts and that of increasing the level of abstractness of thought – rests largely upon the fundamental technical possibility of *writing* (and reading). “Intellectuals are especially oriented toward the written word. Especially in the modern world (...) [i]ntellectuals tend to feel that an idea has not fully entered into their reality until it is in the system of cross-referenced books and journals which constitute the products of the intellectual community.” (*Ibid.*) Writing and reading ensure *both* the reflexive self-awareness of the community of its unity and autonomy *and* its ability and propension to expansion in time and space, that is, to transcend the boundedness of local conditions. This inseparability of the written and the spoken word is illustrated by the “key intellectual ritual, the lecture”, which is always “prepared for by reading

⁴⁹ Cp. (Mannheim 1940: 93): “the cultural elites of Western civilization have from their very origin been a fusion of the representatives of local cultures, of fixed social position, coming from the country, and of intellectuals who were not bound to any definite locality.”

a relevant background of texts (...).” This is so much the case that “[a]n intellectual IR is generally a situational embodiment of the texts which are the long-term life of the discipline. Lectures and texts are chained together: this is what makes the distinctiveness of the intellectual community, what sets it off from any other kind of social activity.” (*Ibid.*: 26-27.) Therefore, even though face-to-face rituals remain the ultimate grounding of intellectual existence, it is correct to define intellectuals as “the community uniquely oriented toward writing – those who live for the production and passing on of texts.” (*Ibid.*: 27.)

Thus, it is the written text that makes possible the phenomenon of *intellectual self-consciousness*: intellectuals recognize each other and themselves as belonging to the community of those whose essential interest is “the carrying out of a situation-transcending dialogue, linking past and future texts” (*ibid.*: 28), a dialogue in principle infinitely continuable towards the future, as well as accessible in its meaning toward the past (precisely because of its thoroughly decontextualized nature). From this follows the idea that “[t]he intellectual world is a massive conversation, circulating cultural capital in intermittent face-to-face rituals as well as in writing. What makes an intellectual is one’s attraction to this conversation (...).” (*Ibid.*: 30).

Collins’ sociology of intellectuals is *thoroughly internalist* as it asserts that the consideration of these factors is not only *necessary* but also *sufficient* to make sense of *any* singular idea or idea-complex and its development. For such an approach, any sociological interpretation of ideas addressing their meaning by relating them to “macro-social” factors (social classes, gender groups, political currents, etc.) will necessarily appear as “reductionist”. This is indeed what Collins reproaches to Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge (Collins 2000c: 117), which he identifies as an *exclusively externalist* approach, that is, an approach that leaves out of consideration the “meso” and the “micro” level of analysis when assessing the form and content of ideas. To be more precise, Collins’ objection to Mannheim is twofold: first, he points to the presumed *absence* of the internal perspective in Mannheim’s oeuvre; second, he asserts that Mannheim’s attempt to link macro to micro phenomena is “reductionist”. In the next paragraph, I will address the first objection according to which the internal perspective is entirely missing from Mannheim’s approach. In a second step, I will address the objection about the alleged “reductionism” of Mannheim’s approach.

§ 26. “Internalist” features in Mannheim’s sociology of intellectuals

The aim of this paragraph is to show that, contrary to Collins’ intimation, the internal perspective is an integral part of Mannheim’s sociology of intellectuals. The text in which

Mannheim comes the closest to the previously expounded conception of intellectuals found in Collins' writings is the *Letter from Heidelberg*, written in two parts between fall 1921 and spring 1922. As its title suggests, this piece by Mannheim is not a standard theoretical article, but a freer "epistolary essay" (Kettler–Meja 1995: 39). The choice of this literary form was dictated by the performative intention underlying Mannheim's text, which was meant to be an "intervention" in a certain intellectual space at a specific historical moment. The *Letter from Heidelberg*, published in *Tűz* ("Fire"), a Hungarian émigré journal located in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia (formerly a Hungarian city, Pozsony) can be read as an address of Mannheim to his former companions from the so-called "Sunday Circle", a lively neo-Romantic intellectual group in which Mannheim had participated from 1915 (the year of the group's inception) until 1921, the year of its dissolution (see Kettler 1971; Vezér–Karádi 1985; Gluck 1985). Gathering around the charismatic figure of György Lukács, the Sunday Circle mostly consisted of young neo-Romantic intellectuals of Budapest at the debut of their careers, several of them (Béla Balázs, Arnold Hauser, and Mannheim himself) later becoming important European intellectuals.

After the defeat of Austria-Hungary in World War I, two short-lived Republics (one bourgeois, one proletarian) took the place of the Monarchy in Hungary. Members of the initially apolitical Sunday Circle drifted toward the radical Left, with György Lukács joining the Party of Communists of Hungary. Although not involved in politics, Mannheim was known to be the protégé of György Lukács, vice-commissar in the ephemeral Hungarian Soviet Republic that replaced the bourgeois-democratic government on March 21st, 1919. A few months after the collapse of the Soviet Republic (August 1st, 1919) and the seizure of the power by the far-right, Mannheim chose the path of emigration. After some initial wanderings in Austria and Germany, he settled in Heidelberg, where he integrated the already defunct Max Weber's intellectual circle, gathering since his death around his widow, Marianne Weber.

This is the context in which Mannheim wrote his *Letter from Heidelberg*, published in two parts, in fall 1921 and spring 1922. The addressees of the letter are Mannheim's former companions from the Sunday Circle, left in Vienna and elsewhere ("the circle of those who mostly knew each another", with whom the public epistolary-essayistic exchange probably seemed to be an adequate way to keep the contact, in a situation not permitting direct encounters (Mannheim 2001b: 81). While the explicit aim of the letters was to report the actual state of mind of the kindred German intelligentsia on the basis of the exposition of the intellectual life of Heidelberg, seen as a sort of microcosm within the larger national stage, the letter also had a more implicit aim, which was to reflect critically on the past evolution of the Budapest group

and to work out new paths for the future. I believe that it is this practical-existential necessity of a confrontation with their past trajectory and an honest diagnosis of the present situation, in order to assess the future possibilities, that first drove Mannheim to the problem of the intelligentsia.

From the outset, Mannheim makes it clear that the addressees of the *Letter* are his fellow intellectuals.

“I must confess from the outset, above all, that the world under discussion here does not reflect the total cultural life of present-day Germany. From these lines, it will be possible to glean a characterization of nothing but the small, thin layer comprising progressive intellectuals in Germany today. (...) At this time – and perhaps it will some day be different – I am interested above all in the lives of those to whom I belong. We, the multitude spread all over the world, are the unique international rootless scum without ground under our feet, we who write books and who are only interested, in writing and reading, in the spirit alone. (...) When I speak of the present-day German, I am thinking, with a deliberate narrowing of meaning, only of this thin layer; and, with all my reservations and condemnations, my love turns nevertheless towards them.” (*Ibid.*: 81-84, transl. mod.)

Besides the declaration of his perspective, addressees and sympathies, this quotation also contains a description of the intellectuals which is compatible with Collins’ above-stated definition.⁵⁰ Ironically taking upon himself the qualifications vehiculated by contemporary Central and East-European anti-intellectualism (with pronounced anti-leftist and anti-semitic undertones), Mannheim ascribes two main characteristics to intellectuals.

First, as the “unique international rootless scum”, that is, as a paradoxical community set apart from the rest of society (and despised by it), but whose limits nevertheless stretch across the entire globe. The vision of the separation of the intellectuals from the rest of society is reinforced by Mannheim’s insistence on the fact that “[c]ultivation, true humanism, forms men into a new kind of stratum, cutting across the economic and other sociological classifications, shaping the most spontaneous forms of life and transporting man into an isolated world incomprehensible to others.” (*Ibid.*: 82, transl. mod.) He also adds a remark having a strong personal touch: “it always amazes me how much closer I am to those who participate in

⁵⁰ In particular with this assertion: “For intellectuals, the society which matters above all, which gives them their creative energy and is the fount and arena of their ideas, is their own social network.” (Collins 2000: 878.)

this cultivated humanism and how much closer they are to me than they or I are to those who share their nationality but are an altogether different kind of people.” (*Ibid.*: 83.)

Second, the intellectuals are defined by their one-sided interest in the spirit alone, as it manifests itself in the form of reading and writing texts. Mannheim makes this even more explicit in the following paragraph where he writes that “only those who put themselves in the service of the spirit to such an extent that it is truly located at the center of their lives, and that its presence can be felt in every expression of their lives can be assigned to this caste. This can (...) be solely decided by the criterion of whether (...) the entire form of [one’s] life gains its ultimate meaning from these qualities and activities” (*ibid.*: 82). These assertions obviously echo Collins’ previously quoted depiction of the intellectuals “as the community uniquely oriented toward writing – those who live for the production and passing on texts (...)”, as well as the assertion that “[w]hat makes one an intellectual is one’s attraction to this conversation”.

Mannheim feels compelled to turn to his fellow intellectuals because the recent historical experiences show the great extent to which social upheaval bears on the intellectuals’ consciousness and especially self-consciousness and how deep historical and social crises reinforce and reverberate the always-already existing contradictions determining intellectual life. In particular, what Mannheim seems to have observed in this process is that their distinctive sociological features make the intellectuals even more subject to the alienating effects of social dissolution than non-intellectuals. The main thread of Mannheim’s letter is thus the *social identity* of intellectuals, which is seen as fragile, opaque, and floating, especially in the current historical circumstances. It is therefore likely that the following admonition is partly directed against those members of the Sunday Circle who, as intellectuals, have committed themselves to Bolshevik politics by making themselves “satellites” to the working class (prefiguring the criticism laid out in *Ideology and Utopia* of the “class-bound” paradigms), as well as those who, on the other end of the political spectrum, have adhered to nationalist or outright racist ideologies.

“I respect the efforts (and time may eventually grant meaning to their strivings), but I simultaneously scorn the lies of those who, under national or racial catchphrases or the slogan of class-struggle, want to fulfill the romantic dream that they are one with the race or class that they programmatically represent. There is something beautiful in attempting to close the gap, but one must nevertheless both see and admit the distance, and one must also know that we too possess an almost hopeless longing, for the sake of which we struggle and with which we lull

ourselves to sleep. We want to find a home, a world, because we sense that we will find no place in this world.” (Mannheim 2001b: 83, transl. mod.)

Mannheim considers here the intellectuals through their lack of binding ties to those social formations that define the nonintellectuals’ identities; the intellectuals accordingly suffer from feelings of *insecurity*, inciting them to adopt strong and dogmatic political positions to counterbalance their lack of social belonging. Howsoever this tendency may be understandable, what intellectuals should not repudiate in any case is precisely their *homelessness*, which albeit a source of suffering, is in fact a *positive*, and maybe even the only positive, determination of their being. Yet, Mannheim does not advocate a quietist or passive attitude for the intelligentsia. To the contrary, he takes pain at dissociating himself from such tendencies, paradigmatically represented in Mannheim’s view by Stefan George and his circle of reactionary Romantic literary intellectuals. Mannheim sees the community gathering around the charismatic German poet as a “well-intentioned experiment by ‘intellectuals’, who have become isolated in present-day society, to solve the problem posed by the homelessness of the soul.” (*Ibid.*: 97.) However, pursues he,

“[t]heir solution is that of shutting their eyes. In order to lull themselves to sleep with the feeling that they have found a grounding, they seclude themselves, wrap themselves in the contents of culture and – omitting the world from their objects – they alienate themselves in their selves. The haven of life sheltered by the hills of Heidelberg convinces them that they exist, that they are effective and important, but it takes only a small storm – and they are the symbols of a bygone age.” (*Ibid.*: 97, transl. mod.)

It is plausible that, behind the explicit object of criticism – George and his followers –, there lies a more implicit target: the attitude characteristic of the Sunday Circle toward socio-political and historical reality during the First World War (before the politicization of the members in 1918, some of them drifting to the far-right and others to the far-left), which most of them opposed but none of them managed to confront practically. It is this quietist attitude of the intellectual, alienated from worldly affairs – that resonates with some characteristics of the self-sufficient Benda-type humanist intellectual – that Mannheim now identifies in the behavior-pattern of the Georgians and that he explicitly urges to overcome. No nostalgia taints Mannheim’s relation to his past: he is decided to develop alternatives for intellectuals to live and act in this world, without losing their specificity in favor of other social groups they identify

with. Seen from a developmental point of view, the *Letter of Heidelberg* is thus the first stage of Mannheim's tribulation between the Scylla of the identification with specific social groups (class-bound approaches) and the Charybdis of integral intellectual autonomy (class-in-themselves approaches).

Having equally rejected these two extremes, Mannheim suggests tackling the issue by enacting what could be called a *conversion of the attention of the intellectuals toward themselves*. The attention must be redirected, first, from what the intellectuals consider to be their objects *par excellence* – the contents of Humanist culture –, and second, from that with which they incline to identify themselves under external pressure – race, nation, class. Instead, the attention should be turned toward what both the revolutionary and the reactionary intellectuals seem to avoid: *themselves*. I believe that this is the background for the “program” of the *Letter from Heidelberg*: the description of “how those anointed or victimized by the spirit live in Germany after war and revolution. What occupies them, what moves them, what lulls them to sleep, what is happening in them and to them, where is this narrow world moving?” (*Ibid.*: 83.) As this is not the place to follow Mannheim's descriptions in detail, I shall concentrate on his *method* and *objects* of study in order to verify my contention that his definitions of intellectuals indeed drive him toward – if only in a sketchy, programmatic and literary-essayistic manner – an internal sociology of intellectuals in keeping with the one expounded in Collins' book.

Proceeding from the outside in, Mannheim's *Letter* describes three distinct levels of a cross-segment of German intellectual life. First, he characterizes the latter's overall structure and dynamism as a play between tendencies to centralization and decentralization, as well as by a certain effervescent atomization of intellectual life, disintegrated into a series of “-isms” carried by self-styled “prophets” (*ibid.*: 84-88). Furthermore, in these pages Mannheim tries to assess the concrete effects of this structure and dynamism on the outlook of intellectual products as well as on the personality and behavior-patterns of the intellectuals, while at the same time pointing to the necessity felt by many, though not carried out yet by anybody, for a synthesis of this chaotic richness (echoing Collins' “law of small numbers”). At a second stage of his description, Mannheim turns to the singular yet representative case of Heidelberg, whose intellectual life, he asserts, can be grasped and measured by the poles of the antagonism that determines it: on the one hand, a group mainly constituted by progressive, protestant academics, gathering in the already defunct Max Weber's circle; on the other hand, a group of literary intellectuals verging towards a conservative, right-wing Catholicism, led by the poet Stefan George (*ibid.*: 90-92). After having outlined their mutual relationships, in a third and last step,

Mannheim sketches a rudimentary typology of the types of intellectual communities based on the socializing effects of differing types of “CCs” and “EEs” (to speak in Collins’s terms) (*ibid.*: 92-93). He then goes on to give a closer analysis of George’s circle – the projected next letters, never written, would have likely been concerned with a similar description of the Weber-circle –, as a spiritual-aristocratic community, gathering around specific sacred objects – the contents of Humanist culture as their symbolic capital, or “CC”, to speak again as Collins – and tied together by the “religious charisma” of Stefan George (*ibid.*: 93-97).

Whatever one may think of the scientific value of Mannheim’s epistolary essay, it seems sensible to say that it represents a venture into the internal sociology of intellectuals as Collins understands it, for instance when he describes the changing material bases of intellectual life and its structure, the relations of rivalry between schools of thought within networks, the typical, different institutional organizations of mental production, and so forth. However, the *Letter from Heidelberg* is neither the only nor the last work of Mannheim that features an internal perspective on the sociology of intellectuals. Another significant text in this respect is Mannheim’s posthumous essay from the early 1930s, “The Problem of the Intelligentsia”, whose explicit aim is “to provide a possible pattern for studies of concrete groups of intellectuals, present or historical.” (Mannheim 2003b: 122.). Again, without going into detail, I will single out a few elements that support my contention according to which, contrary to the claims of Collins (and the NSI), the internalist perspective is not missing from Mannheim’s sociology of intellectuals.

Against certain simplistic criticisms (for e.g., Gross 2002: 56), this essay makes clear, first, that Mannheim did not consider the class-position of the intellectuals as the only relevant factor for the sociology of intellectuals. The class-position of the intellectual – envisioned in a broad and dynamic way as “upward and downward mobility” – is only one of the four guiding questions Mannheim lists for the sociology of intellectuals (Mannheim 2003b: 122-123). Of course, social background, class and political affiliation remain central in Mannheim’s perspective, but they are complemented by other viewpoints: the *form and structure of the groups* in which intellectuals perform and the *larger aggregations* in which these groups develop. The first issue – the impact of the group-forms on ideation – is treated by Mannheim on almost twenty pages detailing the historical variations of intellectual organizations ranging from the German “*Bauhütte*” – masonic fraternities –, “scops” – Germanic poets –, itinerant minstrels, troubadours and minnesingers, through medieval clergy, humanist circles, court-clerisy, salons, coffee-houses and clubs. These developments drive Mannheim to the following consideration.

“Between the compact, caste-like organization and the open and loose group, there are numerous intermediate types of aggregations in which intellectuals may range themselves. Their mutual contacts are often informal, but the small, intimate group forms the most frequent pattern. It has played an eminently catalytic role in the formation of common attitudes and thought currents. (...) [T]he special moulds of intellectual amalgamation furnish a significant basis for the understanding of the roles which the educated strata of a society play, and from case to case, they even throw light on the prevalent style of expression and the mentality which the more articulate elements of society evolve.” (*Ibid.*: 123-124, 142.)

The second aspect – the larger institutional milieu in which the groups act – is treated by Mannheim under the term of the “social habitat” of the intellectual. What Mannheim is looking for here is the impact on ideation of the *larger social settings* in which intellectuals – taken as always-already belonging to intellectual groups – perform their tasks. According to an example provided by Mannheim, “the international style of the cathedrals was due to the migration of stonemasons and architects and the far-flung network of the Church. This network and the identical doctrine constitute the social habitat of the clerics, and not their place of residence or social background [i.e., their class-position – G.T.]” (*Ibid.*: 156-157.) According to Mannheim, other types of “social habitats” – some localistic, others more urban-cosmopolitan – also influence thinking, albeit in different ways. From this, the allegedly “class-reductionist” Mannheim draws the conclusion that, “[m]ore generally, it is the social habitat of the intellectual, rather than his class or residence, which offers a clue to his ideation (...)” (*Ibid.*, 157.)

A third significant textual proof that Mannheim’s sociology of intellectuals did definitely not lack consideration of the factors set forth by the internalist approach of Collins (and the NSI) is an undated, one-page hand-written document, retrieved by David Kettler from Mannheim’s Keele-archives.⁵¹ The document holds the title “Scheme for the representation of the career of individuals (Problem of the Intelligenzia)”. The text in the brackets – “Problem of the Intelligenzia” (*sic!*) – likely refers to Mannheim’s eponymous essay from the early 1930s, whose themes it develops further. Since it was written in English, the document must have been redacted after Mannheim’s emigration to England (1934). The document speaks for

⁵¹ I warmly thank David Kettler for letting me get an insight into copies of these materials.

itself in the sense that the class-position of intellectuals is mentioned as but *one* among *eleven* factors having an impact on ideation:

“Scheme for the representation of the career of individuals (Problem of the *Intelligentzia*)

1. Origin: (stock, district, family, social position of the father)
2. Curve of social rise: (kind of career, kind of obstacles, sudden or gradual rise, or cause of fall)
3. Generation: (typical experiences and situations of persons of the same age; subgroups and divisions of the generation; relationship to previous generations)
4. Factors of selection: (selection through performance or through patronage or through the Possession of money.
5. Social contacts: (membership of cliques, small groups, political or social movements. Contact through this with people from the same or from other strata.
- 5a. Passive or active, leading role in a circle.
6. *Intelligentzia* type (belonging to relatively “free” or to official, to mobile or to locally and traditionally bound *intelligentzia*
7. Marriage: (marriage at the same level or mesalliance. Importance for social position and career.
8. Stabilisation or change of front: (preservation of the same leading ideas and views or change? Does a change of the circles, with which the person has intercourse correspond to the change of views?
9. Efficacy: a. Relationship to institutions. b. The composition of the public which is effectively reached. Dependence on this public c. Friends, scholar, opponents.
10. Maecenas (patron), institutions, personal relations, personal contacts.
11. Simple change of ideologies, changes in mentality, attitudes, changes in conduct – Transformation” (from: David Kettler’s papers).

Although further textual proofs could be cited in favor of my thesis, I do not think that much more needs to be added to make plausible the claim that Mannheim’s sociology of intellectuals cannot be reduced to the straw man of a simplistic, reductive external sociology of knowledge exclusively oriented to the ideological impact of hypostasized macro-level social phenomena.⁵² Nevertheless, this does not mean that there are no real and profound divergences

⁵² Consider, for instance, in light of what precedes, the following statement by Gross: “In contrast to Marx and Engels, Mannheim and neo-Mannheimian ‘standpoint’ theorists like Smith, who all view thinkers’ identities and

between Mannheim's and Collins' (and the NSI's) respective enterprises. The essential thing is to situate this difference at the right place and to comprehend its real nature. It should be obvious from what precedes that the divergence does *not* lie in the lack of an internalist point of view in Mannheim's sociology of intellectuals. The accusation should rather be returned against Mannheim's critics: as a matter of fact, besides having developed all the necessary ingredients of an internal sociology of ideas, Mannheim *also* vindicates something else, which Collins and the NSI, for reasons yet to be investigated, cannot or do not want to accept. To understand what this "something" is, I will now turn to a critical investigation of Collins' theory, by enquiring into the meaning and the well-foundedness of his argument according to which the problem with Mannheim's sociology of knowledge is its alleged *reductionism* – a pitfall Collins himself thinks to avoid thanks to his "two (or three) layers of causality model".

§ 27. The fallacy of the reductionism-argument and the function of Collins' model of two (or three) layers of causality

What exactly does Collins mean when he charges Mannheim with "reductionism"? Since Collins is an integral determinist who believes that a few trans-historical factors causally determine the form and content of ideas, he cannot mean by reductionism the fact of committing the "genetic fallacy". Indeed, Collins' criticism has a different bent. His objection can be broken down to two points. First, economic and political reality are *too remote* from the intellectual world to be able to determine it. Second, and conversely, "[i]t is the *inner structure* of these intellectual networks which shapes ideas, by their patterns of vertical chains across the generations and their horizontal alliances and oppositions." (Collins 1998: 2, italics added).⁵³

interests as tied to their memberships in major social groups, my theory regards thinkers' intellectual self-concepts as discoverable only through individual-level empirical research and not restricted to their identities as members of such groups." (Gross 2002: 56.) Apart from the fact that Dorothy Smith's referred work (*The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of knowledge*) has simply nothing to do with Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, of the eleven points of the above-quoted unpublished document, there is not a single one that asserts that the intellectuals' interests and identities are linked to their "memberships in major social groups". Instead, the document stresses the necessity to take into consideration a whole array of the most diverse empirically testable criteria. Gross' criticism is quite simply what contemporary rhetoric names a "hollow man argument".

⁵³ Another argument, made in a later text, is seemingly more "permissive" towards "externalist" explanations. It does not plainly deny that there can be some measure of "influence" of the larger social reality on ideation, but it minimizes its impact by stating that *this type of influence concerns virtually everybody* and thus does not say

Thus, the problem Collins has with Mannheim's sociology of knowledge is not that it reduces ideas to sociological factors (which, as I have shown in Chapter 3, is not the case anyway), since this is exactly what Collins himself does, but that Mannheim does not reduce them to the *right* sociological factors.

Collins devises what he calls his "model of three (sometimes only two) layers of causality" precisely to explain what role the different social factors play in determining the form and content of ideas. Collins' model distinguishes three distinct levels of social reality, to which correspond three "layers of causality", which coincide in turn with the three levels of sociological inquiry, the "macro/meso/micro" tripartition.

"There are three layers of causality: (1) economic-political structures, which in turn shape (2) the organizations which support intellectual life; and these in turn allow the buildup of (3) networks among participants in centers of attention on intellectual controversies, which constitute the idea-substance of intellectual life. Economic-political conditions determine ideas not directly but by way of shaping, and above all by changing, the intermediate level, the organizational basis of intellectual production." (Collins 2000a: 324.)

This model proposes an image of the world of the mind as a system of filtering compartments communicating exclusively with their *immediate neighbors*, and exclusively in a *top-down* fashion (ideas do not influence social structure, only the opposite way around). For Collins, there is no *direct* causation of ideas by macro- or by meso-structures (albeit the situation seems a bit more complicated in the latter instance than in the former). The only direct influence comes from the micro-level of interaction ritual encounters taking place in the reference-groups of intellectuals. When Collins says that the macro-structures (economic, political, etc.) are "too remote" to have demonstrable effects on thinking, he means that these effects are *so much filtered through* and so thoroughly transformed by the second, institutional,

anything about the peculiarity of intellectual life itself. As he writes, "what makes ideas important among intellectuals is not what is already widely believed in larger communities, but what is new and distinctive in their own field of argument." (Collins 2002: 48.) However, this argument is problematic. To my knowledge, no Marxist – or, for that matter, non-Marxist – has asserted that the dominant ideology exerts the *same* effects in *every* part of the social body. Ideologies, as worldviews, are refracted according to the inegalitarian and oppressive social divisions of class, race, gender, generations, etc., which they are called upon to perpetuate, to ensure the stability of the dominant order. Dominant ideologies affect and structure the intellectual dynamics of society in various, differentiated and contradictory ways: though they do indeed affect everybody, they do certainly not affect everybody *in the same way*, as Collins seems to surmise.

and the third, network layers, that they become *unrecognizable*, if not altogether inexistent, as properly macro-effects on thinking. As a matter of fact, *Collins' model does not at all allow macro factors to affect ideation-processes*. Macro-structures are interesting only insofar as they shape the “meso”, institutional level of intellectual life (monasteries, academies, schools, universities, etc.), that they occasionally use and abuse for their own, political purposes (this is the death of intellectual life, according to Collins). In turn, “meso” structures are relevant only to the extent that they lie down the infrastructure in which intellectual groups – always having the exact same structure across several thousand years of history and across all possible cultures in the past, present, and future – spontaneously emerge in order to think “abstractly” and “reflexively”. *What* will be thought at this level and *how* is determined by the trans-historical factors listed above in § 25, and these are totally independent of either the macro or the meso level.

Of course, Collins is aware of the phenomenon of “ideological thinking”, which endangers the thesis of the purity and self-contained character of high-level thinking. To respond to this challenge, he envisions *two* possible types of causal relationship between macro and micro-level phenomena. The first is an *indirect* and therefore a *healthy* one: “Political and economic changes bring ascendancy or decline of the material institutions which support intellectuals; religion, monasteries, schools, and publishing markets rise and fall with these external forces. Intellectuals then readjust to fill the space available to them.” (Collins 2000a: 380.) Behind this idea stands the conviction that, if “major political and religious upheavals do have an effect on intellectual life”, it is only to the extent that “the inner networks that monopolize the attention space of the most sophisticated accumulation of abstract concepts are realigned when their material bases are upset, and that tends to happen in political crises.” (Collins 2000b: 308.) The second scenario comes about when these upheavals or political crises attain a critical level, disturbing and *directly* intervening in the functioning of the inner lawfulness of the intellectual networks. This is the moment of the appearance of the figure of the *intellectual-ideologue* turned toward lay audiences and selling his ideational capacities to the highest bidder (*ibid.*). Intellectuals are thus *either* thoroughly self-contained, completely cut off from the practical concerns of the larger surrounding society – and this is the authentic condition of intellectuals when they are “creative” –, or they are subjugated and sold out to “lay concerns”, incapable of seriously thinking deep and abstract ideas. As one critic has put it, in Collins' conception, “external forces are seen as a distraction or an aberration.” (Hall 2000: 205.) No middle-ground, synthesis, or fruitful blending of the two forms of causality are imaginable for Collins.

With his three (or two) layers of causality model, Collins manages to disconnect the larger social realm from intellectual activity proper by introducing heterogeneous hierarchical levels ensuring that the larger social world influences only “second-class thinking” (the practical one, turned towards “lay audiences”), not the “first-class” one (the purely ethereal, theoretical one, interested only in “Truth” as such). Hence, between “first-class thinking” on the one hand, and political, economic and other larger social processes on the other, one finds a relation strangely resembling the one established by Scheler between “real factors” and “ideal factors”. Indeed, in a way similar to Collins, Scheler held that one cannot “explain th[e] ideal world from the world of real history” because “the history of real factors does not at all determine the positive meaning-content of works of mind, though it does hinder, release, delay or hasten [their] development”, opening and closing “the sluices of the spiritual stream” (Scheler [1924] 1980: 41-42, 53-54, cited in Camic 2001: 8144). Hence, the following summary of Scheler’s theory by Mannheim applies equally well to the conceptions of Collins.

“Mind is a factor of ‘determination’, not of ‘realization’. That is, what works can be created by a culture is determined by mind alone, by virtue of its inner structure; but what actually *gets* created depends on the particular combination of the *real* factors prevailing at the time. Thus, the function of the real factors is to make a selection among the possibilities made available by Mind. (...) Power constellations in politics, production control relationships in economy, follow their determined way in a robot-like fashion; they are subject to ‘an evolutionary causality blind to all meaning’ (...). Human mind can at most block or unblock but never alter them. (...) As a result of this, the separation, and the abstract immanence of the ‘mental’, remain unchallenged (...).” (Mannheim 1971b: 84-85.)

Of course, Collins, as an integral determinist, is not a Schelerian, quite the contrary: he goes much farther in reductionism than the “vulgar Marxists” once combated by Scheler. He is “Schelerian” only to the extent that he treats the socio-historical macro context in the way Scheler treats the “real factors”. In Scheler, “real factors” have an effect on the “objective spirit”, but not the “absolute” spirit; in Collins, “macro factors” have an effect on “second-class” but not on “first-class” thinking. Genuine intellectual activity occurs in a kind of “supralunar world” where any interference with the “sublunar world” is *a priori* excluded by the *buffer-zone* constituted by the institutional meso-level (at least in favorable historical conditions). Thereby, Collins surreptitiously transforms the “outer layer” of causality into an

external realm homologous to the “real factors” of Scheler, alien in essence to the intellectual world.

This implies that between the two there is strictly no *meaningful* relationship: the struggles happening in the “external realm”, devoid of genuine spirituality and intelligence, appear from the point of view of the Mind as blind natural forces, with Mannheim’s words, “like a sea of flames surrounding the eternal entities. The flames may rise or subside; they may approach the entities or recede from them, and the rhythm of their movement, imposed by destiny, is shrouded in mystery; all we know is that some periods get closer to the entities than others.” (*Ibid.*: 92.) The intellectuals in turn, whom these “natural social phenomena” befall with complete fortuitousness, seem to exist within society with the naturality of animals or plants, functionless, like Meister Eckhardt’s rose, “without why”. Having suffered the “natural catastrophes of history”, this resilient species rebuilds its nests and thrives again – until the next “natural catastrophe” happens, and so forth till the end of times.

Consequently, what was for the “old” sociology of knowledge the problem of *mediation* between “mind” and “society” becomes in Collins the instrument of their *segregation*. The two (or three) steps causal model turns out to be the instrument with which the *intermediary structures*, considered by Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge as the key to “uncover and articulate those acts of sociation which are inherent in, but not revealed by, the communication of ideas” (Mannheim 2003a: 44), are transmuted into a meso-level institutional *buffer-zone* or *border wall*. These now stand between those “action contexts” whose impact on thinking the “new sociologist of ideas” is ready to accept (his own academic milieu), and those that he wishes to exclude from consideration on *a priori* grounds. Eventually, Collins’ model results in what may be called a *group-immanent sociological interpretation of mental phenomena*, which functionalizes the latter exclusively on the social group of its *immediate producers* – the “intellectuals” understood in a certain way –, while rejecting, with the help of idealist arguments evoking Scheler, to pursue the sociological work in direction of macro-social phenomena.

§ 28. Intellectual discourse as a purely communicative process: the meaning of “decontextualization” in Collins’ theory

What conception of intellectual discourse and identity corresponds to a sociology of ideas arbitrarily stopping short at the limits of the immediate institutional habitat of intellectuals? To answer this question, one has to pay attention to an assertion made by Collins

in the first pages of his book, whose importance contrasts with the nonchalance of its enunciation: to know what an *intellectual* is, Collins says, one has to turn to the figure of the *philosopher*, since his is the “archetypal intellectual role” (Collins 2000a: xviii). Although Collins never justifies and explains this claim, its meaning and function become clearer in light of his conception of *philosophy*, which is, for Collins, the *production of decontextualized ideas*, clustered essentially in epistemology, logic and metaphysics, and to a lesser degree in normative sub-disciplines such as political and social philosophy, ethics and aesthetics. Consequently, *intellectuals* are defined as *producers of decontextualized ideas*.

What are *decontextualized* ideas? Since Collins does not give a definition, one has to conjecture its possible meanings and to hypothesize on the one fitting Collins’ views. Starting from the analysis of the word itself, “de-contextualization” is the process by which the *meaning* and *validity* of an idea become *detached* from its *context* of emergence. This typically takes the form of a *generalizing* process, as is the case, for example, with the creation of practical concepts, as in Mannheim’s theory of the conjunctive concept. Yet, there is also another sense of decontextualization: *universalization*, in which the meaning of an idea is detached from *any* particular context to become valid in *all* of them ($2+2=4$ is Mannheim’s favorite example of a “truth” not linked to any particular context, yet valid in all of them). This second sense is the one toward which Collins’ theory verges. In this perspective, a decontextualized idea coincides with what Mannheim called a *communicative concept*, one whose meaning and truth-value can be assessed *without recourse to any sort of contextual understanding*. What are the presuppositions and implications of such a notion?

This question drives back to the modern discourse over the possibility of a *purely conceptual philosophical language* (see above, Chapter 3, § 15). A pure philosophical language would contain *only clearly and distinctly defined concepts*, according to the first rule of Descartes’ *Discourse on Method*, that is, no *figurative elements*, depreciated as “residues” or “relics” in humanity’s way from *mythos* to *logos* (Blumenberg 2010: 10). With Mannheim’s words, the ideal of the pure philosophical language posits “a timeless conceptual level upon which every concept which occurs would have its place, would secure its unambiguous meaning and its contents from the other components, and would be defined once and for all through its relationship to these others.” (Mannheim 1982b: 196.) In this case, and only in this case, could philosophy pretend to have realized the thorough decontextualization, i.e., universalization, of its language: only in such a state of affairs would “[e]verything subject to assertion (...) be identical for everyone in every assertion of it; and the concept thus universally valid in two

ways: referable to all objects of the same kind (...), and valid for all subjects who will ever utter it (...)." (*Ibid.*)

Against this ideal of a purely communicative language, there stands the counter-ideal driving Mannheim's theory of the conjunctive concept, involving that there will always be figurative elements in philosophical discourse impossible to translate in universal-conceptual language (Mannheim 1971a: 40-42; Mannheim 1971c: 231-32). Mannheim perceives the ideal of full conceptual universalization as a symbolic aggression having its political counterpart in the capitalist functional rationalization of the lifeworld. For him, context-bound, figurative elements of discourse are not, as in Descartes' program of logicization, residues and provisional features to be gradually eliminated by conceptual work, but – to use Blumenberg's words – a "catalytic sphere from which the universe of concepts continually renews itself, without thereby converting and exhausting this founding reserve." (Blumenberg 2010: 11.) An essential feature of such conjunctive concepts – what Blumenberg calls "absolute metaphors" (*ibid.*) – is that they cannot be dissolved in universal concepts without a loss of meaning. In other terms, contrary to the Cartesian "universal" concept, they carry with them references to human experiences within singular life-situations and are always indexed to a certain place, time and perspective. While this obviously precludes them from claiming universal validity, it does not rule out the possibility of them having *general* validity, which means that they have the power to provide *practical orientation* for action for persons in different but analogous existential situations.

Collins' definition of philosophy as the production of decontextualized ideas suggests that his views correspond to the Cartesian, "logocentric" tradition in Western thinking. This is congruent with Collins' inclination to re-enact some of the basic features of the traditional, academic-institutional history of concepts, which is mostly rooted in Cartesian presuppositions. Two of Collins' critics have made this point against him: while Fabiani remarked that both the traditional "immanent" history of ideas and Collins' sociology of philosophy tend to see philosophy "as a permanent and homogeneous intellectual reality throughout history" (Fabiani 2000: 108), Camic questions Collins' postulation "that philosophical eminence can be measured by 'how many pages of discussion [individual philosophers] receive in various histories of philosophy' (as if such histories are impartial recordings, rather than social constructions in their own right), (...)" and the related tendency to assume that original thinkers who have acquired eminence have done so mainly as a result of their ideas (as if reputations and canons are built on intellectual grounds alone)." (Camic 2000: 102.) In short, both authors point to the fact that Collins' sociology of philosophies strenghtens the classical image the

immanent history of philosophy has of thinking as a self-identical, decontextualized, trans-historical activity, marked by the alternance between periods of intense and high-level reflexivity and abstractness on the one hand, and periods of stagnation and insignificance, on the other.

At the same time, it is obvious that Collins' sociological method, by presenting ideas as a mechanical result of the interplay of a handful of trans-historical sociological factors, breaches the most elemental exegetical rules of the immanent method of textual interpretation, namely the injunction to interpret the meaning of ideas only on the basis of the meaning of other ideas (cp. Mannheim 1971f: 124-25). How is it then possible to arrive from radically "non-immanentist" (sociological-deterministic) *premises* to results so perfectly in phase with "immanentist" *conclusions*? I believe that the answer lies in the already mentioned fact that, with the support of his model of two (or three) layers of causality, Collins artificially restricts the scope of sociological interpretation to micro-level social phenomena, contenting himself with showing that "philosophical truth" is an object construed within networks of competing philosophical communities in the course of transhistorical ritual activities, thereby excluding any other kind of social, political, economic factors. By virtue of this ambiguous halfway-solution, Collins operates a peculiar – because benign – kind of "sociological debunking" vis-à-vis the philosophical community: he shows philosophers that what they believe to be the immanence of (the history of) ideas (the illusion that "ideas beget ideas") is in fact the *sociologically naïve yet true expression of the consciousness of their detachment from the social world outside their esoteric circles*. One could say in a sense that Collins offers a sociological critique of "immanentist" reason by showing its implicit sociological conditions of possibility (see in this sense Collins 2000a: 878).

This reasoning allows for the following answer to the question of the meaning of decontextualization in Collins. Philosophical ideas are decontextualized in his theory to the extent that their meaning is accessible without any reference to social contexts transcending the limits of intellectual circles and their institutional bases. However, they are not decontextualized in the radical sense of the utopian ideal of pure, universal philosophical language and knowledge (the ideal of the idealist tradition).

§ 29. Collins' conception of intelligence

What notions of *intellectual* and *intellectual knowledge* correspond to the idea of philosophy as a purely communicative discourse (in Mannheim's sense)? To answer this

question, I will take as a point of departure a certain number of objections addressed to Collins' *Sociology of Philosophies* by reviewers, and Collins' answers to them. His critics recurrently (and rightfully) object to Collins' dismissal of the possibility of "external" factors bearing on the meaning of philosophical ideas. They make the point that, since philosophers are living social beings who participate vicariously in cultural, economic and political life, it is hard to imagine that these connections do not have any influence on the shape and content of their ideas. According to Camic (2000: 101), Collins' notion of intellectual life is thus exaggeratedly "ethereal" and naively mirrors the self-conception of a certain kind of man of letters. Another criticism by Fuller (2000), reformulated in the first person by Collins, states that "by adopting the insulated, professionalized self-conception of contemporary philosophers, I privilege their internal concerns with abstraction and reflexivity, and leave out of consideration their participation in the social conflicts and policies of their time." (Collins 2000b: 307.) Or, as another critic (Hall 2000), also cited by Collins, has put it: "philosophers were often linked to practical politics and hence their ideas should be connected to the 'real social experiences to which they refer'." (Collins 2000b: 307.) More pointedly, another author (Bunge 2000) – whose words are summarized again in the first person by Collins – remarked that "I did not pay enough attention to certain kinds of intellectuals, Macchiavelli, Beccaria, other political thinkers, lawyers, historians, social scientists." (Collins 2000: 307.)

Although these critics accurately diagnose the absence of the dimension of social and political praxis in Collins' definition of intellectuals, their arguments fail to deal a real blow to Collins' position. The ease and elegance with which Collins navigates amid their objections without being really affected by them, and above all without being compelled to go to the root of the problem they pinpoint, is an indication of a fundamental shortcoming of these criticisms. Collins' answer to them consists in their partial acceptance, while at the same time neutralizing their charge by reducing them to the issues of *extensiveness* and *disciplinary specialization*.

"I could [indeed] have constructed the networks *more widely* to include such thinkers [the "political intellectuals" – G.T.]; this would have meant taking a *wider selection* of texts identified with *disciplines other than* what is now *philosophy*. (...) I would welcome future scholars to *extend* the network method to these and *other kinds of intellectuals*. I contend that the *network dynamics would be the same*, although the *shapes* of some of these networks will differ (thus producing the differing lineups of conflicts and alliances which shaped the distinctive contents of political thought, sociological thought, etc.)." (Collins 2000b: 302, italics added.)

I believe that the reason why Collins can so easily neutralize his opponents' arguments is that the critics' choice of their point of attack – which is indeed of strategical importance – somehow happens to undermine their own position, without them being aware of it, but with their opponent seeing through the situation. The result is a *weakened* attack, easily repelled by Collins. The point of attack in question – the essence of the critics' objections – is the phenomenon of *intellectual intervention* (for this concept see Eyal–Buchholz 2010, discussed in detail below in Chapter 7, § 49), considered since the Dreyfus Affair by the sociological canon as a *definitory feature of intelligence*, a feature manifestly missing from Collins' account of intellectual life. Intellectual intervention means that, by virtue of a dominant social convention, certain persons and groups of persons – “the intellectuals” – are deemed entitled to intervene in particular political conflicts in order to give general rules for orientation for the public, provided that this activity is accomplished from the standpoint and in the defense of “universal values” (and not of partisan interests).

The peculiarity of Collins' notion of intellectuals, which comes under criticism by the reviewers of the *Sociology of Philosophies*, is that “*intervention*” is not a part of it. Of course, Collins does not deny that intellectual interventions do occur *empirically*. But he considers, first, that *intervention* has, in general, either insignificant or straightforwardly dire consequences for the intellectual, and second, that it has in fact *nothing to do with intellectual work proper* (see Collins 2011). As a matter of fact, Collins believes that the hermetic isolation from larger social concerns – i.e., non-intervention – is expressly a condition of possibility to produce genuine philosophical, that is, archetypically intellectual knowledge. For Collins, intellectual intervention, even if successful, can only *divert* the philosophers from their abstract, self-centered activity, and in any case does add nothing to it (*ibid.*).

One could also formulate this by saying that, whereas, for Benda, the treason of the intellectuals consisted in them embracing *particular* causes instead of defending *universal* ideals, for Collins “treason” occurs already in the very act of the intellectual embracing *any* ideal – universal or not – other than the “ideal” of the self-sufficient production of “true” ideas within secluded intellectual networks (which does not exclude that intellectuals will engage in worldly affairs in order to secure the kind of institutional structure making possible their seclusion). In this sense, Collins' concept of intellectuals is the plain *negation* of the very grounds on which all the different and conflicting versions of the sociology of intellectuals have been standing since the foundation of the field at the beginning of the 20th century. The relation

between Collins' approach and the canonical representation of intellectual life is one of *incompatibility*. This is obviously the point that upsets most of Collins' critics.

How, then, is it possible that the critics could not make this incompatibility explicit and altogether reject Collins' theoretical assumptions? My hypothesis – which I will expound in more detail in Chapter 7 – is that their failure resides in their inability or unwillingness to challenge the *elitist conception of intellectuality* underlying *both* the Dreyfussian *and* the Collinsian definitions of intellectuals. Indeed, Collins' critics – especially Fuller, Hall and Bunge –, despite their laudable conviction of the social responsibility of the “man of letters”, keep seeing intellectual activity “as beholden to a specific type of activity (thinking), an extraordinary kind of person (the intellectual), and a particular habitat (the world of letters), reflect[ing] a strikingly limited conception of what intellectual life is, may, or can be, a restricted sense of where intellectual life can be found, or made, and a puzzlingly stereotyped shortlist of potential candidates for the role.” (Fatsis 2016: 2.) Both Collins and his critics continue to “treat intellectuals as a species apart, rising above ordinary citizens who ostensibly lack the ability, capacity, skills, and wherewithal to think, act, or debate as intellectuals.” (*Ibid.*: 11.)

It is this elitism inherent in most of the canonical images of intellectuals that weakens the impact of the above criticisms directed against Collins and compels well-intentioned authors to perceive intellectual commitment and intervention as an *additional potentiality* that the intellectual, who implicitly remains defined by the *social roles* conventionally labeled as “intellectual”, can (or should) “*activate*” in certain conditions. There is an “intellectual-in-itself”, a secluded and self-centered figure, who *also* has the *potential* to become a “committed intellectual” (a potentiality *recognized* but *devalued* by Collins). In such a conception, political thinkers, lawyers, historians, social scientists, etc., as well as socially or politically engaged intellectuals in general, continue to be perceived implicitly as producers of abstract, reflexive and decontextualized ideas, who distinguish themselves from the archetype only in that they *also* happen to step into public/political life, thus creating the figure of the “public intellectual”, as a *subaltern subcategory* of the genuine figure of the contemplative “generic intellectual”.

Obviously, this situation will remain if the idea of what it means to be an intellectual will be modeled on those privileged and conventionally determined *social roles, statuses, competences* and *levels of knowledge* that are commonly associated with the term “intellectual”. Unless a wholly new notion of intelligence is created, the “committed intellectual” (the one who “intervenes”) will be apprehended, despite all the good intentions of socially responsible theoreticians, as a *sub-species*, as a *modus*, or a *potentiality*, of the “intellectual-in-itself”, “a

figure whose identity, role, place, mode, and manner of speaking are by definition at a certain social distance from the public sphere it is called upon to address.” (*ibid.*: 9.) In sum, to make “intervention” the truly central feature of intelligence, a radical *democratization* of the notion of intellectual must be carried out in the first place – an issue to be explored in detail in Chapter 7 of this dissertation.

For the time being, the question I wish to address is how the internalist conception of intellectual (*in*)*action* impacts the notion of intellectual *knowledge*? As I mentioned, the canon of the sociology of intellectuals takes “intervention” as a category constitutive of the intellectual role (Eyal–Buchholz 2010; Charle 2015). Insofar as the intellectual’s intervention is an *epistemic* action – a proposition based on Foucault’s definition of the intellectual as “the person who uses his knowledge, his competence and his relation to truth in the field of political struggles” (Foucault 2000: 128) –, this has direct consequences for the nature of intellectual knowledge.

First, since “intervention” implies transcending the limits of a given field of action toward another, the knowledge this move involves cannot be esoteric, neither in the sense of the highly specialized knowledge of the expert, inaccessible to laymen, nor in the sense of the highly abstract philosophical discourse uttering universal truths comprehensible only to the community of the utterer (members of philosophical networks). In other terms, this sort of knowledge must come about in a *transferable* form and speak to persons and groups living in *different action-contexts*.

Second, since intervention seeks practical effects, the validity of the knowledge it involves cannot be conceived on the model of the validity of universal laws of physics, which determine everyone’s life whether one is aware of it or not. The general validity of intellectual ideas includes their *effectivity*, or at least the *possibility* of their effectivity: the intellectual character of an idea depends on its social recognition *as* intellectual idea, though not in a purely *theoretical* act of recognition but through the *practical behaviors and attitudes* the enactment of such an idea entails. In other words, an idea does not become “intellectual” merely because it is “true”: it must also have the potential and the claim to *make people act* according to its *normative* and *transcontextual* content. In sum, the canon of the sociology of intellectuals, for which intervention is a central category, holds that intellectual knowledge must be transcontextual and able to orient the actions and behaviors of individuals situated in different social locations (Konrád–Szelényi 1979).

What can be said about Collins’ conception of intellectual knowledge with respect to these two fundamental tenets of “intellectual knowledge”? Is the knowledge of his

“intellectuals” trans-contextual? Is it able to serve as the basis of any meaningful intervention in the perspective of orienting social behavior? Instead of giving a straightforward answer to these interrogations, I suggest listening first to what Collins has to say on the matter. My own answer will then be given through the criticism of Collins’ proposition.

On Collins’ account, the answer to these questions is positive: “[t]he terrain of philosophy is that of the *all-purpose intellectual*, concerned with questions of *widest interest*.” (Collins 2000a: 645, italics added.) At first sight, Collins’ expression “questions of the widest interest” could be understood as referring to the type of trans-contextual ideas one would expect to be the object of study in the sociology of intellectuals. As to the expression “all-purpose intellectual”, it could be seen as referring to several classical problems of the canon, in particular Foucault’s distinction between “universal” and “special” intellectuals (Foucault 2000: 110-113). However, the analysis of the following passage, which puts back Collins’ terms in their context, makes it clear that these inferences would be erroneous.

“Structurally, the academic revolution divided the old *all-purpose intellectual* role of the philosopher into a multitude of academic specialties. The *process of specialization*, not yet ended today, has affected the contents of intellectual life in several ways. (...) Nevertheless, the *general-purpose intellectual* role continues to exert an attraction, and finds new subject matters in the very topic of the disciplinary challenge.” (Collins 2000a: 642, italics added.)

Although Foucault’s terms may have been in Collins’ mind when he wrote down this passage, another author should be invoked here to interpret Collins’ assertions: Max Weber who, in *Science as Vocation*, exhorted the contemporary generation of young scientists to accept the inevitable renunciation to the perspective of totality in favor of specialization, as well as the structural incapacity of modern science to offer answers to the ultimate grand questions such as the meaning of the universe, the value of life, etc., as well as more practical-existential interrogations such as “What is to be done?”, “How should we live?”, “How can we meet up the expectations of everyday life?”, and so forth. For Weber, the university (and more broadly the academia) is not the place where one should hope to receive intellectual orientation on the mentioned questions. Actually, in *Science as Vocation* Weber argues for the *de-intellectualization of academic knowledge*, where “intellectualization” refers to what I have called above trans-contextual knowledge capable of orienting the behavior of people situated in different social locations. This does not amount to say that Weber considers scientific knowledge as having no relationship at all with intellectual knowledge, but that scientific

knowledge is simply not intellectual knowledge. This is so because scientific knowledge does not refer to *ends* (existential, ethical, social, political, religious, etc.), but only to the *means* by which such ends can be achieved *outside* of scientific research (Weber [1919] 2004).

In Weber, the understanding of this knowledge as “means” is related to the specialized character of modern science, which is a guarantee for its reliability in situations where technical choices must be made to bring about a given end. This, in turn, implies that, for Weber, there is a mediation – based on a “homology” or an “analogy” – between theoretical and practical knowledge, between the scientific and extra-scientific community. Weber argues for the irrelevance of the category of “totality” not in general, but specifically *within* the scientific process. Indeed, insofar as the political (and in general the practical) persons are confronted with *complex situations* in which *decisions* are to be taken, they have no other choice than to cope with this complexity at once, as a totality. Thus, Weber does not deny or demean the importance of intellectual knowledge or intervention but restricts it to the sphere of practical and political action. The result is a division of labor where scientific knowledge, though perceived as crucial for practical action, is stripped off its “intellectual” character, while intellectual knowledge, without being named as such, becomes the attribute of the practical (and the political) person. In Weber, “specialism” was nevertheless an intellectual issue because (and only because) it was treated in the context of its relation to intellectual action (situated outside the walls of academia, mainly in politics): scientists had to remain scientists precisely in order to give stable foundation for such intellectual activities.

At first sight, in Collins too, there seems to be an opposition between “specialized” and “intellectual” knowledge. However, a closer glance shows that this is not the case. Indeed, Collins’ “all-purpose” intellectuals are *not* outside the academia, but well inside, and do not seem at any rate to be more practical or political than their fellow “specialists”. The process of the division of the role of the so-called “all-purpose” or “general-purpose” intellectuals into a manifold of new disciplines in fact describes an *intra-academic* process that took place especially since the “university revolution” in the early 19th century, and thus concerns only those *within* the academia (that is to say, it concerns *only* Weber’s specialists). In other terms, Collins is not at all contemplating the main issue of Weber’s conference, namely the *relation* between specialized scientific knowledge and practical-political action. *Collins’ “intellectuals” are “pure specialists”*, perfectly indifferent to the world outside their professional milieu (like Weber’s scientists should be). To be more precise, philosophers as “all-purpose intellectuals” are a specific group *within* Weber’s community of specialists, who “specialize” in the production of abstract, reflexive and decontextualized ideas, and who, for reasons outside their

reach, happen to be disadvantaged by the ongoing process of academic specialization. What they are concerned with, therefore, are the purely *intra-academic consequences of specialization*, itself a purely *technical-organizational problem*, even though it may give way to intense power-struggles within the academia between groups of specialists with conflicting interests.

Now, not only are these philosopher-specialists disinterested in the possible intellectual “truth-effects” of their knowledge, but the very possibility of such effects is theoretically excluded by Collins. In a note on the differences between his and Bourdieu’s approach, Collins straightforwardly rejects the Bourdieusian idea of a “homology between the intellectual field and the social space of non-intellectuals.” (Collins 2000a: 947, n. 4.) Yet, without this hypothesis of homology (or at least analogy), it is not possible to conceive any form of intellectual intervention, let alone any trans-contextuality of philosophical knowledge. In these circumstances, Collins’ contention that “[t]he terrain of philosophy is that of the all-purpose intellectual, concerned with questions of widest interest” (*ibid.*: 645) has a pronounced ironic undertone, since it is implicit in Collins’ utterance that these questions have the “widest interest” only to the restrained circle of specialists defined precisely by their exclusive interest in these questions...

Why, then, should a type of knowledge accessible only to the community of its producers – a properly *mono-contextual* knowledge –, incapable of offering points of orientation for actors with different socio-cultural backgrounds, be still called *intellectual* knowledge? In light of the preceding argument, *philosophical knowledge as understood by Collins does not deserve the epithet “intellectual”*. Nor should one, for the same reason, consider its holders intellectuals: abstract, reflexive, decontextualized knowledge is not intellectual knowledge, even when it is vehiculated by the sort of community – building far-flung but isolated networks – that Collins labels “intellectual”. What makes knowledge “intellectual” is that it has, in a particular social setting, the potentiality to conduct and orient the actions of persons from a variety of social locations. A specialized knowledge, whether “philosophical” or not, which has relevance only for its immediate producers and consumers – that is to say: which is inaccessible and unpracticable by outsiders –, lacks the trans-contextual quality defining genuine intellectual knowledge.

The conclusion I draw from this is that – contrary to what even its most determined critics have tacitly conceded – Collins’ book is *not* about intellectuals. Not that a significant portion of the authors mentioned in the *Sociology of Philosophies* were not actually intellectuals in the standard sense of this notion. The reason why Collins’ book is not about intellectuals is

that the authors he studied were not studied *by virtue of their being-intellectual*, but by virtue of them being in possession of a certain kind of highly specialized and abstract knowledge, making them assimilable in this respect to Weber's modern scientists. Purely communicative ideas whose existential connectedness is restricted to the trans-historical sociological factors determining the production of ideas in *any* possible context, devoid of any reference to the larger social realm outside of those networks, are quite simply not intellectual ideas. It must also be said, however, that the simple possibility to identify "references" to (or traces of) sociohistorical contexts within an utterance does not in itself make the latter automatically "intellectual". Nevertheless, it is only insofar as such existential references *can* be traced in mental formations that the latter *can* reveal themselves to be intellectual ideas. Since Collins expressly excludes the existence of such references, his "sociology of intellectuals" is not a sociology of *intellectuals*. It is, in fact, an attempt to reinterpret the history of philosophy as a purely communicative process, and thus to deny philosophy its conjunctive, life-based character.

§ 30. Mannheim and Collins: conflicting views on intellectual struggle. Toward a redefinition of intelligence

The thesis that conflict is a central motor of intellectual life is a significant overlap between Collins' and Mannheim's theories but their respective takes on this issue differ to a great extent. As I mentioned above, Collins follows Mannheim's view that "[i]n actual life, it is always some volitional center which sets thought going; competition, victory, and the selection based upon it, can be considered as the most important principles of thinking and of its dynamism." (Mannheim 1971c: 244.) In his conference on "Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon", held in 1928 in Zürich, Mannheim devised a preemptive argument to counter a foreseeable objection to his thesis. The objection says that talking about competition as constitutive element of intellectual life amounts to reduce the latter to non-intellectual, economic motives. Mannheim's counterargument is that competition is originally not an economic but a *general human* phenomenon to be found in many different domains of social action. Economic and intellectual competition are but two concrete instantiations of this general-human phenomenon. At the same time, however, Mannheim also stresses that the forms of competition differ in accordance with the different domains of social action where it takes place.

“To accept the proposition that the phenomenon of competition is also to be found in the mental sphere, does not imply that *theoretical conflict* is nothing but the reflection of current social competition, but simply that theoretical conflict also is a manifestation of the ‘general social’. Phenomenologically speaking, theoretical conflict is a self-contained sphere, as is also social conflict in the more general sense.” (Mannheim 1971c: 227.)

Up to this point, there is no disagreement between Collins and Mannheim. Their pathways bifurcate with the next sentence of Mannheim’s text.

“It is not enough, however, always to keep things apart and to keep watch over the jurisdictions of the various spheres. We must explore the *interpenetration*, the *togetherness* of these ‘planes of experience’, the separation of which is merely a matter of *phenomenality* and often does not *go beyond the immediate datum*. Once this is seen, the question becomes: *how is theoretical conflict related to social conflict?*” (*Ibid.*: italics added.)

In this statement, Mannheim demarcates himself from the internalist approaches on two points. First, he asserts the “interpenetration” and the “togetherness” of those spheres whose relative autonomy he previously admitted, the strictly understood “intellectual realm”, on the one hand, and the general social processes on the other. Second, and consequently, he affirms that the task of the sociology of the mind cannot be confined to giving an internal account of the life of intellectual networks (and their conflictual relationships) but must also include the description and theory of the *connectedness* of these circles to the forces shaping society at large.

Another important element in the previous quote is the argument it advances for the necessity to transcend the internalist perspective. This argument says that, although the internalist description of intellectual life is in a sense *accurate*, it is at the same time vulnerable to *illusion*, because it uncritically accepts the given as *immediate*, not as the result of a series of *unperceived mediations*, which conceal themselves as the origin of what is given in first-person experience. What the internalist perspective, based on a “phenomenological description” of intellectual life as lived “from within” cannot see is that immediacy can be false or illusory: the immediate givenness of contents in consciousness is in no way a guarantee against their illusory character. In this case, even though sociologists are equipped to avert certain common distortions to which lay persons often fall prey, they are themselves subject to specific bias linked to their peculiar social location and role. Taking without further ado the “givenness” of

intellectual self-experience as the ontological fundament of this form of sociality and as the methodological basis of its knowability arbitrarily leaves out of consideration the possibility that this “[c]onsciousness – in spite of its introspectively attested immediate givenness and absolute distinctness from all other manifestations of life – is actually only a *part-moment* in the life and activity of material-social man and [that] its character is determined by the function it fulfills in this life activity.” (Márkus 1978: 27.) In other terms, the internalist sociology of intellectuals inherently lacks self-reflexivity.

The confusion to which the internalist approach exposes itself consists in thinking that the knowledge inherent in the individual intellectual’s subjective experience of being an intellectual (in a specific time, place, and social milieu) forms the basis of and coincides with the knowledge of intellectual activity *as such*. While a “phenomenological” description of intellectual experience as constitutive of the intellectual world *can* be accurate in itself, it becomes illusory once it loses sight of the possibility that this experience itself is constituted by processes which are *not* given in the consciousness of the describer. To put it differently: while it is true that the intellectuals create their own (intellectual) world (thesis of the autonomy of the intellectual field), it is not less true that the “world” (i.e., society) also creates the intellectual and their world: there is a genesis of the genesis, which is *a priori* rendered invisible by the internalist sociology of ideas. This blindness finds expression in Collins’ belief that the *motivations* for intellectual action immediately present in the individual intellectual’s consciousness *coincide* with the *general stakes* and *motives* of intellectual life as such. In other terms, Collins refuses to see the phenomenologically attestable intellectual motivations in the perspective of other kinds of motives, thus excluding on *a priori* grounds the possibility that the former be the *means* for realizing *social functions*, a process that does not necessitate that the actors be aware of the objective outcome and framework of their actions. This awareness is, however, exactly what Mannheim’s sociology of intelligence seeks to bring about.

This difference is the source of a major discrepancy between Collins’ and Mannheim’s theorizations of the meaning and function of intellectual struggle. For Collins, the *stake* in intellectual competition is to find the most prestigious “slot” in a given “attention space” as determined by a given “opportunity structure”. The intellectual has two kinds of *motivations* for finding this “slot”: an “egotistical” one, the desire to be at the center of group-attention, and a deeper one, which may be called the “theoretical impulse”, encompassing such phenomena as scientific curiosity, the will-to-know, the desire to “see through” complexity, to master a given topic, etc. As § 26 of this dissertation has suggested, Mannheim himself considered these motivations as being real, important and worth of sociological investigation: he maintained that

the intellectuals had specific reasons to engage in interactions with their peers and that the dominance in the “attention space” was indeed a major rationale in their strategic choices (see also Mannheim 1952c: 272).⁵⁴ However, and herein lies the distinctive characteristic of his approach, Mannheim also believed that these specifically intellectual motivations were always connected to other types of social motives. He expounded this thesis in the following famous passage of his talk on competition as an intellectual phenomenon.

“The different parties are all competing for the possession of the correct (social) vision [‘Sicht’], or at least for the prestige which goes with the possession of this correct (social) vision. Or, to use a more pregnant term to characterize this identical goal: the competing parties are always struggling to influence what the phenomenologist Heidegger calls the ‘public interpretation of being’ [‘das öffentliche Auslegung des Seins’]. (...) [This] struggle is not guided by motives of pure contemplative thirst for knowledge. Different interpretations of the world for the most part correspond to the particular positions the various groups occupy in their struggle for power.” (Mannheim 1971c.: 228: transl. mod.⁵⁵)

In Mannheim, the *ultimate* stake (and motive) of intellectual struggle transcends the narrowly understood intellectual field. The struggles internal to the intellectual networks, although governed by the rules of the field, are *functionally connected* – through a number of mediations summarized in the concept of worldview – to struggles *outside* the field. This

⁵⁴ “As far as the second category is concerned – the professional intelligentsia – work is primarily motivated by the *desire for recognition*.” (Mannheim 1952c: 272.)

⁵⁵ Mannheim’s idea that, in the last analysis, the rationale of intellectual conflict is the imposition of a particular public interpretation of (social) Being made an important impact in the history of political thought, but in a quite original fashion. When Eyal and Buchholz, in their article on the transformation of the sociology of intellectuals into the “sociology of interventions”, quote Gisèle Sapiro’s work as an important contribution to this new direction in the sociological research on intellectuals, they use almost word to word Mannheim’s formulations, yet without referring to him: “[Sapiro’s recent work] extends this approach to the wider French intellectual field as *a space in which various cultural producers compete for the imposition of the legitimate vision of the social world in the public arena*.” (Eyal–Buchholz 2010: 126, italics added.) A similar case is spotted by Dick Pels, who demonstrated how Bourdieu failed to acknowledge Mannheim’s discovery as being Mannheim’s, by embracing it in such a way as to attribute it to Merton, even though the latter explicitly cited Mannheim’s 1928 text as the origin of this idea (Pels 1996: 36). Bourdieu summarizes Mannheim’s thesis as follows (without referring to him): “In the cognitive domain as in others, there is competition among groups or collectivities to capture what Heidegger called the ‘public interpretation of reality’. With varying degrees of intent, groups in conflict want to make their interpretation the prevailing one of how things were and are and will to be.”

functional connectedness implies that the struggles inside the intellectual field already represent a specific stage of the broader social struggle to which they indirectly contribute. It is worth underlining that this and *only this* conception is congruent with the canonical definition of intellectual activity understood as “intervention”. The latter is possible by virtue of the fact that intellectual knowledge, albeit produced in relatively autonomous, even close-knit, circles such as Collins’ intellectual groups, always-already feeds on extra-intellectual contexts and is “disposed” to be transferred to alien contexts and to confront other types of concerns than those strictly immanent to the intellectual field (the phenomenon grasped by Bourdieu as “homology”). This must be so insofar as intellectual knowledge – in the canonical sense – is defined not by some reified and arbitrary quality – abstractness, reflexivity and decontextualization – but by its *social function* consisting in giving *practical orientation* to the action of human groups differently located in the social space. This is a fundamental supposition of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge, which is made explicit in the following passage of his 1928 conference.

“From the point of view of the social sciences, every historical, ideological, sociological piece of knowledge (even should it prove to be Absolute Truth itself), is clearly rooted in and carried by the desire for power and recognition of particular social groups who want to make their interpretation of the world the universal one. To this, sociology and the cultural sciences make no exception; for in them we see only the old battle for universal acceptance of a particular interpretation of being, carried on with modern scientific weapons. (...) [T]he process in the course of which scientific interpretations gain ascendancy in a society has the same structure as the process in the course of which pre-scientific modes of interpretations had achieved dominance; that is to say, even the ‘correct’, ‘scientific’, interpretation did not arise out of a pure, contemplative desire for knowledge, but fulfilled the age-old function of helping some group find its way about in the surrounding world. It emerged and exists in exactly the same way as the pre-scientific modes of orientation – that is, as a function of the interplay of vital forces.” (*Ibid.*: 228.)

In this passage, Mannheim presents the principle of *radical symmetry* of “*true*” and “*false*” knowledge (an idea mistakenly attributed to David Bloor by the posterity), on the one hand, and of the *methods of knowing*, on the other, in regard to *existential connectedness* (“*Seinsverbundenheit*”). If one arrives at false beliefs because of specific social factors bearing on the mind of the inquirer, the same must be true also for the case when one arrives at true beliefs; and while the “scientific method” can often prove to be more efficient in obtaining “true

knowledge” than other epistemic procedures, this performance is as much rooted in extra-scientific drives as the other, “non-scientific” modes of knowing. This principle of symmetry between scientific and extra-scientific methods involves a radically *democratic conception of intelligence* in that it breaks down the conventional hierarchical differences between various *regimes* or *levels* of knowing. From the point of view of practical-existential orientation, the scientific method will not necessarily be the most valuable source of intellectual knowledge. Epistemic activities other than academic science can produce trans-contextual knowledge providing effective orientation in practical-existential situations. An implication is that the traditional hierarchization of bodies of knowledge and modes of knowing – where scientific-academic knowledge invariably stands on the top – may be biased. This is so not because this hierarchy presents the things in an erroneous way (i.e., not because the status of scientific knowledge is usurped), but because the process of hierarchization itself may turn out to be the result of an uncontrolled political volition to furnish an apologetic self-image of academic science as the only possible source of true, universal (i.e., decontextualized) knowledge.

Such an illusion would not be fortuitous: its origin should be situated in the aspiration of the social bearers of the scientific enterprise to “power and recognition”, and even monopoly over the alternative modes of knowing. One of the practical and existential functions of this kind of “scientific ideology” would consist in *justifying the privileges* associated with the monopolistic position of academic intellectuals, by fostering an apologetic attitude toward their privileges, the awareness of which could become a source of disturbance for maintaining said privileges. For this reason, Mannheim’s insistence on the fact that *the principle of symmetry is valid also for the social and the cultural sciences* is significant. Indeed, this means that sociological inquiry, especially when its object is the intelligentsia, runs the risk of becoming mere ideological self-apology if it does not seriously scrutinize *itself* with regard to the question of the socio-political aspirations motivating it. Consequently, a sociology of intelligentsia *a priori* excluding this move should fall under the suspicion of promoting this sort of self-justificatory ideological discourse. This suspicion applies in particular to Collins and the NSI, since even if it were true (as it is not) that genuine, “pure” (metaphysical, logical and epistemological) philosophical thinking is devoid of any sort of “external” influence, this would not hold for the sociology of intellectuals itself, which represents – with Collins’ own standards – a mixed, “impure” type of knowledge, in relation to which such influences cannot be ruled out from the outset.

This is one of the main reasons for which Mannheim considers that the sociologists of ideas cannot satisfy themselves with the study of the internal dynamics of the intellectual groups

and their processes of knowledge-production, but should instead “look beyond the direct relationships in which individuals are engaged and discover the decisive polarities behind the controversies of the various schools of thought, and attempt to grasp the ultimate important extremes behind the various local conflicts.” (*Ibid.*: 240.) But what does this looking toward the decisive (social) polarities mean exactly in light of what precedes? Should it be understood, for instance, that the results of intellectual action are nothing but ideological reflections of different social interests of which the intellectuals would be the unconscious operators? Or, on the other extreme, should one understand that the intellectuals consciously produce ready-made ideas for investment in the social conflicts in the non-intellectual arena?

The answer to both these interrogations is negative. This is because Mannheim’s position implicitly entails the *partial dissolution* of the figure of the intellectual and the *relative collapse of the frontier* between the “intellectual field” and the “social space of non-intellectuals” (Collins 2000a: 947, n. 4.) True, Collins also depersonalizes the classical figure of the intellectual and enlarges it to that of intellectual networks, which are the true subjects of intellectual history. Yet, this enlargement and depersonalization do not go together, in his case, with the collapsing of the limits between the “intellectual field” and the “social space of non-intellectuals”: quite the contrary, the central stake of Collins’ sociology of intellectuals is precisely to ensure and reinforce the separation of these spheres through the three (two) layers of causality model. And it is precisely because Mannheim enacts this collapsing that he can avoid the two above-mentioned pitfalls, in which the intellectual, whether consciously or unconsciously, becomes a mere ideologue at the service of “non-intellectual” – political, economic, religious, etc. – causes. The following passage, in which Mannheim exposes his own conception of the “homology” between “intellectual” and “non-intellectual” spaces, could be read, in this sense, as a polemical response to Collins’ “internalist” sociology of ideas.

“It is fundamentally false to suppose – as unpolitical observers, who are unaware of the volitional basis of every theory, are tempted to do – that all that happens in this connection is that existing political movements cast about for a philosophical companion with which they can ally themselves. (...) [If it were so, then the problems here investigated] would merely concern the study of ‘ideologies’, and it could be said that these phenomena may be observed in politics but cannot affect intellectual life in its ‘higher objectivity’. It would follow that a philosophy which linked itself with a political tendency would be degraded into a mere ‘ideology’; real philosophy, in its purity, however, could have nothing to do with the influence we have shown social factors to exercise upon the mental sphere. If someone thinks along these lines, if he looks

at things in such a non-activistic, non-political spirit, then it is difficult to make him *see*. All one can do is to make him realize in case after case that philosophy – just any particular philosophy not yet deliberately allied to any political cause – is always the *child of a specific spirit*, and that already at its birth, before even any clear relation to politics is developed, a philosophy already reflects a peculiar direction of the will-to-see in a certain perspective [*“ein bestimmter Betrachtungswille”*], a peculiar style of thought, which in most cases stems from a deeper root that this philosophy has in common with the corresponding social trend with which it later becomes associated.” (Mannheim 1971c: 241-242, transl. mod.)

Drawing on his concepts of style of thought and worldview, Mannheim’s reply to the concerns of the internalist sociology of intellectuals underlines the *common sociogenetic origin* as well as the *potentially common destiny* of intellectual standpoints and tendencies on the one hand, and that of broader social aspirations on the other. Their “homology” is seen as the *result* of the fact that they both stem from the *same sociohistorical process and spirit*, which nonetheless made them become functionally differentiated in the form of semi-autonomous fields. With an expressive metaphor, Mannheim conceives their encounter as akin to the “reunion and mutual recognition of long-separated children of the same mother”, citing as example the one-time alliance between Liberalism as the rising Bourgeoisie’s ideology and Enlightenment doctrines (*ibid.*: 242).

A crucial implication of this conception of homology between “intellectual” and “non-intellectual” fields is that the *intellectual function* is not anymore exclusively attributed to the narrowly understood “intellectual” field but is *extended to spheres of social action hitherto considered “non-intellectual”*. Insofar as it enacts the intellectual function, Liberalism as a political ideology and practice is not less “intellectual” than the more abstract philosophies crafted by Enlightenment philosophers close to some form of political Liberalism. This means in turn that *the so-called “intellectuals” are no more the exclusive producers, guardians, and disseminators of intellectual knowledge*. Evidently, this makes unavoidable the thorough revision of the *terminology itself* since the opposition between “intellectuals” and “non-intellectuals” – an opposition which is at the core of Collins’ sociology of ideas despite his enlargement of the classical figure of the intellectual – will necessarily take on a new meaning.

Mannheim’s way of diluting, depersonalizing and multiplying the figure of the intellectual is far more radical than Collins’ because it entails that the enactment of the intellectual function is realized in a social process that transcends the limits of the “intellectual field” (i.e., the academic “elite”), which becomes only a special – though privileged and

sometimes monopolistic – operator in the process of the social creation of intellectual knowledge. “*Intervention*” as the *movement of intellectual ideas in social space* thus becomes a tension or a stream *de facto* transcending the contingent hierarchical categories of the different social roles resulting from the social division of labor: the neat separation of “intellectual” and “non-intellectual” spheres thus appears as the result of the domination of certain social strata (the “intellectuals”) over others (the “non-intellectuals”), but which cannot thwart the *real* process of intellectual intervention whose *true subjects* encompass but do not reduce to the “intellectuals” (the intellectual networks, in Collins’ terminology).

It must be underlined here that the collapse of the categories of “intellectuals” and “non-intellectuals” is, at this point, theoretical, since the difference continues to exist *empirically*. There *are* persons who *specialize* in the production of intellectual ideas and who are gratified by society for their (supposed) capacity of producing and circulating such ideas. These are the groups that our societies conventionally label “intellectuals”, and who, *by virtue of this social process of role-attribution* (expressed in the label), are *indeed* intellectuals. And since this division of labor is at the same time a process of *monopolization* of a social function by a group of “specialists” (the “intellectuals”), there will necessarily be, alongside “intellectuals”, masses of “non-intellectuals”. My point is not to deny this *fact*, but to underline that it is precisely not more than a *fact*. It is not the *essence* of the intellectual phenomenon because, in the last instance, *one is not an intellectual by virtue of one’s participation in this monopoly, but by virtue of the exercise of the intellectual function*, whether this is done from a monopolistic position, or from within a profession or role traditionally considered “intellectual”, and more generally, whether one is recognized as “intellectual” by dominant social conventions. (I will treat this issue in detail in Chapter 7.)

Who are, then, the subjects of intellectual history in Mannheim’s theory? The German word the sociologist coins to denote these subjects is “*Geistesströmungen*”, “spiritual currents” or, to remain closer to the vocabulary used up till now, “intellectual currents” (*ibid.*, p. 240).⁵⁶ Intellectual currents are the results of *syntheses* of the aspirations of all the lively social forces whose competition shapes the overall directionality, self-interpretation and hierarchical articulation of a society at a given time. These syntheses occur as an interplay of social

⁵⁶ The English translation of “*Geistesströmungen*” by “doctrinal currents” leads to the misunderstanding of Mannheim’s idea, whose introduction is motivated precisely by the necessity to look *beyond* the controversies of the different *doctrinal currents* (carried by concrete intellectual groups and strata and their networks) shaping the internal outlook of the “intellectual field”.

coalitions of heterogeneous actors, often merging in internally articulated social movements and their organizations (*ibid.*). The intellectual currents thus *encompass*, alongside the more restricted “intellectual field” (the proper turf of those traditionally considered intellectuals, who are also the prime object of most sociologies of intellectuals), the broadly understood *social movements*, insofar as they partake in the struggle for the “public interpretation of Being” and the imposition of the right “social vision” by creating and circulating intellectual knowledge. In this sense, *social and political movement organizations* can be viewed as *collective intellectuals* shaping intellectual currents of which, then, the “classical intellectuals” are themselves functionally differentiated and historically specific *operators* (with different roles, according to different conjunctures).⁵⁷

Strictly speaking, in the light of Mannheim’s conceptions, should be called “intellectuals” only those persons, groups and organizations – whether inside or outside of the “intellectual field” – who take an active and self-conscious role in the framing of intellectual currents shaping the basic antagonisms (“world-aspirations”) whose totality (the “*Zeitgeist*”) gives its specific outlook to society in a given epoch. Insofar as society attributes them this function, academic intellectuals are, of course, to be counted among intellectuals. The point is to say that they are not the only ones, nor can they pretend to be necessarily the most important of all in all historical conjunctures.

* * *

§ 31. Transition to the second part of the dissertation

These last considerations of Chapter 4 have put forward two theses which already point to what I call the *transdisciplinary character* of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge and intellectuals, to be explored in the second part of this dissertation: (1) the thesis of homology

⁵⁷ This view should not be seen as a restatement of Gramsci’s thesis of the organicity of intellectuals insofar as, first, it does not imply the allegiance of the “organic intellectuals” to specific *political* tendencies, and second, it asserts on different bases the relativity of the divide between “intellectuals” and “non-intellectuals”. Gramsci’s argument is that all human beings always use their *cognitive capacities*. Mine is that all human beings have the faculty of producing and disseminating *intellectual knowledge*, that is, of participating in the “intellectual function”, which is a far more specific performance than the general use of cognitive capacities. For details, see Chapter 7.

between sociopolitical struggle and the more strictly understood intellectual realm and (2) the thesis of radical symmetry of all forms of knowledge.

(1) As to the first thesis, Mannheim's formulation in his "Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon" implies not only that general sociopolitical struggle appears under a mediated form in intellectual standpoints and knowledge, but also that intelligence is not the exclusive prerogative of those conventionally labeled "intellectuals". This latter proposition, which amounts to a democratization to the notion of intellectual, is transdisciplinary in that it is, in and by itself, an intellectual intervention that seeks to alter not only a given theoretical consensus in the sociology of intellectuals, but the existing sociopolitical arrangements on which said consensus is based (and that it fosters by the same token) – an arrangement which has historically condemned entire swathes of society to live on the ideological by-products of a so-called intellectual elite, to which the sociologists of intellectuals themselves belong.

(2) The second thesis asserts the radical symmetry of "every historical, ideological, sociological piece of knowledge", including the knowledge produced in the sociology of intellectuals, which strives not less than any other form of knowledge to "help some group find its way about in the surrounding world" and to impose their particular interpretation of social being as the right one (*ibid.*: 228). The most important consequence of this thesis for the sociology of intellectuals is, I believe, the *imperative of self-reflexivity*, meaning in this instance the capacity to perceive one's own discourse as a discourse of power, as being anchored in a world-aspiration that connects it with sociopolitical processes that transcend the confines of the academic institutions and disciplines.

The second part of this dissertation aims at a systematic exploration of these two hitherto neglected dimensions of Mannheim's sociology of intelligence.

PART II

TRANSDISCIPLINARITY AND DISSENT IN MANNHEIM'S SOCIOLOGY OF INTELLIGENCE

Chapter 5 – A sociology of *intellectual* knowledge: toward a reappraisal of Mannheim’s project

§ 32. Aim and structure of the chapter

The last paragraph of Chapter 4 has put forth the proposition that, in Mannheim’s theory, the “true” subjects of intellectual history are the so-called *intellectual currents* (“*Geistesströmungen*”), encompassing both the more narrowly defined *intellectual strata* (those human groups specializing in the formulation and explicitation of the various world-aspirations shaping the “*Zeitgeist*” of a given era) and the broadly understood *social movements* and their organizations, to which these intellectual groups are committed and in which they take part to various degrees and through different forms of engagement. In this sense, social and political movement organizations are themselves *collective intellectuals* having a share in the shaping of the intellectual currents, as well as of the outlook of more specialized intellectual groups. The common point of these different actors is then that they all partake in the struggle for the “public interpretation of Being” and the imposition of “the right social vision”.

This thesis has been put forward in the context of a confrontation with Randall Collins’ internalist sociology of intellectuals, which I have presented as part of a trend within the contemporary sociology of intellectuals sometimes referred to as the “new sociology of ideas” (NSI) (see Camic–Gross 2001). One of my main criticisms formulated against Collins’ project was that it detaches the intellectual networks from broader socipolitical processes to such an extent that it condemns the question of their mutual relationships and function for each other to near-total irrelevance. However, this objection against Collins does not seem to hold against other initiatives in the NSI. Indeed, a significant contribution by Scott Frickel and Neil Gross, two leading theorists from this group of scholars, titled “A General Theory of Scientific/Intellectual Movements”, advances a thesis at first sight very akin to Mannheim’s according to which the true subjects of intellectual and scientific history – since the birth of the “modern university sector” in the early 19th century – are neither creative individuals, nor simply intellectual networks, but so-called “scientific/intellectual movements” (abbreviated as “SIMs”), which must be understood by analogy with social movements (Frickel–Gross 2005: 204). This prompts to further reflections on the relationship between Mannheim’s ideas and the approach preconized by the NSI.

Therefore, in the continuation of the confrontation began in the previous chapter, the first paragraph of Chapter 5 (§ 33) offers an interpretation and critical reading of Frickel and Gross' article. My focus will be on the question whether the superposition of the “scientific” and the “intellectual” dimensions – epitomized in the expression “scientific/intellectual movements” – in this theory is warranted and to establish what its presuppositions and implications are. The goal of this critical discussion is to clear the path for a better understanding of the distinctive features of Mannheim's own standpoint. The next paragraph (§ 34) seeks to bring closer to this end by discussing a contribution to the theory of intellectuals by John Peter Nettl whose central thesis is the necessity of the analytical separation of the “scientific” and the “intellectual” components of academic knowledge.

In the next two paragraphs, I will apply the categories of Frickel and Gross, and those of Nettl, to Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, and argue, first, that the latter should be understood in the frame of the preceding discussion as a “scientific/intellectual movement” (“SIM”) (§ 35), and, second, by discussing aspects of the so-called “sociology of knowledge dispute”, that Mannheim's project involves a peculiar synthesis of the scientific and intellectual components of academic knowledge (§ 36). These developments will lead to a critical reflection on earlier and contemporary trends in Mannheim's reception which attempt to bring Mannheim's project closer to a scientific or scope-oriented academic endeavor, and to minimize his “intellectual”, “qualitative” or “dissenting” dimensions (§ 37). Against these trends, I will offer an alternative interpretation of the status and place of Mannheim's project as a “dissenting social/intellectual movement” (“disSIM”), a thesis whose implications I will explore in detail in the next chapter of this dissertation (Chapter 6).

§ 33. Scientific/intellectual movements and social movements: a critical reading of Frickel and Gross' general theory of intellectual change

Scott Frickel and Neil Gross' article “A General Theory of Scientific/Intellectual Movements” aims at building a theory explaining the mechanisms responsible for the dynamism of knowledge production since the autonomization of the university sector in the early 19th century (Frickel–Gross 2005: 204). According to Frickel and Gross, “the history of almost every field of inquiry (...) is a history of new scientific or intellectual movements that rose up to challenge established patterns of inquiry, became the subject of controversy, won or failed to win a large number of adherents, and either became institutionalized for a time, until

the next movement came along, or faded into oblivion.” (*Ibid.*) The first thesis of the article is thus that the dynamism of “scientific/intellectual movements” (shortened by the authors as “SIMs”) is the “central mechanism for change in the world of knowledge and ideas.” This mechanism is analyzed in four general propositions (not to be systematically surveyed here) seeking to explain “the social conditions under which SIMs are most likely to emerge, gain prestige, and achieve some level of institutional stability.” (*Ibid.*)

Frickel and Gross’ theory starts from the assumption that SIMs – understood as “collective efforts to pursue research programs or projects for thought in the face of resistance from others in the scientific or intellectual community” (*ibid.*: 206) – are “similar in certain respects to *social movements*.” (*Ibid.*: 205, italics added.) “Social movement” is taken in the sense defined in McCarthy and Zald’s (1977) resource-mobilization theory, which is here applied to the field of the sociology of ideas.⁵⁸

In what sense are SIMs and SMs (abbreviation of social movements) similar? What does it mean to “draw directly on social movements theory in constructing key propositions”? (Frickel–Gross 2005: 206.) Frickel and Gross more specific assumption in this regard is that SIMs are analogous to SMs insofar as both have a “*social*” dimension: a set of typical motivations, strategies and means employed in view of the transformation of certain social practices (whatever be their nature). Revealingly, Frickel and Gross do not establish a similar analogy with respect to the *intellectual* component of these movements: they do not give serious consideration to the fact that *both* SMs and SIMs *produce knowledge*. Although they acknowledge that “creating knowledge is something many social movements can claim to do as well”, they reject a parallel between SMs and SIMs *on this ground*, saying that SIMs are

⁵⁸ To recall McCarthy and Zald’s basic definitions: “A social movement (SM) is a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society. A countermovement is a set of opinions and beliefs in a population opposed to a social movement. (...) A social movement organization (SMO) is a complex, or formal, organization which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or a countermovement and attempts to implement those goals. (...) All SMOs that have as their goal the attainment of the broadest preferences of a social movement constitute a social movement industry (SMI) – the organizational analogue of a social movement. (...) Analytically separating these components by distinguishing between an SM and an SMI has several advantages. First, it emphasizes that SMs are never fully mobilized. Second, it focuses explicitly upon the organizational component of activity. Third, it recognizes explicitly that SMs are typically represented by more than one SMO. Finally, the distinction allows the possibility of an account of the rise and fall of SMIs that is not fully dependent on the size of an SM or the intensity of the preferences within it.” (McCarthy–Zald 1977: 1217-19.)

distinct from SMs in that for the former “the production and diffusion of ideas and knowledge is the central goal.” (*Ibid.*) In other terms, a parallel is drawn between SIMs and SMs insofar as SIMs are *not only* scientific/intellectual, but *also* “social”, which helps to understand the “impure”, “social”, nature of SIMs, while the corresponding observation that SMs are equally “impure” because of their intellectual nature is simply disregarded. The authors’ aim is clearly not to understand the *intellectual* nature of SIMs on the basis of the *intellectual* nature of SMs (or the opposite way round), but to understand the *social* nature of SIMs on the basis of the *social* nature of SMs.

The definition of the central aim of SIMs as the production of knowledge for its own sake suggests a strong correlation between SIMs and the scientific enterprise, the latter being definable by the fact that its institutional goal is “the continuing extension of certified knowledge claims.” (Stehr 2018a: 120.) It can thus be surmised that the reason why the authors do not consider seriously the processes of knowledge production by social movements stems from the fact that they take a narrow notion of “certified knowledge” associated to *specific* elite institutional contexts (research centers, universities, academies, etc.) and not other types of institutions in which knowledge is produced (for example organs of popular education, groups practicing participatory action research, etc.). The implicit priority given to a certain type of knowledge and knowledge-production raises the following question: is it true that, because it is not an *end in itself*, but an organic part of a broader project (social transformation), knowledge-creation and diffusion is only an *incidental* aspect of social movements and their organizations? This question is motivated by the consideration of such initiatives as the different projects of adult-education and popular education (Stehr 2018: 47-50), the consciousness-raising groups in the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s (Sarachild 1978: 172-196; Hardin 1986), or workers’ inquiry and co-research-type initiatives (Cavazzini 2013; Wright 2007; Hoffmann 2019). What this question suggests is that the claim to build a *general* theory of SIMs uncovering the “ambiguous links connecting social movements and SIMs” (*ibid.*: 226) is clearly an *overstatement* unless the non-academic type of knowledge characteristic of the above-mentioned SMOs is made a problem and considered as an integral part of the “general theory”.

It is not certain, however, that a more modest claim on Frickel and Gross’ part to a *partial* theory would solve this issue. Indeed, while the authors’ definition of the specificity of SIMs’ central aim – production of knowledge for its own sake – can be said to correspond to the conventional idea of the *scientific* enterprise, the type of knowledge produced by social movements may well contain the essence of *something qualitatively different* from scientific knowledge, which I will call *intellectual knowledge*, whose peculiarity is that it is not produced

for its own sake but for practical and existential purposes (among which sociopolitical ones). Now, if this contention was correct, it would undermine the claim of the theory not only to general, but even to partial validity, since the suggested *disjunction* of the scientific and the intellectual elements would make the very idea of “scientific-intellectual movement” problematic. Consequently, what must be investigated in the first place is whether the simple superposition of “scientific” and “intellectual” is warranted at any rate.

I take the lack of definition in Frickel and Gross’ article of the terms “scientific” and “intellectual” a symptom of the problem I am trying to point out. What does the slash sign (“/”) between the two notions mean? Does it mean that the two terms are *identical* or *synonymous*? If that is the case, what reasons can be advanced to maintain a terminological distinction between them? If they are not identical, in what do they differ? Frickel and Gross’ text contains only one elusive indication allowing to hypothesize about the meaning and possible relation of the two terms: SIMs “are constituted through collective action aimed at the institutionalization of new social forms across the *sciences* and *humanities*.” (*Ibid.*: 225, italics added.) Does this mean that the adjective “intellectual” refers to the “humanities”, whereas the adjective “scientific” denotes the exact (and formal) sciences? As I will try to show in the next paragraph, this interpretation is consistent with Frickel and Gross’ “general theory”. However, I will also show that this solution does not help to disentangle the issue raised here.

For this, it is necessary to consider a further definitory feature of SIMs, namely that they “are constituted through collective action aimed at the institutionalization of *new* social forms across the sciences and humanities.” (*Ibid.*, italics added.) This means that “a movement is a SIM (...) only if, at the time of its emergence, it significantly challenges received wisdom or dominant ways of approaching some problem or issue and thus encounters resistance. Gradual or incremental changes – the stuff of Kuhn’s (...) ‘normal science’ – are best understood from the standpoint of institutional drift. By contrast, SIMs involve dramatic breaks with past practices.” (*Ibid.*: 207). Thus, the “formulation of a SIM (...) always represents an effort, whether implicit or explicit, at differentiation from prevailing intellectual practices.” (*Ibid.*: 210-11.)

From this, Frickel and Gross draw the consequence that, “[l]ike social movements, SIMs represent contentious challenges to normative practices and institutions and, as such, are inherently political.” (*Ibid.*: 225.) To be more exact, it is “[p]recisely because the intellectual practices recommended by SIMs are contentious, [that] SIMs are inherently political.” (*Ibid.*: 207.) However, Frickel and Gross expressly underline that the “political” contentiousness of SIMs should not be taken literally: they do not aim at furthering *political causes* within and

through the academia, as is the case for example with queer theory in the field of cultural studies (*ibid.*). Instead, they describe SIMs as “political in the Weberian sense of relating to ‘interests in the distribution, maintenance, or transfer of power’ (...) because every program for intellectual change involves a desire to alter the configuration of social positions within or across intellectual fields in which power, attention, and other scarce resources are unequally distributed.” (*Ibid.*)

In fact, Frickel and Gross’ understanding of the notion of “politics” follows a design reminiscent of several sociologies of intellectuals investigated in the first part of this dissertation in that it approaches the motivational structure of the participants in SIMs through a *purely goal-rational perspective*. Although the possible motivations to engage in a SIM taken into account by Frickel and Gross go beyond the Collinsian thesis of intellectuals as natural-born opportunists vying exclusively – although on the basis of their common commitment to the “sacred object of truth” – for attention, prestige and status, the *type of relation* (imputation) between the individual scholars’ performance and scientific/intellectual production remains governed by the idea of *interestedness*, as defined in the first part of this dissertation: intellectuals’ choices are seen as rational *means* toward a *goal* made in accordance with the expectation of institutional benefits (or avoidance of harms). Thus, even though Frickel and Gross enlarge the variety of possible objects of intellectuals’ interests (among which the most important one is the somewhat obscure “drive to maintain intellectual identity”), they do not transcend the *type of imputation* in question (*ibid.*: 207, 211). As I will try to show below, this implies that, similarly to Collins, Frickel and Gross also confine the problem of worldview-committedness to the periphery of their theory.

It is worth noting that, since Weber expressly linked his concept of politics to participation in *state-power*, Frickel and Gross’ reference to his theory is curiously selective. A few lines from the passage quoted by the authors, Weber underscored that he “wish[es] to understand by politics *only* the leadership, or the influencing of the leadership, of a *political association*, hence today, of a *state*.” (Weber 2004: 32-33, italics added.) To borrow J. P. Nettl’s expressions, in the quoted text Weber expressly understands politics as a “particular *sector* of social action”, not as a “particular *function* of social action” in any possible action-context (Nettl 1966: 46). The problem consists, in this instance, in assuming that SIMs are political not in the sense that they would be the “continuation” of politics (as embodied by social movements in general, not only by political parties) by academic means (which could be consistent with Weber’s definition of politics), but in a much broader sense which does not seem to correspond to Weber’s notion in the referred text.

Going beyond the question of the adequacy of Scott and Frickel's interpretation to Weber's propositions, defining politics merely as an action designed to altering the power-balance in *any* given field of social action in order to affect the distribution of scarce resources, conflates and dilutes the concept of politics beyond recognition. Can it be seriously maintained that the competition for stipends between academic actors, or the competition of pupils for the favors of their most coveted colleagues in a high-school class is "political" *in the same sense* as the struggle for control within or over the state apparatuses through social struggle? Such a reading of Weber makes Frickel and Gross step over the narrower concept of politics and with it the central problem it creates for the sociology of knowledge: the *articulation* of processes of knowledge-production with broader social and political dynamics.⁵⁹

This discussion suggests that contrary to what they assert, Frickel and Gross' notion of SIM is designed from the outset as an operator of *depoliticization*. From the point of view of a narrower notion of politics (which is how Weber uses the term in the "Vocation lectures"), SIMs appear as being *inherently apolitical*. To construct them as at least *potentially* political in the Weberian sense of the term, one would need to understand SIMs as having an *inherent potential to carry extra-academic aims* and to be *potentially homologous with social movements*, or even be *part* of such movements – theoretical gestures that the authors expressly

⁵⁹ This understanding of politics is reverberated in other passages of Frickel and Gross' article. In their comparison between states and the academy, based on the "ideological differences" of the two institutions, states appear to "value social order and reward political and civil conformity", and are consequently fundamentally conservative institutions. The academy, on the other hand, because it values "intellectual advance, and (...) tends to reward novelty and innovation", appears as a dynamic, progressive institution (Frickel–Gross 2005: 225-26). However, one could also reason in the opposite way: it is precisely because the State is the *par excellence locus* of power-struggles and contentious challenges to the sociopolitical order that it constantly *has* to reward civil conformity and suppress dissent. Because it concentrates the social and political volitions struggling in modern societies, it is a dynamic institution, always exposed to the risk of revolutionary upheavals or internal transformations. On the other side of the equation, the academy could be seen as a fundamentally conservative institution built on the idea of *career*. As Mannheim writes in his 1930 paper on economic ambition, any field in which careers – as the "rationing or gradual distribution of success through a number of stages" – are possible "constitute a relatively undisturbed and peaceful enclave within society as a whole. *The real social struggle, then, goes on outside the enclave*; what we see within, is merely a competitive struggle among members of a successful group for the greatest share in positions of influence available for distribution on the basis of rationing schedules." (Mannheim 1952b: 248-49, italics added.) For Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, the stake in this case would again be to try to articulate the *links and mediations* between the power struggles *within* the enclave (and the very *structure* of the enclave) on the one hand, and the broader sociopolitical processes "*outside*" the enclave (which in fact *comprise* the enclave), on the other.

reject. It could be objected here that Frickel and Gross are, in fact, aware of an “important distinction between SIMs (...) more or less *internal* to the scientific and intellectual field and those *tied* more directly to *social movements*.” (*Ibid.*: 226, italics added.) However, instead of exploring the implications of this significant statement, the authors take the opposite way – they widen the gap between these two sub-types of SIMs and make the case to consider the second type of SIMs – those tied to social movements – either as an *exception* or as an *anomaly*:

“at their extreme social and scientific/intellectual changes can become revolutionary, but in most cases, SIMs are not likely to reverberate in the lives of most people. (...) [A]ctions associated with SIMs are rarely contentious in the same way as political activism is contentious. Public confrontations with institutional structures of power are not typical strategies for mobilizing and advancing SIMs. (...) Notwithstanding a few famous exceptions, most notably involving some early 17th-century Italian astronomers and some mid-20th-century Soviet geneticists, scientists who become involved in movements that challenge or defend (as in the Soviet case) the scientific/ intellectual status quo seldom risk their lives or their freedom.” (*Ibid.*: 225-226.)

It seems clear that these arguments assume that the production and propagation of value-free scientific knowledge is the *authentic* goal of SIMs, which only exceptionally transcend the institutional limits of scientific disciplines. Thus, Frickel and Gross avoid confronting the theoretical questions posed by the existence of SIMs *organically* linked to social-political movements; they simply assume that this fact has no impact on the *definition* of SIMs (*ibid.*: 226). I do not believe, however, that cases of institutionalized SIMs whose aim is not the production of knowledge for its own sake can be simply dismissed as “exceptions” or “anomalies”. They should rather be regarded as evidence to the idea that two different concepts of “politics” are involved in SIMs, a fact the conflated definition of politics given by Frickel and Gross obfuscate.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ In this same context, I would like to bring attention to the chilling remark of Frickel and Gross according to which “[t]he assertion that science is political” – obviously implicit in *any* SIM tied to social movements – “violates disciplinary expectations on a grand scale, and young scholars without tenure run grave career risks in putting forward such claims.” (*Ibid.*). I personally do not see why it is so obvious that the assertion that science is political violates disciplinary expectations. The minimum of professional honesty would demand that the suppositions behind such a thesis be made explicit. Especially, I cannot see how one can ethically and professionally accept – as Frickel and Gross seem to be doing – the idea that a scientific assertion such as “science is political” should entail retaliation from disciplinary authorities. If what Frickel and Gross write is true, the

A further not sufficiently clarified issue in Frickel and Gross' article is the place of SIMs in the wider social, economic, political and cultural context and, linked to these questions, the status of the notions of interpretation and worldview. The authors write that,

“as collectivities, social movements come together not simply through recognition of grievances arising from objectively similar material conditions or the shared social locations of movement actors, but also around *common understandings* of the nature and significance of those conditions and locations, as well as shared *social values* and broader *worldviews* (...). [C]ultural analysis of contentious collective action begins from the understanding that social movements are generated from, and ultimately sustained by, ideas.” (*Ibid.*: 222, italics added.)

To tackle this problem, Frickel and Gross draw on the Goffmanian notions of frame and frame-analysis: “frames are sets of ideas purposefully articulated to lend specific meaning and urgency to actors' individual and social experiences. With respect to social protest, frames operate as cultural mechanisms that inspire and guide collective action.” (*Ibid.*) The notion of frame being closely related to those of *habitus* (Bourdieu) and *perspective* (Mannheim) (cp. here Chapter 3), and Frickel and Gross mentioning “social protest”, one may think this is the point of their theory where the more restrictively understood political character of SIMs would finally be treated. However, the authors are quick to avert such a danger by adding two provisos to their statement. First, they explain dealing with the issue of framing only insofar as it plays a role in the *representation* of SIMs by the participants to insiders and outsiders (i.e., as the supports of rhetorical competency), and not as a mediating category seeking to explain the very *genesis* of SIMs, in relation to the social locations and social functions of their members (this would imply worldview-interpretation in Mannheim's sense). Second, although the authors recognize that “efforts at framing may try to link the SIM not only with intellectual self-concepts, but also with broader values and worldviews” (*ibid.*: 222), they do not explore this suggestion, rather asserting their interest in the more limited problem of “intellectual self-concept”.⁶¹

problem may be with the the disciplinary expectations rather than the assertion itself. If anything, it is such retaliation that is a grand-scale political violation of scientific freedom, and even of freedom of thought.

⁶¹ Gross defined this notion in a previous work as “the more or less stable narratives thinkers use to understand who they are as intellectuals”, and which is “rooted in a range of values, commitments, and competencies.” (Gross 2002: 53.)

Nevertheless, the function of the concept of “intellectual self-concept” seems to be on par with that of worldview in Mannheim in that it is “one of the crucial links between micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis in the sociology of ideas.” (Frickel–Gross 2005: 222.) The problem is that, besides the restrictive remark according to which these identities are not limited to those “associated with major groupings such as class, race, gender” (*ibid.*), there are no hints at how intellectual self-identities are constituted, and whether they have anything to do with social location or (political) worldviews. The actual *function* of the concept of intellectual self-concept is nevertheless clear: it is the creation of “*types*” within the intellectual community. These types, which can be “characterological, dispositional, theoretical, political, religious, stylistic, etc.”, are “social categories that acquire their meaning within particular intellectual communities. They have an important effect on ideas because, especially given prevailing cultural notions of authenticity, thinkers are motivated to do intellectual work that resonates and feels to them consistent with their sense of the kind of intellectual they are.” (*Ibid.*)

What is, then, the relationship between intellectual self-concepts, worldviews and socio-political movements? The authors’ answer is the following.

“Although the fields in which SIMs develop are relatively autonomous from wider cultural and political-economic contexts, we take it as axiomatic that SIMs are influenced by direct or indirect pressures emanating from the broader cultural and political environment. Key actors within the larger environment include the state, religion, industry, education systems, and social movements. Any or all of these may shape the interests, needs, identities, worldviews, and topical foci of intellectual actors engaged in SIM projects, thus providing impetus for intellectual or institutional change.” (*Ibid.*: 209.)

At first sight, the straightforward recognition of the possibility of macro-processes playing a constitutive role in “ideation” by the mediation of worldviews indicates that Frickel and Gross depart from Collins’ model of three (two) layers of causality and drift toward a conception congruent with Mannheim’s. This impression quickly vanishes, however, in a passage where the authors give precisions about the relationship between intellectual self-concepts and the dynamic of the extra-academic socio-political context.

“The distribution of intellectual self-concepts is a function of other social processes both endogenous and exogenous to the intellectual field. For a wide variety of reasons (e.g., the rise of political or cultural movements, new phases in capitalist expansion, a perceived sense of cultural crisis), one or another set of intellectual self-concepts may become more popular at

particular historical junctures. Scientific/intellectual movements can then ride this wave of popularity provided they have been framed as ideational vehicles for the expression of these self-concepts in ways that resonate with potential recruits as appropriate or legitimate. In this way, macrolevel changes, which may reshuffle intellectual self-concepts, shape microlevel processes (the desire for self-concept resonance among intellectuals) that may spur mesolevel transformations (the rise or fall of various SIMs).” (*Ibid.*: 222.)

This quote confirms that Frickel and Gross’ model is more “permissive” toward “externalist” approaches than Collins’ in that it allows for macro-level processes to “reshuffle” micro-level ones (intellectual self-concepts), which can even retroact on the meso-level. Nevertheless, their conception definitely remains within the limits of the internalist sociology of ideas insofar as intellectual self-concepts on one part and worldviews on the other are considered *separate, heterogeneous* entities existing *prior* to their *mechanical*, fortuitous encounter. One does not at all contribute to the constitution of the other. Intellectual self-concepts as central organizational principles of SIMs are somehow always-already there, ready to opportunistically ride the waves of popularity of social cultural or political movements, or to parasitize “new phases of capitalist expansion”, without any form of genetic connection between the two series of events and actions. Eventually, the “macro” and the “meso” and “micro” levels are kept well apart, as in Collins’ model: there can be only fortuitous, mechanical, casual, external interactions between SIMs and SMs, the latter lacking any intellectual relevance for SIMs, who seem on their part to monopolize the entirety of the intellectual spectrum. Social movements can have importance for SIMs only insofar as they convey power, resources and opportunities for contentious actions *within* scientific institutions whose *logic is heterogeneous* to that of the broader socio-political world, perfectly in keeping with Collins’ model of the two (three) layers of causality.

In sum, Frickel and Gross’ article has the great merit to pose the problem of the relationship between social movements (SMs) and scientific/intellectual movements (SIMs). However, it restricts the search for analogies between them to goal-rational action-patterns operating both in SMs and SIMs, perceived as autonomous and heterogeneous fields of social action. In this way, the question of the peculiarly *intellectual* character of SMs (and by extension, of SMOs) is pushed aside, without noticing that the marginalization of this issue may be a source of bias when it comes to understanding the meaning of the term “intellectual”, namely in its difference with the idea of “scientificity”, taken for granted by the authors. To show where the crux of the problem lies and how it could be formulated in a more fruitful way,

I will now turn to John Peter Nettl's alternative account of the principles of the dynamism of the scientific and intellectual fields.

§ 34. Scientific *and* intellectual movements: John Peter Nettl's conception of intellectual change

At first glance, Nettl's article differs from Frickel and Gross' paper both in its scope and object. Whereas the latter is concerned with enlarging the domain of the internalist sociology of intellectuals by building a theory of scientific and intellectual dynamics that draws on a functional analogy with the concept of social movements in resource mobilization theory, the former seeks more broadly to lay new foundations for the sociology of ideas and intellectuals as such, and thus takes as its central object the very notions of "ideas" and "intellectuals". Nettl's hypothesis – which he has in common with Mannheim (see here Chapter 7, § 50) – is that the sociology of intellectuals should not start from a definition of "intellectuals" according to the roles, professions, institutional structures or human types that are conventionally associated with the label "intellectual". Instead, Nettl suggests that a viable definition "can get off the ground only by looking at ideas as such. It must [start] from inside out, *from* certain types of ideas *toward* certain categories of idea-articulators." (Nettl 1969: 55.) Only in the last steps of the analysis should these be related to the variables of institutionalization and social structure (*ibid.*). "The usual order of priorities is thus reversed; instead of starting with certain types of men and differentiating them according to social role and context, I start with the assumption that types of ideas can be differentially classified and that it is this differentiation that ultimately governs roles and social contexts." (*Ibid.*: 62.)

Despite the difference of scope and object, the respective endeavors of Nettl and Frickel and Gross share an important assumption: the *relational nature of ideas*, or the notion that no idea is stated *in vacuo* but only against the backdrop of already existing ideas. For Nettl, the decisive thing is "the *manner* in which different ideas (...) are put forward and accepted or rejected at the time – in other words the relationship between ideas and their environment." (*Ibid.*: 64, italics added.) This rhymes with Frickel and Gross' proposition according to which "[t]he formulation of a SIM (...) always represents an effort, whether implicit or explicit, at differentiation from prevailing intellectual practices." (Frickel–Gross 2005: 210.) However, Nettl's proposition differs in a decisive way from Frickel and Gross' hypothesis in that it

identifies not one but *two ways* – two “dimensions” – in which an idea can relate to the stock of existing ideas.

“These dimensions can be labeled respectively that of *quality* and that of *scope*. Quality in this context will be defined as acceptance or rejection of the axio-normative (...) structures of given systems of thought, a rearrangement of the significance and interrelationship of known components. Scope, on the other hand, deals with the broadening of the area of discussion through the addition of genuinely new or at least newly relevant knowledge. If and when we are suddenly asked to accept a totally new order of facts as salient and relevant to our concerns, or when we are faced by a new corpus of knowledge altogether, the problem created is obviously different from one in which an argument, however bitter and hectic, takes place along agreed of at least recognized and known dimensions.” (Nettl 1969: 63, italics added.)

According to Nettl’s definitions, ideas concerned with “scope” are “additive”: their value is measured by gauging their innovative character against what is commonly accepted as the standard knowledge on a given issue. Although they are “opposed” to a certain state of knowledge or to certain epistemic practices, this is a constructive opposition insofar as a common value-system is implicitly postulated by both the novelty and the actual standard knowledge. The paradigmatic practice involving the creation of scope-oriented ideas is modern natural science, whether it is taken “as an endless accretion and incorporation of new discoveries, moving deterministically towards the present mature truths” (*ibid.*: 67), or as a discontinuous succession of “revolutions” and normalized periods, as in the Kuhnian image of scientific change.⁶²

Ideas concerned with “quality” differ from those concerned with “scope”. While the latter presuppose the acceptance of a basic framework of values, an unquestioned shared ethos and a range of common *habiti* (on the notion of “scientific ethos”, see Merton 1973: 257-68), the former presuppose a partial or total rejection of such a framework. Ideas on the “quality”

⁶² Kuhn’s model is not inconsistent with Nettl’s ideas on this matter since scientific revolutions are *scientific* revolutions: they are essentially concerned with the reshaping of *scientific* knowledge, regarded as a sphere of action *distinct* from other spheres of social action, in particular the political sphere. This is so even though “[t]he border line between intellectually and socio-politically dangerous doctrines is never easy to draw.” (Nettl 1969: 77.) Indeed, scientific revolutions have a potential for extra-scientific impacts, like in Galilei’s case. This instance, however, can be understood rather well with Mannheim’s category of function-change: Galilei’s theory intended to effect a paradigm-shift on the dimension of “scope”, but, in a given sociopolitical conjuncture, it unexpectedly received a symbolic meaning and a definite sociopolitical (“qualitative”) function.

dimension are concerned with the formulation and furthering of alternative values, value-systems and the necessary choice between them. Also, this sort of idea is *socio-politically functionalized*, insofar as it concerns polemical issues affecting a wide variety of social groups. This also means that qualitatively oriented ideas are not restricted to the more or less closed community of those who formulate them – as in the case with scope-oriented innovations – and involve an imperative to adjudicate on values (Nettl 1969: 64). This may also be the reason why the drive toward qualitative rearrangement of known components occurs typically in the human and social sciences and less often in the exact sciences, “the former disciplines encompassing larger areas of interrelationships and covering more components than the latter.” (*Ibid.*⁶³)

Besides these first two distinctions between ideas concerned with novelty on the scope dimension located mainly in the “particularistic sciences”, on the one hand, and the ideas concerned with qualitative rearrangement of known components located chiefly in the “universalistic humanities” (*ibid.*), on the other, Nettl introduces a third distinctive criterion: “the type of social structure best suited to the diffusion” of these two sorts of new ideas (*ibid.*: 65). This criterion says that

“the greater the extent of universalistic restructuring of the accepted, the more definitely ideas fall within the category of quality, and in turn the greater their dependence on clearly articulated socio-political structures for recognition and diffusion. (...) Qualitative ideas (...) seem to predicate socio-political movements and environments for their manner of formulation, acceptance, and diffusion. Without such movements they become academic curiosities in the history of ideas or may be lost altogether. The choice of problems to be tackled is almost invariably influenced, if not governed, by criteria of social relevance and importance. This type of strenuously argued, qualitative rearrangement of known components, strongly oriented toward the socio-political environment, is well captured by the notion of *dissent* (...). Dissent

⁶³ Nettl’s intimation that the distinction between the broadly understood human sciences and the exact sciences is only a secondary determination of the scope-quality difference is corroborated by the example reported in Frickel and Gross’ article of the so-called Biotheoretical Gathering, a left-wing group of American biochemists established in the 1930s who sought to challenge the classical scientific order and hierarchy by devising a transdisciplinary research-program founded on a “team-based approach to research and administration (...) at odds with classical reductionist, hierarchically ordered science and science policy defended by the ‘Oxbridge establishment’”. The Biotheoretical gathering was ultimately unable to stabilize its agenda in face of the resistance of the established disciplinary authorities.” (Frickel–Gross 2005: 213.) This case shows that there is no *logical* contradiction in qualitative ideas emerging and taking hold within the field of the exact sciences. This general indication does not, of course, yet give an explanation for the correlation between the two types of ideas and the two types of sciences.

as used here is implicit in the structured opposition of preferences in idea-systems rather than in the sense of commitment to new scientific knowledge replacing older, now partially or wholly invalidated knowledge.” (*Ibid.*: 65-67, italics added.)

By contrast, in the case of scope-oriented ideas, “[t]he acceptance of a discovery of something genuinely new, of an exploration of particularistic scope, initially requires a limited number of highly skilled ‘peers’ who eventually diffuse the new by application or teaching.” (*Ibid.*) In this case, “[t]he choice of problems to be tackled is dictated by internal, professional considerations.” (*Ibid.*: 65-66.) Not surprisingly, Nettl considers that “an academic environment (...) is, broadly speaking, the most suitable structure for diffusing scientific ideas of scope – for formulating, testing, validating and spreading them.” (*Ibid.*) Nettl’s idea can also be summed up with the complementary notions of “dissent” and “colonization”: “*dissent* within the framework of basic givens may thus be interpreted primarily as a socio-political phenomenon; the *colonization* of new areas and their integration into the existing stock of thought may be considered as an academic function most suitable for institutionalization in universities.” (*Ibid.*: 78, italics added.)

Revealingly, Nettl’s prime interest lies precisely in those phenomena that Frickel and Gross consider to be “anomalies”: scientific/intellectual programs and movements whose emergence and development is “influenced, if not governed by criteria of social relevance and importance.” (*Ibid.*: 65.) Nettl’s theoretically decisive gesture is to treat this latter kind of SIM as a *distinct type* – defined by its “dissenting” character – that can be *opposed* to the scope-oriented type of SIMs, in which the choice of problems, methods, etc. is commanded by professional considerations *internal* to the scientific field, however radical the desired transformation may be.⁶⁴

Nettl’s conception therefore allows to determine with more precision the relationship between “scientific” and “intellectual” in the expression “scientific/intellectual movements”. A crucial implication that can be drawn from his reasoning is that movements operating predominantly on the scope-dimension ideas should be dubbed “scientific movements”, while the epithet “intellectual” should be reserved only for those movements predicating socio-

⁶⁴ This point drives back to the discussion of Frickel and Gross’ notion of politics. If one uses the epithet “political” in the broad, sociological sense of a “particular *function* of social action” in any possible action-context (Nettl 1966: 45), it becomes difficult to perceive the difference between SIMs oriented to scope and those oriented to quality. More specifically, it makes it difficult to perceive the constitutive openness of quality-oriented SIMs to politics in the narrower (Weberian) sense, which would include the phenomenon of social movements.

political structures and environments for their manner of formulation, acceptance, and diffusion (*ibid.*: 65). Nettl's contention is indeed that only ideas carried by *sociopolitical* movements have to do with *intelligence* proper. "Qualitative ideas" are *potentially* synonymous with "intellectual ideas", while ideas on the scope-dimension should not be qualified as such.⁶⁵ In sum, Nettl suggests that only those SIMs deserve the epithet "intellectual" which are – at least potentially – oriented to a qualitative, content-rearranging activity whose guiding principle and rationale are rooted in worldviews carried by broader social movements. An important implication is that this kind of SIM, far from simply "riding the waves" of extra-academic social movements, are in fact parts and parcels of the latter.

Nettl's disjunction of these two dimensions – scientific and intellectual – holds consequences for the understanding intellectuals and scientists have of their self-image based on their "intellectual roles". Nettl criticizes the "indiscriminate amalgamation of intellectuals with scientists into a cultural stratum of the learned and skilled" (*ibid.*: 98) and consequently proposes to distinguish intellectuals both from the catch-all category of "men of ideas" and in particular from that of scientists (*ibid.*: 62, 77) (more on this here in Chapter 7). In this regard, it is interesting to look back on Frickel and Gross' theory by using Nettl's distinctions. Of the five different ways of achieving "novelty" by SIMs (Frickel–Gross 2005: 208), three clearly refer to scope-related issues: 1) the problematization of "previously undiscussed or underdiscussed topics", 2) the introduction of "entirely new theoretical perspective on established terrain" and 3) the addition of new methods and rule-making procedures to existing ones. The fourth, 4) – the alteration of "the boundaries of existing scientific or intellectual fields" – can, in certain circumstances, be implied by the qualitative rearrangement of known components driven by rationales imported from social movements, but the authors' examples from the hard sciences – biochemistry and molecular biology – indicate that they did not understand the idea of "altering the boundaries" in this sense. Only the fifth – the blurring of the boundary between science and nonscience – seems to logically entail transdisciplinarity, although it is a question whether and in what sense the given examples – eugenism and "sustainability science" – really involve *dissent*, rather than that sort of colonization of new areas of research in which, precisely, SIMs opportunistically ride the waves of fashionable political ideologies of the time.

⁶⁵ "Potentially" is an important provision here because, as Nettl remarks, "mere rearrangement or inversion by itself predicates nothing other than paradox." (Nettl 1969: 80.) The further requirements that ideas must fulfill in order to be considered genuinely intellectual will be specified in Chapter 7, §§ 50-51.

It thus seems that from Nettl's perspective, Frickel and Gross' expression of "scientific/intellectual movements" entails a confusion between an "intra-professional distinction" and a "social and intellectual disjunction" (cp. Nettl 1969: 112, n. 82). This indeed seems implied by Frickel and Gross's (probable) connection between the term "scientific" and the "exact sciences" on the one hand and of the term "intellectual" with the human and social sciences on the other hand (mentioned in § 33 above). In Germany, the opposition between the two types of science can be traced back to the *Methodenstreit* whose main stake was the methodological autonomy of the human sciences ("*Geistes- und Kulturwissenschaften*"), including philosophy, in the face of the "colonial" claims of the exact or natural sciences ("*Naturwissenschaften*").⁶⁶ Later, at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s in England, the opposition between natural and human sciences gave birth to a resounding debate between C. P. Snow and F. R. Leavis on the so-called two cultures, the "culture" of hard sciences and that of the humanities and literary studies (see Lepenies 1990).

These debates may be reverberated in Frickel and Gross' expression of "scientific/intellectual movement". Following Nettl, my contention is that the distinction between the "two cultures" (scientific and literary), on the one hand, and the two types of movements and ideas, on the other, do in fact concern different matters. Where Snow's polemic postulates a "distinction between two types of *professional* academic activity or culture", Nettl points to a "social and intellectual disjunction" which transcends that opposition (Nettl 1969: 112, n. 82). For Nettl, the "human-scientific mandarin" is not more "intellectual" than the "exact-scientific mandarin". Conversely, provided that they engage in that sort of "strenuously argued, qualitative rearrangement of known components, strongly oriented toward the socio-political environment" that Nettl tries to capture with the notion of dissent, "hard scientists" can be as much intellectuals as those working in the humanities. The criterion of distinction between "scientific" and "intellectual" thus must lie elsewhere than in the difference between two "academic cultures" or two types of science.

With these issues having been clarified and having constructed his dichotomous ideal-types, Nettl goes on to tackle the challenging task of bringing these types closer to empirical reality. He first warns that since these are ideal-types, one should not expect to find pure examples of them in reality: in practice, "the difference between these two analytical categories

⁶⁶ This, of course, was a central problem in Mannheim's sociology of culture and knowledge (see Mannheim 1982). For a review of the psychologism and sociologism disputes, see Kusch 2003. For an indicative bibliography on the *Methodenstreit*, see Meja–Stehr [1990] 2015: 10, n. 2.

of ideas is not absolute.” (*Ibid.*: 63.) The two of them often intermesh, so that their difference “is in the main a question of saliency; either the new dominates and controls the qualitative rearrangements that follow from it, or the new is incidental to the reshuffling of known and accepted components.” (*Ibid.*) Rare are ideas of which it can be predicated with immediate evidence and in a definitive way that they are scope-oriented or quality-seeking: ideas are inherently polyvalent formations, synchronically as well as diachronically. The example of Galilei’s discoveries is the paradigmatic case of scope-oriented ideas becoming qualitative in a specific historical setting (of which their formulator may be, at least initially, unaware). On the opposite side, “as Marx and Comte showed so clearly, even the most determined preferences for a particular hierarchy or arrangement of socio-historical components can be presented and accepted as scientific truth.” (*Ibid.*: 67.)

This indetermination makes itself felt also at the level of the institutional embeddedness of the two sorts of innovative ideas. As Nettls writes: “[t]he relationship between the appearance of ideas on the scope dimension and on the dimension of quality (...) may have to be mutually reinforcing if it is to be effective.” (*Ibid.*: 79). He evokes two counter-intuitive constellations in which unexpected cross-dependencies can be observed. On the one hand, “new ideas involving scope produced in academic institutions often need ‘outside’ support in the form of dissent before they can be diffused and institutionalized in a social context.” (*Ibid.*) The examples given by Frickel and Gross for “the blurring of the boundaries between science and nonscience” in the case of eugenism and sustainability science seem to fit well this kind of constellation; the case might be the same today with the experimentation with crossbreeding of human and animal genomes.

On the other hand, ideas on the quality dimension may expressly seek types of institutional backgrounds traditionally associated with ideas involving scope – namely and typically universities. While the first case seems to relate to the more or less technical problem of the application of scientific knowledge produced in an academic or laboratory context (and thus does not in itself transcend the scope-dimension), the second configuration – qualitative ideas having extra-academic socio-political support *which nevertheless seek academic soil to thrive* – seems to involve a *special kind of qualitative ideas*, whose peculiarity is their *double dependency* on academic and extra-academic backgrounds. In Nettl’s view, the rise of the *social sciences* from the early nineteenth century offers just such a paradigm of quality-oriented ideas seeking academic backgrounds: “[t]he concept of social science itself suggest an amalgam of society and science. According to the way the terms have been employed here, social science suggests a fusion between scope and quality; it collapses (at least intellectually) the two

dimensions into one.” (*Ibid.*: 98.) The paradigm of such a collapsing is the very idea of the founding fathers of sociology – Comte and Saint-Simon – according to which “[s]ocial life too can be understood as well as engineered (...) by incorporating and applying new areas of scientific knowledge.” (*Ibid.*)

This “bigamous marriage”, as Nettl says, between “scope-oriented science” and “component-reversing, qualitative intellectualism” has far-reaching consequences for the intellectuals as the bearers of qualitative ideas, as well as for their institutional backgrounds (*ibid.*: 99). Indeed, this evolution results in what seems today evidence, namely the inevitability of “scientific justification in social matters”, an expectation which tends to gradually replace “the classical intellectual by the scientist on the intellectual’s own particular ground.” (*Ibid.*; see also Kettler 2000: 305). This process drives the intellectual into a sort of Catch-22 situation: “[h]is socio-political role has disappeared, for as a social scientist he is almost invariably back in a science-dominated university, from which the leap into socio-structural dissent is barred by an almost completely unbridgeable institutional chasm. And if he is not an academic and not institutionalized at all, he has even less chance of making an impact.” (Nettl 1969: 102; see also Stehr [1981] 2018: 136).

This tendency is reinforced by a coextensive process of the “ever more dominating replacement of social logic for purposes of action by the logic of machinery and the acceptance of the concomitant priorities of technological needs over social action.” (Nettl 1969: 99). As Chapter 6 will detail, this is the same phenomenon that Mannheim denounced in his time as the “paralyzing effect of functional rationalization on (...) substantial rationality in the sense of the capacity for independent judgment.” (Mannheim 1940: 58.) According to Nettl, the gradual submission of qualitative inclinations to the imperatives of scope-oriented research was significantly furthered in the 20th century by the exponential development of higher education. The dominance of scope-orientation over qualitative proclivities in the social sciences meant the irreversible shattering of the universal dimension still present in Comte’s project and its particularization “in an increasingly differentiated academic environment into distinct disciplinary ‘fields’ with carefully guarded frontiers”, while the “scope-oriented teaching – and of course learning – function separate[d] both subject matter and those who produce it from their socio-political environment.” (Nettl 1969: 113.⁶⁷)

⁶⁷ The process Nettl describes here has famously been decried already by the three “founding fathers” of sociology, Comte, Durkheim, and Simmel (Comte 1982: 24, 393-394; 1978: 126; Durkheim 1967: 347; 1938: 13; Simmel 1968).

As against this fatalistic diagnosis of the destiny of the critical academic intellectuals, Nettl sketches a *possible* alternative, a brighter evolutionary path for the marriage between scope- and quality-oriented ideas – between what he calls “scientism” and “intellectualism”. According to this scenario, under specific circumstances, the “proliferation of universities and their almost complete capture of social science thinking, could in fact lead to a new form of institutionalized dissent based on universities (...) as a power base for dissent within but against society.” (*Ibid.*) This evolution would ultimately result in a partial rehabilitation of the role of the critical intellectual *within* academic institutions. Although this scenario must count with the fact that “[d]issent based on a universalistic rearrangement of known components combines badly with the limited or parochial concerns of the professional scientist” (*ibid.*: 115), and that it thereby remains “easy to drive a wedge between the two conflicting roles” (*ibid.*), there nevertheless seems to be a way of constraining the scope-oriented faculty to play the game of the “putative intellectuals disguised as professors in the humanities and the social sciences.” (*Ibid.*: 114.) This way would be to “authoritatively (...) challenge the scientific status of the mandarin’s articulation, especially in its social science sector; thus credibly and professionally undermining the ideological ‘scientism’ on which the ‘modern’ displacement of intellectuals by social scientists is based and by which it is justified.” (*Ibid.*: 116-17.)

How could this new “form of generalized dissent by scientists” come about (*ibid.*: 117)? How can such a reversal of the displacement of intellectuals within the academy be conceived in the first place? A possible lead could be to envisage a mode of fusion of scope- and quality-oriented ideas going in a direction different from the foundational program of the social sciences: not from scientific knowledge towards society, as in Comte, Saint-Simon, Spencer and their 20th century counterparts, but *from social knowledge toward academic science*. Based on what has been said so far I believe there is grounds to understand Nettl’s idea of challenging the “scientific status” of the ruling social-scientific paradigm and the “ideological scientism” of the “mandarin’s articulation” as the *unveiling of the value-laden character of the allegedly value-free social science*, or as the *exhibition of the disavowed socio-political rootedness of social-scientific knowledge* – or, to paraphrase Frickel and Gross: as the violation on a grand scale of the disciplinary expectation of refraining from the assertion that science, and especially social science, *is* political.

§ 35. Mannheim's sociology of knowledge as a scientific/intellectual movement (SIM)

The idea of debunking the disavowed socio-political rootedness of scientific knowledge by unveiling the value-laden character of social science obviously resonates with the aims of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge. In this paragraph, I would like to go beyond this feeling of resonance by exploring more systematically some of the implications of the prior discussions regarding the question what exactly the status of the sociology of knowledge within the social-scientific disciplinary fields is. It seems that the general consensus is that the sociology of knowledge is either a discipline, a sub-discipline, a field, a subfield, or possibly a specialty area of sociology (see among others: Merton 1968: 562; Berger–Luckmann 1967: 15; Hamilton 1974; Camic–Gross 2001: 236). However, in the past decades this understanding has been called into question in various ways (Kucklick 1983; Swidler–Arditi 1994), most notably in the frame of reflections over Mannheim's legacy (Meja–Stehr 1999: xiii-xx; Kettler 1967: 402; Kettler 1975: 69; Meja–Stehr 1982; Buxton–Rehorick 1988; Meja–Stehr 1993).

Some of the latter authors also proposed alternative conceptualizations of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge in particular. David Kettler for instance tried to grasp the sociology of knowledge with Mannheim's own notion of a *style of thought*. He also put forth the idea that the sociology of knowledge was initially meant by Mannheim as a “technique for discovering what it means to be an intellectual” and “to provide a moral and practical orientation” both for intellectuals and for the general public.” (Kettler 1967: 402-406.) Building on Kettler's proposition, Buxton and Rehorick in turn defined the sociology of knowledge “as an intellectual orientation, rather than a discipline.” (Buxton–Rehorick 1988: 72.)

“The sociology of knowledge, as given form and direction by Mannheim, was never intended to be another substantive field or separate discipline; it has represented a way for intellectuals to confront problems at the foundations of their disciplines, and a way to be engaged in the public sphere. (...) Given the changing role of the intellectual in the early decades of the twentieth century, the sociology of knowledge provided a necessary ‘escape valve’ which would permit the scholar to ‘roam through domains’ without appearing either dilettantish or lacking in social responsibility. In this respect, the sociology of knowledge never was, nor did Mannheim intend it to be, a separate discipline or subfield. It is an intellectual orientation which, like Halley's comet, appears bright and more visible in some epochs, dimmer and obscure in others.” (*Ibid.*: 72-78, italics added.)

While I agree with these critics and value their suggestions, I believe that considering the results of the above discussion of Nettl's and Frickel and Gross' conceptions of scientific change can bring closer to a more precise definition of what the sociology of knowledge is, granted that it cannot simply be located as a distinct disciplinary field. My first suggestion is simple: Mannheim's sociology of knowledge may be best understood as a SIM. To make sense of this hypothesis, I will apply Frickel and Gross' category to Mannheim's sociology of knowledge to see whether and to what extent the former fits the latter.

To this effect, I will first quickly recall Frickel and Gross' main propositions. According to their definition, "SIMs are collective efforts to pursue research programs or projects for thought in the face of resistance from others in the scientific or intellectual community". (Frickel–Gross 2005: 206.) A movement can be said to be a SIM "only if, at the time of its emergence, it significantly challenges received wisdom or dominant ways of approaching some problem or issue and thus encounters resistance", in other terms, if it entails "dramatic breaks with past practices." (*Ibid.*: 207.) Indeed, "[t]he formulation of a SIM (...) always represents an effort, whether implicit or explicit, at differentiation from prevailing intellectual practices." (*Ibid.* 210-11.) Yet, it would be misleading to suppose that SIMs are purely negative entities. On the contrary, they "revolve around positive visions as to how inquiry in a field should be restructured." (*Ibid.*: 216.) Then, based on such a positive and "coherent program for scientific or intellectual change or advance" (*ibid.*: 206), SIMs "are constituted through collective action aimed at the institutionalization of new social forms across the sciences and humanities." (*Ibid.*: 216.)

Mannheim's program for sociology corresponds to these criteria: perceived as a research program on its own right by supporters and opponents alike, Mannheim's sociology of knowledge significantly departed not only from the practices and epistemological and methodological assumptions of the human-scientific disciplines of his time (see Mannheim 1982b: 147-149; 1963: 264-311), but also from other projects attempting to formulate a program for the sociology of knowledge (Scheler, Jerusalem, Durkheim, etc.; see Mannheim 1971b: 71-104). As illustrated by the reception of the first public presentation of his project at the Zürich Congress of German sociologists in 1928 (see the discussions by Wilbrandt, Singer, Lederer, Löwe, Meusel and Elias in Meja–Stehr 1990: 92-102), as well as by the intra- and extra-academic support he received prior and leading to his nomination to full professorship in Frankfurt (see Loader–Kettler 2002; Kettler 2007), Mannheim's project received wide recognition, as well as political-institutional support. On the other hand, Mannheim's rise did also trigger strong opposition from his academic peers, as well as from extra-academic

intellectual milieus (see next paragraph), all indicating that Mannheim's project was indeed a SIM in Frickel and Gross' sense.

Another set of criteria advanced by Frickel and Gross concerns the *types of achievements* ascribable to SIMs (Frickel–Gross 2005: 208). In these case too, Mannheim's program fits the criteria: it has problematized “previously undiscussed or underdiscussed topics” in his own domain (for example: intellectuals, utopia, ideology, styles of thought, worldviews, etc.); it introduced “entirely new theoretical perspectives on established terrain” (for example: the socio-historical functionalization of epistemology and methodology; a new theory of interpretation, etc.); it proposed new methods for human-scientific investigations (for example the method of sociological interpretation of intellectual history); it did seek to “alter the boundaries of existing scientific or intellectual fields”, namely with respect to political science and political sociology, as well as to social science and philosophy (on the problem of transdisciplinarity, see here Chapter 6). Most importantly, as Chapter 7 will show, it blurred “the boundary between science and nonscience” (see for instance Mannheim 1963: 164-66, 168-71, 184-85, 190.)

Finally, regarding the typical motivations to participate in SIMs (Frickel–Gross 2005: 210), Mannheim is certainly concerned with the following ones: dissatisfaction with the dominant intellectual practices (see above § 15); scientific or intellectual doubt (a fundamental theme of *Ideology and Utopia*; see for instance Mannheim 1963: 42); “lack of fit” between his worldview and “the main intellectual tendencies of the day” (see my reconstruction of his criticism of “academic scholasticism” in Chapter 6; see also Mannheim 1963: 173-74; Mannheim 2001: 3-5); lack of fit between the social hinterland and life-experiences from which he entered the academy and the perspective of the work being done there (see Mannheim 2001c: 99-104).

§ 36. The sociology of knowledge on the scope/quality continuum, in light of the “sociology of knowledge dispute”

I believe these congruences make plausible the hypothesis according to which Mannheim's program for the sociology of knowledge can be considered a SIM. However, the question remains what kind of SIM Mannheim's sociology of knowledge is. To answer this question, I suggest trying to locate the latter on the continuum between Nettl's dichotomous idealtypes of scope-oriented and quality-seeking research and scholarship.

At first sight, this task seems rather straightforward. Indeed, the passages in Mannheim's oeuvre showing his bent toward dissent as the "qualitative rearrangement of known components" are rather abundant. His estrangement from the secluded, contemplative lifestyle associated with academic environments is voiced in many passages of his oeuvre,⁶⁸ along with his skepticism toward the achievements of scope-oriented academic research in political theory.⁶⁹ The sentence, written in "A Theory of Culture and its Knowability", according to which "[a]ll sociological thinking is originally rooted in a transformative will" can be read as Mannheim's "profession of faith" on this issue (Mannheim 1982b: 199).

Further evidence in this sense can be extracted from a text Mannheim wrote in response to the rather vehement attack on *Ideology and Utopia* by the German Romanist Ernst Robert Curtius, urging German sociology to take the same pathway as French sociology a few decades earlier: to transition from a politicized science meant to fight the clergy and royalist reaction to "what [sociology] always ought to have been: an honest specialized discipline." (Curtius 2015: 113). In his response, Mannheim rejects Curtius' charge by offering his narrative of the birth of German sociology.

"Though belatedly, sociology is entering Germany's official consciousness. Unofficial, uninvited, an intruder, it had long been present, but rather as an outsider to thinking, most of the time no more than the bearer of social opposition. (...) What is the exceptional nature and depth of this retarded breakthrough of sociology? The person who thinks about sociology to the end and is willing to relate it to himself and to take it on, finds himself in a critical situation, for this science has from its beginnings been an organon of self-reflection and self-enlargement." (Mannheim 1971d: 262-63, transl. mod.)

⁶⁸ To provide an example among many: "Summing up the main difference between this contemplative, intellectualistic point of view and the living standpoint which is accepted in the realm of practice, we might say that the scientist always approaches his subject-matter with an ordering and schematizing tendency, whereas the practical man – in our case the political person – seeks orientation with reference to action." (Mannheim 1963: 173.)

⁶⁹ "The theorizing subject is liable to be misled in the study of politics because his own contemplative attitude tends to subordinate his politically active attitude, thus concealing fundamental relationships rather than emphasizing them and tracing out their ramifications. The fact that sciences are cultivated in academic surroundings constitutes a danger in that the attitudes adequate to the understanding of an actual sector of human experience are suppressed in the contemplative atmosphere which prevails in academic institutions." (Mannheim 1963: 173.)

First, note the epithets of sociology in this passage: “unofficial”, “uninvited”, “intruder”, “outsider”. All these qualifications suggest that Mannheim did not perceive his project as a set of scope-oriented innovations, supposing a “constructive opposition” based on the tacit acceptance of a common value-system orienting the practices of both innovators and those defiant to the novelty proposed. These are obviously the expressions of dissent. That the issues brought by German sociology into the academic life of the epoch have a socio-political impetus is underscored by Mannheim when he describes sociology as “the bearer of social opposition”, seeking to intervene in the field of sociopolitical struggle by furthering the synthesis of “the worldviews of two possibilities of the modern vision, the ‘bourgeois’ and the socialist (...)” (*Ibid.*: 262.)

Mannheim insists on another “qualitative” feature of German sociology (which in this debate is but a metonymy for Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge): its value as a practice of *self-education*. According to Mannheim, contrary to French sociology, the sociopolitically functionalized dimension of German sociology is neither incidental nor temporary; it is not a childhood disease that will be suppressed by its integration into the disciplinary division of science. The reason is that German sociology was born as the most up-to-date expression of the actual philosophy-of-history situation which, contrary to the French case, is bound to last because it concerns the essence of our times, the present stage of modernity, characterized by a process of colonialism and globalization in which “nations and countries [are] brought closer, but also ranged against one another, when the occident broke into the orient in order to decompose it in its traditional form.” (*Ibid.*: 263.) This movement is concomitant with what Mannheim calls the “democratization of culture”, which means that “social strata and classes which in decisive matters were previously present only in a passive capacity and whose will, range of instincts, thoughts, and habits had been passed by, broke into the power structure and into the sphere of consciously attended culture with claims of their own.” (*Ibid.*)

The need for sociology stems from the fact that these processes make one’s own position in the world and one’s identity increasingly “questionable”. German sociology emerged to bring an answer to the eminently qualitative “Socratic” question “Who are we?” by working out the instruments allowing for modern individuals to acquire the level of self-enlargement and self-reflexivity corresponding to the present spiritual situation, which traditional forms of cultivation and philosophy proved unable to provide (more on this here in Chapter 6). As Mannheim writes, “what is decisive is that in Germany this possibility, which exists for almost all men now living – namely, to enlarge one’s view of the world and to this end avail oneself of the method of sociology, eventually *exceeds the problem area of this special discipline*. The

sociological problem constellation in the narrower sense transcends itself in two directions – in the direction of *philosophy* and in the direction of a *politically active world orientation*.” (*Ibid.*, italics added.)

Finally, I will mention a rather luxurious statement made by Mannheim about the qualitative, transdisciplinary character of the sociology of knowledge, in which he contrasts the scope and quality aspects of sociological knowledge by describing the first as a purely additive, two-dimensional broadening of the domain of the known and by characterizing the second as a three-dimensional enlargement of the modern person’s – not just the scholar’s – whole life. Sociology of knowledge gives access to a radically new attitude and feeling of life as such, amounting to an inner transmutation, to a leap to a new and higher form of humanly existence.

“Because in Germany the philosophic impulse was alive in the form of the philosophy of consciousness and life, while epistemology of positivism had already been overcome, here every accretion to knowledge and every enlargement of the horizon could become topical in its relevance. Thus, *to know more did not simply become a mere additional enrichment of experiences of Being*. Instead, the three-dimensional deepening of vision – in the direction of the telluric, the social and the historical – has, in the form of a sociology that reaches into questions of philosophy, become the *organon of the new man*, the *breakthrough of a new feeling of life*: the human being is once again shedding its skin, striving after an enlarged form of its existence.” (Mannheim 1971d: 264, transl. mod., italics added.)

Despite these forceful formulations, one should not hasten to conclude that Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge is to be located unambiguously on the quality-side of Nettl’s continuum. Mannheim’s institutional location and academic career-path obviously tells another story. He was also quite insistent that research in the sociology of knowledge as a “systematically applicable method” must build on empirical evidence and even supposes a “devotion to empiricism” (“*Empirieförmmigkeit*”) (*ibid.*).⁷⁰ However, it is the so-called

⁷⁰ “The most important task of the sociology of knowledge at present is to demonstrate its capacity in actual research in the historical-sociological realm. In this realm it must work out criteria of exactness for establishing empirical truths and for assuring their control. It must emerge from the stage where it engages in casual intuitions and gross generalities (such as the crude dichotomy involved in the assertion that here we find bourgeois thinking, there we find proletarian thinking, etc.) though even this may involve sacrificing its slogan-like clearcutness.” (Mannheim 1963: 306-307.)

“sociology of knowledge dispute” – triggered by the 1929 publication of *Ideology and Utopia* – that contains the most instructive material regarding this issue.

If, for the present purpose, one disregards criticisms exerted on epistemological grounds (Grünwald’s and von Schelting’s are the best known), as well as the otherwise interesting and complex essays by politically moderate progressives such as Paul Tillich, Hannah Arendt and Günther Anders, it is possible to divide the critical literature in two groups. The first is concerned with the question of the relationship between Marxism and the sociology of knowledge. This group can be further divided in two sub-groups. The first, comprising Marcuse and Ernst Lewalter, perceives the sociology of knowledge as a “sophisticated reformulation of the materialist conception of history”. The second sub-group – which includes Horkheimer, Wittfogel, Fogarasi, Neurath – is more critical and explains the “sudden popularity” of Mannheim’s program by its capacity to neutralize the political impetus of Marxist theory (Meja–Stehr 2015: 6). The second major group of critics is constituted by conservatives like Curtius and Eduard Spranger, the first attacking Mannheim because of the perceived “imperialist” tendencies of his sociology of knowledge seeking to replace philosophy as the discipline suited to give general intellectual orientation (Curtius 2015: 113), the second criticizing it because it undermines the distinction between ideology and science (Spranger 2015: 239-40).

I will begin with considering Horkheimer’s criticism, who belongs to the second group of Marxist critics. Horkheimer formulates in a more urbane manner the same objection that can be found in the more aggressive reviews of Fogarasi, Wittfogel or Neurath.

“The incorporation of Karl Marx’s doctrines into the contemporary human sciences has led to a perversion of the meaning of his basic concepts into their opposite. These doctrines essentially aimed to achieve a consistent explanation of social changes in terms of class relations as they have been brought about by economic development. The goal of Marx’s science was neither the discovery of a ‘totality’ nor of some total and absolute truth, but rather the transformation of particular social conditions. (...) The work of Karl Mannheim, above all his book *Ideologie und Utopie*, represents the most recent and especially sophisticated attempt to incorporate some basic Marxist concepts into an approach clearly informed by a philosophy of the spirit.” (Horkheimer 2015: 140.)

The sociology of knowledge is recognized by Horkheimer as the fruit of the introduction of Marxism into the academia, but this move is seen as leading to the devitalization and

distortion of the original meaning and intent of Marxist thought. The point of Horkheimer's criticism is that theory as a moment of revolutionary class struggle is turned here into a depoliticized, contemplative stance resulting in nothing but scope-oriented academic hair-splitting. Horkheimer, for whom Marxism is the only true science, accuses Mannheim of "philosophism": "[i]n the sociology of knowledge, the modern concept of ideology is assigned a task which runs counter to the theory from which it arose. Marx wanted to transform philosophy into a positive science and into practice. The ultimate intent of the sociology of knowledge, however, is a philosophical one." (*Ibid.*: 144.) Mannheim's sociology of knowledge thus appears as turning a decidedly qualitatively bent theoretical practice focused on social and political dissent into an innocuous object for scope-oriented academic research.

On the conservative side of the reviewers of Mannheim's book stand Curtius and Spranger. The latter's short but incisive essay charges Mannheim with the exact opposite of Horkheimer's accusations.

"One of the symptoms of the present crisis in science is the tendency to interpret scientific systems as ideologies. (...) The sociology of knowledge considers the prevailing historical and factual form of science as a variable which is functionally dependent upon social conditions in a particular epoch and stratum. In *Ideologie und Utopie*, Karl Mannheim pursues this line of reasoning to its extreme (...). If we fail to go beyond this new sociologising in science (...) the very idea of science will inevitably be undone. (...) Any obscurities that may occur in the world of facts are more likely caused by an ideology in its search for power than by the impartial ethos of the search for truth, and thus belong in the realm of the pathology of science rather than in that of its inherent structure. Ideologies which have been unmasked as such are not science." (Spranger 2015: 239-240.)

Assimilating Mannheim's position to the state of affairs Mannheim expressly seeks to overcome, Spranger accuses *Ideology and Utopia* with "interpret[ing] scientific systems as ideologies", which amounts, according to him, to undermining the very possibility of science. Spranger admits that distortions do occur in science, but such distortions are the pernicious effects of ideologies – which are precisely not science, but "pathologies" resulting from an undue interference of power-motives with the impartial ethos of science. To translate Spranger's criticism into Netti's vocabulary, Mannheim is presented as the paragon of the nefarious tendency of the *politicization of science* seeking to turn a disinterested intellectual activity into a weapon of class-struggle.

Curtius' case is more complex than Spranger's and his answer, despite its disturbing features, shows a deeper insight into the complexity of Mannheim's project (revealingly enough, it is the only review of *Ideology and Utopia* to which Mannheim ever responded). Curtius' essay concentrates on two related but nevertheless analytically separate issues that I will call respectively the *place* (or *status*) of sociology and the *action* of sociology.

The first issue refers to the perceived "imperialism" of (Mannheimian) sociology, seen as striving to replace philosophy on its own grounds, namely in its ability and licence to dispense qualitative knowledge providing intellectual principles and life-orientation. To fend off such a proposition, Curtius follows two courses of argumentation. First, he notes that the French case shows that it can be acceptable that a new science, such as sociology, be politically functionalized *at its inception*. Nonetheless, the qualitative pretense of specialized areas of research is an anomaly akin to a childhood disease, which must imperatively be overcome if the child is ever to reach adulthood. In this respect, Mannheim's book may be pardoned as the expression of the youthful errance of a promising new discipline. However, his posture becomes unacceptable when he oversteps the field of jurisdiction of his own discipline and attempts to colonize such a venerable science as philosophy by laying claim on the life-orienting faculty of philosophical knowledge. Thus,

"when one of [sociology's] noted teachers tells us that it 'will gradually become a key science' for modern people, that the sociological interpretation (*Soziologismus*) will become a 'tool in mediating the reality of everyday experience and of history', that sociology involves a 'scientific diagnosis of the culture of an epoch', and when the method of this science is recommended to us as 'an inquiry at a mature stage of thinking' – when confronted with all these claims, we may indeed inquire about their legitimacy and thus about the very limits of sociology." (Curtius 2015: 113-14.)

Yet, Curtius does not deny all relevance to sociology. As he writes,

"[w]e support all varieties of this kind of analysis, not least among them the sociological, but we deny their ultimate jurisdiction. All these partial perspectives merely prepare the ground for a philosophical ontology of man. This explains why the sociology of knowledge, as conceived by Max Scheler (...) was seen as an auxiliary discipline of philosophical anthropology, which in turn was to culminate in an – unfinished – metaphysics. Philosophy alone is the queen of the sciences, and every attempt to displace her by a specialized science inevitably leads to a

distortion of the conception of the world and of man. Only philosophy can offer the ‘comprehensive orientation’ which Mannheim proclaims for sociology.” (*Ibid.*: 118-19.)

In sum, Curtius maintains that sociology and the sociology of knowledge can be accepted if they restrict themselves to an appendice or a prolegomenon to philosophy, more particularly to the project of a fundamental ontology in view of a new metaphysics – that is to say, if they renounce to their claim to orientation corresponding to the present conditions of modern life.

Contrary to Spranger, Curtius does not content himself with dogmatically reasserting the precedence of philosophy over sociology in matters of “comprehensive orientation” but also challenges Mannheim’s argument sustaining the “imperialist” claims of his sociology. Curtius perceptively identifies the *unprecedented novelty* of the present era as Mannheim’s core assumption for his claim that in face of this novel situation only sociology can provide orientation for contemporary people. To this thesis of living a threshold-moment between epochs, Curtius opposes the biblical formula according to which “there is nothing new under the sun”. History is fundamentally *continuous*, even *repetitive*. The “elemental perplexity of our time” is thus not a philosophy-of-history situation, just a psychopathological symptom reflecting the “shock neurosis” of Germany’s defeat in World War I (*ibid.*: 115).

In a rather unflattering way, Curtius intimates that, if Mannheim’s project is somewhat more than just this, it is only because it is the newest expression of the kind of spineless nihilism “already well described by Nietzsche, of uprooted, modern intellectual strata.” (*Ibid.*: 114.) As Curtius opines,

“[t]here is surely an inner logic according to which a nihilistic world-view is inevitably connected with the conceptual and social dissolution of ‘ossified forms’. There is nothing to be said against this – at the intellectual level – as long as this sentiment is content to remain a kind of confession based on a world-view. However, *once it attempts to pass itself off as scientific knowledge, once it is taught and demands to be heard at German universities as the latest finding of the most recent ‘key science’*, then serious objection must be permitted.” (*Ibid.*: 117, italics added.)

Curtius ends his charge against Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge with a diatribe voicing the classical mandarinal objection to Mannheim according to which he makes science political by unduly introducing an extra-academic qualitative dimension into disinterested and

value-neutral academic research. On the other hand, Curtius' injunction addressed to the university youth to resist all attempts by scientific authorities (viz. Mannheim) to dissuade them from worshipping mythologies of (national) greatness and "idealism" shows that he perceived also the other aspect of Mannheim's endeavors: an intervention in the public sphere *from within* the academic field by the *scientific (scope-oriented) deflation* of the conservative and far-right ideologies serving as justifications for the mandarin's privileged position.⁷¹

"'We have a case of ideological distortion' – according to this sociology – 'when we try to resolve conflicts and anxieties by having recourse to absolutes, according to which it is no longer possible to live. This is the case when we create »myths«, worship »greatness in itself«, avow allegiance to ideals, while in our actual conduct we are following other interests which we try to mask by simulating an unconscious righteousness, which is only too easily transparent' (p. 52; p. 86). This can be read – word-for-word – in Mannheim's book. *We hope that youth – German youth – will resist all attempts by scientific authorities to dissuade them from an appreciation of greatness and idealism.* We believe that German youth will never adopt an 'attitude for which all ideas have been discredited and all utopias have been destroyed'." (*Ibid.*: 117, italics added.)

What conclusions can be drawn from this discussion? The first thing is that Mannheim's sociology of knowledge as a SIM was (rightly) perceived by his contemporaries as calling into question the scientific status of the ruling paradigms in the human sciences, and more generally the "ideological scientism" of the German mandarin, terrified at the perspective of the recognition of the value-laden character of academic science, and their own role as academic ideologues. This, obviously, also came with the consequent negation of the conventional

⁷¹ Interestingly, this latter criticism echoes in a way certain Marxist criticisms of Mannheim, according to which there is not a "more dangerous interpretation and one more hostile to Marxism than one which thoroughly destroys the decisive unconditionality of the proletarian deed (*Tat*) and leads to universal opportunism." (Marcuse 2015: 131.) If indeed, "Marxism is shown to be an ideology just like the ideas of conservatism or democracy, does this not destroy Marxism's claim to validity, just as Marx himself, by revealing bourgeois thought as ideology, believed to have destroyed its validity claims?" (*Ibid.*) It must be underlined that these quotations from Marcuse's text do *not* reflect Marcuse's position but are precisely intended to expose the weakness of the "orthodox" Marxist criticisms of *Ideology and Utopia*. Marcuse refutes these readings and credits Mannheim with having given the theoretical instruments to Marxism to overcome a too confined self-understanding.

distinction between the context of discovery and the context of justification.⁷² With Frickel and Gross' words, Mannheim was perceived as someone who has "violated on a grand scale" the disciplinary expectation of *not* exposing the political roots of academic science in that he directly challenged his peers to recognize the qualitative dimension of their theoretical and

⁷² With respect to the necessity of maintaining the distinction between the context of discovery and the context of justification, Mannheim's declared adversaries and some of his self-declared supporters agreed with each other – against Mannheim. Werner Sombart's intervention after Mannheim's talk during the sixth congress of German sociologists is emblematic of the double-faced attitude of Mannheim's "supporters". Sombart begins with the following statement: "I am in the delightful situation of generally agreeing with the second speaker [Karl Mannheim]. I can, just as the previous speaker, readily agree with all six or even seven theses which he has proposed. In particular, *I concede that all knowledge is existentially connected (seinsverbunden)*, including natural scientific knowledge. Modern natural science too is quite inconceivable without the specific spirit out of which it emerged." (Sombart 2015: 90, italics added.) After these preliminaries, however, Sombart exempts one kind of mental formation – namely "values" – from under the existential connectedness he has just admitted as being universal. "Values remain absolute and objective. Valuations, however, are personal, hence socially and historically determined, and they lack universal validity. For this reason, we have insisted upon value-freedom, although we are aware that our choice of problems is determined by values and that the object of our study is value-laden (so that a valuation is always a personal act) and that attaining universal validity under these conditions is perhaps an inaccessible goal. (...) [V]aluation does not belong to science; thus I can pursue science quite independently of my own value perspective." (*Ibid.*: 92). Curtius advances a similar argument in regard to the limits of sociological interpretation: "Today we partake in a great spiritual movement which aims, from the most varied starting points, at the same objective: to define the essence of man. In order to bring out this essence in all its purity, all instinctual and historical forces which co-determine human existence, and in this way relativise its absolute quality, must be laid bare. We are not purely spiritual creatures; we are affected by bodily structure, race, psyche, nation and social stratum. Each real person may be a pycnomorph (according to Kretschmer), Durarian (according to Gunther) or introvert (according to Jung). If he is, in addition, a German, he may, one might hope, share in the characteristics of his race (according to Hellpach). Finally, he can even be described sociologically – as urbanite or as peasant, as proletarian or intellectual, or whatever else he may be. *All these determinants – and there are many others – define him. Yet once they are all stripped away, we are not left with nothing, but rather with a unique person. And this person is a spiritual being, i.e., one that partakes in an autonomous realm of ideas, of values, of significancies, of meaning.*" (Curtius 2015: 118, italics added.) Thus, according to Curtius' classical idealist perspective showing a decisive Kantian-Fichtean imprint, all the human-scientific knowledge regarding the human being is, in fact, only the knowledge of what this being is truly *not*. The diverse human sciences are a useful tool for effecting a thorough *reduction* of what is *inessential* in the human being (in the early Fichte's terminology, the "empirical Ego"), in order to arrive at what is really *essential*, the Mind (the "pure Ego"), whose description is, then, assigned to philosophy as its proper task. In sum, it appears that many of those who claimed to embrace the fundamental thesis of the sociology of knowledge (the existential connectedness of all thought) often had their private escape roads to deny its validity.

teaching practice, as well as the general importance of always keeping this issue on the scientific agenda (Kettler–Loader–Meja 2009: 12). Although Mannheim’s “dissent” did not cost him his tenure, it nevertheless triggered a range of angry responses from colleagues infuriated by the fact that this challenge came *from within* the walls of the academia. On the other side of the political and institutional divide, Mannheim’s leftist and extra-academic critics were equally enraged by his scope-oriented, “deflationalist” intervention in the political-ideological struggle from the safe haven of the university, legitimized by the aura of disinterested and value-neutral scientific research, but nevertheless well understood in its political ambitions (Kettler 2000: 304; Loader–Kettler 2002: 91-92). They clearly had no appreciation for Mannheim’s offer of the sociology of knowledge “as a way of bringing about the Biblical transformation of swords into pruning hooks prophesied by Isaiah.” (Kettler–Loader–Meja 2009: 7.)

Is there any coherence to be found in these contrasting criticisms of Mannheim’s project? I believe it is possible to give each party a partial truth, on the condition to perceive the *synthetic* aspiration of Mannheim’s twofold strategy. On the one hand, Mannheim sought to “(re)introduce” the qualitative dimension in social-scientific and humanistic research and teaching by making it explicit in the first place. On the other hand, Mannheim’s project was to “rationalize the irrational” (Kettler–Meja 1995) – that is to say: to introduce the scope-oriented ethos into the political struggle of ideologies – via the gnosis-sociological critique of ideologies and utopias and the subsequent development of a “scientific politics” by a specific type of intelligentsia qualified by its “freely bound” character. What the critics could not see from their respective vantage points (with the exception of Marcuse)⁷³ was that Mannheim’s project consisted in *reshaping the relations* between scope-oriented research and qualitative dissent *inside* academic walls, but in order to *transcend* these walls in a way that leads to work out a

⁷³ See in particular Marcuse’s following remark: “Karl Mannheim is not among those sociologists who shy away from accepting existential responsibility for their scientific work, and who see their task accomplished by merely tracing, and thereby relativising, all ascertainable intellectual contents back to their social genesis, thus coming to the conclusion: this happens to be our scientific situation, which we must state; however, what specifically follows from this for our contemporary existence is quite another story and of no concern to science. As if genuine science had ever confined itself to a mere stating of its results! The concluding passage of Mannheim’s essay, ‘Is Politics as a Science Possible?’, is itself an expression of his awareness of such a responsibility (...).” (Marcuse 2015: 135.)

new type of cooperative relationship between the academic and the extra-academic actors of civil society (cp. Loader–Kettler 2002).⁷⁴

§ 37. General and contemporary trends in Mannheim's reception: a critical review and a counterproposition

In this paragraph, I would like to discuss how this double character of Mannheim's project has been received in the longer run, and how this reception contributed to shape the general conception of the sociology of knowledge up till today. Several authors have remarked that the dominant pattern that emerges upon a retrospective look on the development of the sociology of knowledge in general and on the reception of Mannheim's program in particular is that of marked *disciplinary normalization* (Buxton–Rehorick 1988: 66-68; Meja–Stehr 1999: xvi-xxiii; Stehr 2018b: 137). On Meja and Stehr's account, after the abrupt ending of the dispute developing around Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia* following the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, the sociology of knowledge entered in a phase of "normalization". From then on, "the cognitive domain of the sociology of knowledge [was] defined much more narrowly"; its "external relations" became "mediated by disciplinary traditions", and "issues initially considered relevant [to it were] no longer considered *sociologically* significant." (Meja–Stehr 1999: xviii.) Buxton and Rehorick single out Robert K. Merton as the initiator of the program to make the sociology of knowledge into what Curtius thought it should always have been: an honest sociological speciality studying the relations between the "existential base" and "mental production" with empirically testable hypotheses (Buxton–Rehorick 1988: 66-68).

Meja and Stehr concur with Buxton and Rehorick in saying that the Mertonian attempt at "normalizing" the sociology of knowledge was part of a strategy of neutralization of certain claims of Mannheim's original program: "[d]ownplaying the significance as well as the implications of the sociology of knowledge has been one of the strategies in the attempt to legitimize the sociology of knowledge as *sociology*. If, just like other sociological specialities,

⁷⁴ Cp. Mannheim's own reaction to the similar treatment of *Ideology and Utopia* by critiques having widely different political orientations in his first Frankfurt course from 1930 (Mannheim 2001a: 56): "All such critiques say: very interesting but terribly dangerous, dangerous for all the parties. First the academic world, then Communism and, in part, Socialism, then the Catholic Church. All alike, without distinction, strike an identical pose. We can use this analysis. It is a good discovery. But we ourselves are of course not ideological; we are absolute. We occupy the absolute position."

the sociology of knowledge is legitimated by its specialized topic of inquiry, any far-reaching claims are precluded from the outset.” (*Ibid.*) Yet this strategy appears to have brought little benefit to the sociology of knowledge: “[r]ather than galvanizing research along the lines suggested by a refurbished Mannheimian framework, Merton’s inventory appears to have done little more than inspire further efforts at stock-taking and conceptual refinement.” (*Ibid.*: 67.) As a matter of fact, as Lewis Coser has noted in 1968, the endeavor to understand and practice the sociology of knowledge as a sub-discipline or sub-field of sociology has had outright negative consequences for it: incorporated into general sociological theory, it has become one among different sociological specialities, merging with other areas of research, losing its distinctive characteristics, to the point that what has still remained of it “is no longer explicitly referred to as sociology of knowledge” (Coser 1968: 432). Despite this unfavorable evolution, the general view that the sociology of knowledge is – or should become – a scope-oriented sociological sub-discipline like any other maintains itself till today (see for e.g. Swidler–Arditi 1994; Camic–Gross 2001).

However, as Meja and Stehr have remarked, considering the definition of its scope as the “investigation of the relations between knowledge and society”, there is something startling in the fact that the sociology of knowledge “could ever have been regarded as a mere ‘speciality’ among other sociological specialities.” (Meja–Stehr 1999: 18.) In the mid-1960s, this intuition found an echo in a small circle of Mannheim-scholars, whose activity marked the beginning of a new momentum for a renewed reception of his sociology of knowledge. With the groundbreaking works of David Kettler, Volker Meja, Nico Stehr, A. P. Simonds, Colin Loader and others, the new Mannheim scholarship

“sought to understand him on his own terms, rather than as simply a precursor to an increasingly ‘scientific’ sociology of knowledge (...). Rejecting the view that Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge could ‘be understood as a specialized subfield of the specialized discipline of sociology’, (...), they largely concur with the sentiment of Simonds that the sociology of knowledge must be considered ‘as a claim respecting the nature of social science itself’ (...). By seeking to understand Mannheim on his own terms rather than as simply an early (if outmoded) contributor to the disciplinary development of the sociology of knowledge, one is able to situate his interest in this field as it relates to his other concerns, including culture, the intellectual strata, and the ideological movements that set the terms for political discussion and debate in Weimar Germany.” (Buxton–Rehorick 1988: 71-72.)

I agree with Buxton and Rehorick that the most important development of this scholarship was the idea put forth by David Kettler according to which, in Mannheim's eyes, the sociology of knowledge was first and foremost a "technique for discovering what it means to be an intellectual; it was to provide a moral and practical orientation." (Kettler 1967: 406.) Through this assumption, the original, epistemologically, methodologically and politically ambitious claims of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge came back to the fore of the discussions. In the following years further research (Ashcraft 1981; Vallas 1979) has added to the hypothesis that "Mannheim can be most fruitfully viewed as an 'activist' thinker who offered interpretations of his immediate world, in order to change it (...)." (Buxton-Rehorick 1988: 74.) As Kettler, Loader and Meja put it in their latest book, their generation of Mannheim-scholars has restored the idea of a fundamentally qualitative orientation of the sociology of knowledge (Kettler-Loader-Meja 2008: 1-2).

However, these newer developments appear to have had not much effect on the reception of Mannheim's program within the sociology of knowledge as an academic subfield. In general, the rediscovery and exploration of the politically committed, activist Mannheim seems to have gone unnoticed within the sociological literature. This may partly be because it was not the intention of the above-mentioned scholars to ignite a new "sociology of knowledge dispute" within the to-them foreign domain of sociology. The most evident reason, however, is quite simply the enduring hostility of the mainstream sociology of knowledge toward precisely those dimensions of the work of its founder that the scholarship of the above-mentioned authors contributed to bring back to the fore. This disjunction had the unwelcome consequence that *the qualitative dimensions of Mannheim's sociological work were exhibited without a concurring problematization of sociology as an academic discipline* – whereas as the next chapter will try to show in Mannheim these problems were intimately bound together. As Buxton and Rehorick put it: "[w]hile commentators have alluded to the practical side of Mannheim's thought, they have failed to indicate the implications of this orientation for our understanding of his intentions and work as a whole. This failure is not simply a matter of misplaced judgment; it stems from a much deeper malaise of academic life, much akin to the pervasive 'intellectualism' that troubled Mannheim so deeply." (Buxton and Rehorick 1988: 78.)

My view is that this failure causes still-lasting difficulties in Mannheim's reception as *sociologist of knowledge* having relevance for present-day scholarship. Not only the vicissitudes of the earlier stages of the reception process, but also the propensity of the contemporary aspiration to what I would describe as an exclusively scope-oriented "application" of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, are to be considered in light of the

hypothesis of the general tendency to obliterate the qualitative dimension of Mannheim's ideas, *whenever the idea emerges to put them to work within his own domain, the sociology of knowledge*.

There is some irony in the fact that the tendency to assert the actuality of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge for academic research while downplaying its activist, qualitatively oriented dimensions in favor of its scope-oriented aspects, can be shown at work *inter alia* in Kettler, Loader and Meja's last book, *Karl Mannheim and the Legacy of Max Weber*. This important contribution deals with the unduly forgotten research group organized around Mannheim during his tenure at the University of Frankfurt between 1930 and 1933. Though being an input into the history of sociology, and more broadly into intellectual history, the message of the book has also a more "practical" bent. Kettler, Loader and Meja suggest that the existence and the contributions of this research-group show that, contrary to its detractors, Mannheim's sociology of knowledge was able to function as a method for empirical investigations. I consider this objective of the authors entirely legitimate and their achievement significant. However, while agreeing with the substantive part of Kettler, Loader and Meja's book, I believe some of the presuppositions underlying the authors' practical strategy have some problematic aspects that need to be discussed.

The way Kettler, Loader and Meja present their past achievements in Mannheim-scholarship is revealing about their strategy. "Some academic generations ago", they write, "it made good sense to open a plea for a reconsideration of Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge by rejecting the tendency to treat him as a muddled if admirable precursor of an inquiry that had to be completely recast to satisfy the then current standards of social-scientific rigor." (Kettler-Loader-Meja 2008: 1.) According to the authors, their scholarship on Mannheim's "grandest theoretical ambitions – the hope that the sociology of knowledge could be an organon for overcoming ideological constraints on knowledge and for grounding a science of politics, or the aspiration towards a diagnosis of post-liberal societies with therapeutic effects, based on a new mode of rationality" has only historical relevance today. Witness to this is that, in parallel with the obsolescence of these aims and interests of their own generation, newer generations of scholars have emerged who approach Mannheim's oeuvre from a very different perspective and with different expectations.

"In recent years (...) there have been modest receptions of Mannheim as exciting innovator and fruitful discussion partner in more limited fields of inquiry, from the sociology of generations to the sociology of artistic production. These welcome uses of Mannheim's work (...) make use

of texts in the usual way of scholarship by extracting ideas or methods or findings and by attempting to make them good as resources for their work. Our present undertaking is different, although its aim is to support this work.” (*Ibid.*)

In tune with these newer developments and contrary to their previous undertakings seeking to underline the qualitative depth and significance of Mannheim’s thought, the rationale of Kettler, Loader and Meja’s latest book is “to expand the scope of Mannheim’s usable legacy.” (*Ibid.*).

It seems that, for the authors, to reach this goal requires to explicitly relinquish the figure of the activist, “dissenting” Mannheim, with whom they were concerned during most of their scholarship on him, to replace it with another figure, better fitting the presumed expectations of the latest generations of researchers and scholars looking to refurbish their methodological and conceptual toolkits by tapping into Mannheim’s legacy. To this end, Kettler, Loader and Meja subject their own vision of Mannheim to a revision. Applying Mannheim’s recognition of the modern intellectuals’ “versatility” to Mannheim’s “multifaceted legacy” itself, the authors attempt to divide this legacy into two main components. On the one hand, an “*interpretive*” dimension, including pioneer experiments in reflexive sociology, “oriented to a public of literary intellectuals”, alongside with efforts made at political education “constituted by [Mannheim’s] exchanges with wider educated publics and elites.” (*Ibid.*: 2.) On the other hand, an *empirical* part, embracing a “more nearly technical work shaped by [Mannheim’s] relations with his advanced students”, as well as “incursions into empirical sociology as a practice.” (*Ibid.*) The authors’ interest in their present study goes for this “empirical” aspect of Mannheim’s project, which they perceive as “not narrowly contained within his distinctive metasociological convictions.” (*Ibid.*: 3.)

Behind these ideas stands the authors’ general assumption according to which, “[i]t is (...) possible to distinguish for the sake of argument, as [Mannheim] did himself, between his philosophically charged, rather personal theoretical enterprise and a more nearly collaborative research programme of investigations into empirical social relations, which he sponsored and led, using the most widely accessible methods for testing the kinds of claims that such a programme entails.” (*Ibid.*: 2.) In light of what precedes, it is no surprise that the authority under whose protection the trio introduces their argument is Robert K. Merton, who

“has observed that Mannheim’s metasociological speculations about the contributions that sociology of knowledge can make to therapeutic political knowledge amount to little more than an awkward way of highlighting the value relevance of his undertakings, whatever he may have

proposed in his more speculative flights (...). For the purposes of our present study, we can almost accept this skeptical emendation, precisely because Mannheim himself treated his metasociological theories as experiments, which were not required in order to comprehend his primary sociological practice. Merton has suggested how this could be done with regard to the sociology of knowledge exercises by extracting empirical research issues from the interpretive framing that Mannheim provides.” (*Ibid.*: 9.)

The authors’ argument thus rests on Merton’s division of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge into a purely empirical – if not altogether positivistic – research-agenda and a set of slippery “metasociological” speculations, a division for which they find evidence in Mannheim’s 1931 article written for Alfred Vierkandt’s *Handbook of Sociology*.

“In that article, Mannheim clearly separates the programme of sociology of knowledge as a research method to comprehend the factual relations between knowledge and its social correlates from sociology of knowledge as a doctrine relevant to epistemological inquiries into the implications of such relations for philosophical theories about the grounds, structure, and scope of knowledge. This latter is the systematized and academically circumscribed version of Mannheim’s much less formal metasociological speculations, notably in the essay on “Politics as a Science,” about the political and pedagogical consequences of sociology of knowledge as an intervention in the contexts of public discourses. It is noteworthy that Mannheim here says expressly that it is possible to accept the more strictly sociological project without taking part in the philosophical.” (*Ibid.*: 9-10.)

Kettler, Loader and Meja’s reading of this text raises several difficulties. The authors take Mannheim at his word by elevating a *rhetorical maneuver* and an *order of exposition* made in a *peculiar context*, to a *general principle of interpretation* of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge as such. While it is true that, at the beginning of the first section of his handbook article, Mannheim wrote that “one can accept the empirical results [of the sociology of knowledge – G.T.] without drawing the epistemological conclusions” (Mannheim 1963: 267), Kettler, Loader and Meja do not mention (although they are aware of it, see Kettler–Meja 2001: 100) that, at the beginning of the second section, Mannheim had put that assertion in a different perspective.

“In the opening paragraph of this chapter we maintained that it was possible to present the sociology of knowledge as an empirical theory of the actual relations of knowledge to the social

situation without raising any epistemological problems. But once the fundamental relationships between social situations and corresponding aspects are reliably established, one cannot but devote oneself to the frank disclosure of the valuations following from them. Anyone who has a sense for the interconnection of problems which inevitably arise out of the interpretation of empirical data, and who at the same time is not blinded by the intricacy of specialization in modern learning, which very often prevents a direct attack on problems, must have noticed that the facts presented under the section of ‘Particularization’ are in their very nature hard to accept as mere facts. They transcend bare fact, and call for further epistemological reflection. (...) Our point is (...) that the sociology of knowledge (...) has made certain discoveries which have more than a mere factual relevance, and which cannot be adequately dealt with until some of the conceptions and prejudices of contemporary epistemology have been revised.” (Mannheim 1963: 286-87.)

This passage shows that the separability of the empirical and the interpretive (or epistemological) claims of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge is only a *first step* in a *rhetorical construction* in a situation where Mannheim addresses an audience whom he supposes with good reason to be rather skeptical about his point of view. This is why he begins his discourse with those assertions he knows the said public to be more open to (the possibility to separate the empirical from the theoretical, the empirical from the transcendental, the context of discovery from the context of justification, etc.), to proceed only thereafter to his own thesis, which is precisely a *negation* of the validity of the initial presumption, which thus appears as having only had the function of bringing his audience into his game... The moment Kettler, Loader and Meja – following Merton – abstract from Mannheim’s text, as if it stood in and for itself, is the first, transitory step of a dialectical argument whose explicit goal is precisely the destruction of the standard conception of the difference between the “empirical” and the “epistemological”, the “context of discovery” and the “context of justification”, whose legitimacy authors such as Merton maintained – against Mannheim.⁷⁵

In parallel to this shift in their perspective, Kettler, Loader and Meja also tend to downplay the political character of Mannheim’s texts and interventions in the Frankfurt period, in which he would have come “closer to the practices of ‘value-free’ social science” (*ibid.*: 11).

⁷⁵ In a 2001 article (containing some of the arguments of the 2008 book), Kettler and Meja still agreed with my reading: “In the German version, the empirical aspect of the sociology of knowledge is characterized as a matter of **phenomenological** description and the transition to epistemological enquiry is treated as a logical step that can be delayed or avoided but not called into question.” (Kettler–Meja 2001: 109, authors’ emphasis.)

Accordingly, Kettler, Loader and Meja assert that “[d]uring his five semesters as professor in Frankfurt, Mannheim in effect declined the role of public intellectual. He separated the professional aspects of his activities from his public reputation. Only one of the critics of *Ideologie und Utopie* received an answer, and then only a rather conventional and academic rejoinder to the charge of trespassing beyond the bounds of sociology.” (*Ibid.*: 10.)

However, in light of Mannheim’s public interventions during the Frankfurt years (especially his 1932 Amsterdam conference), his rather sharp articles about the disciplinary division of the sciences (to be analyzed in detail in Chapter 6), the very tone and content of his first course taught in Frankfurt in 1930, the view that Mannheim withdrew from his role of “public intellectual” in this period seems very questionable. It also strangely obfuscates a more plausible yet more complex scenario: that during these years, Mannheim sought to create a new conception of the role of the academic intellectual and design a practice of science congruent with the ideas of self-education (self-formation and popular education), while also working out a conception of the integration of academic disciplines. Following this scenario, Mannheim’s response to Curtius was certainly more than a “rather conventional and academic rejoinder to the charge of trespassing beyond the bounds of sociology”.

Along the same lines, Kettler, Loader and Meja write that “Mannheim’s strategy in his courses was to build on the generalized popular ‘sociological’ attitude he expected them [the students – G.T.] to bring with them, but to argue the need for a move towards rigor in method and specificity in research work. Celebrated and embattled as an ‘intellectual’, he defined himself ever more as a professional sociologist.” (*Ibid.*). However, it seems difficult to maintain that Mannheim in this period relinquished his role as an intellectual to choose that of “professional sociologist”. To my knowledge no textual evidence supports this claim. Actually, as the following chapter will try to show, another hypothesis is more plausible: that Mannheim’s struggle during the Frankfurt years was for the *unification* – and not the disjunction – of these two dimensions of the scientific endeavor.

Besides these contentious issues, there are also other question marks about the “scope-oriented” understanding of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge. One troubling consequence of it is the unquestioned endorsement of the separation between theory (the “metasociological”) and empirical investigation (the “scientific”), which stands in blatant contradiction with the most basic tenets of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge. By dividing Mannheim’s activity in two mutually heterogeneous roles – the “public intellectual”, pertaining to the practically oriented, “dissenting”, “metasociological” aspect of his work, and the “professional sociologist”, pertaining to the empirical-technical, sociological aspect of his endeavors –

Kettler, Loader and Meja tacitly accept that the first aspect has basically no relevance at all for contemporary social science, let alone for contemporary sociology of knowledge. However, since the aspects of Mannheim's work related to his intellectual role are *de facto* an integral and essential part of his sociology of knowledge, the strategy of depicting an image of Mannheim corresponding to the expectations of contemporary scope-oriented social science risks having the undesired effect of giving ammunition to the claims about the unscientific character of Mannheim's sociology (cp. Meja–Stehr 1999: xx-xxi).

Therefore, Kettler, Loader and Meja's argument eventually contributes to the view that what is really interesting in Mannheim is *not* to be found in his sociology of knowledge. This pushes farther the perspective that Mannheim's specialized empirical researches (as well as potential future researches conducted in a Mannheimian framework) be understood as organic parts of his sociology of knowledge. To say it differently, this amounts to renouncing to the perspective of a *genuinely Mannheimian empirical sociology of knowledge* – viz. one that does not exclude from the outset his so-called “metasociological” investigations. This, of course, also amounts to abandoning the broader aspiration that empirical researches receive their style, hypotheses, and methods from a distinctively Mannheimian framework transcending the distinction between the “context of discovery” and the “context of justification”.

In sum, although it is true that Mannheim devoted much of his theoretical efforts during the first half of the 1930s to the agenda of sociology as an emerging academic discipline, he did this in a different direction than what Kettler, Loader and Meja suggest. Mannheim does not appear to have shifted his emphasis from the so-called “interpretive” dimension of sociology to empirical studies. It does not seem more sustainable that Mannheim relinquished the role of “public intellectual” in this period. Such a tendency can be read off neither from his public utterances, nor from his choices of themes for his courses and essays (social mobility, the role of intellectuals and the politics of intelligentsia, democratization of culture, etc.).

As I will try to demonstrate it in the next chapter, his engagement in defining the agenda of sociology rather shows that his main concern was to avoid the institutionalization of sociology *as specialized science*, to save it from becoming a non-interpretive, value-neutral, formal, empiricist endeavor. The reason for this is obviously not that Mannheim was against empirical work in general, but that he was against the *positivist* understanding of “empiricism”, as he saw it at work for instance in the American social sciences of his era. It is likely that what Mannheim was seeking was an empirically conducted sociology as a way of self-formation in the current stage of modernity, *for* the sake of modernity, democracy, and progress.

Mannheim's sociology of knowledge should thus be understood as a "dissenting scientific/intellectual movement" ("disSIM").

Chapter 6 – Sociology as “basic science” and the problem of transdisciplinarity

§ 38. Aim and structure of the chapter

The previous chapter has made the claim that Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge should be understood as a “dissenting scientific-intellectual movement” (abbreviated as “disSIM”), which contradicts the standard comprehension of the *sociology of knowledge as a subdivision or field of sociology*, itself understood *as a specialized academic discipline*. According to my claim, initially a disSIM, the sociology of knowledge began to be perceived as assimilable to the disciplinary logic only once its radical intellectual element has been wiped out in the process of the institutionalization of sociology as an academic discipline. My own position is close to alternative approaches sketched in the previous chapter, which consider Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge as an *intellectual orientation*, as a *method for intellectual self-clarification and orientation*, as well as *criticism of intellectual and academic traditions*. However, although these approaches do gesture toward what I deem to be the essential element in Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge (the intellectual or qualitative dimension in its different manifestations), I believe that they do not do full justice to the *status* of Mannheim’s program. The present chapter seeks to contribute to the clarification of this matter by articulating in more detail the hypothesis formulated at the end of the previous chapter, according to which Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge should be understood a disSIM. This hypothesis will be supported by the analysis of Mannheim’s texts on sociology from the first half of the 1930s. In doing this, I will rely on recent historical research made on the context of Mannheim’s intellectual activities during these years, as well as on the elaboration of three operative concepts developed in the sociology of the sciences.

Before entering these matters, it is important to highlight an essential aspect of the “dissenting” character of Mannheim’s program, which is its *reflexive* dimension. As I will try to show, what is specific about Mannheim’s disSIM is that in this case *the reason for dissent is the very status of dissent in (social) science* – implying that the status of social science is itself called into question (cp. Buxton–Rehorick 1988: 71-72). In other terms, the *stake* of dissent is, in this case, the recognition of the *necessity of dissent in social science*. In an academic culture dominated by scope-oriented research, this requires the proactive transformation of existing

institutional structures and practices in view of a material reorganization of social science around the intellectual, or qualitative, dimension of scientific work.

Seen from this perspective, Mannheim's disSIM appears radical and conflictual. This is confirmed by the vivid contemporary reactions and the general defiance to Mannheim's propositions. I believe that these reactions and defiance were an answer not simply to the qualitative orientation of Mannheim's program in general, but to the peculiar kind of *reflexivity* inherent in it. In other terms, the ticklish aspect of Mannheim's program was not its supposedly Marxist political leaning, but rather the *challenge of self-reflexivity* inherent in his conception of sociology. Indeed, while the political situation and the acceptability of one's political commitments in the academic world varies in accordance with the changing circumstances, *self-reflexivity is a permanently perilous exercise*. This dimension of Mannheim's thinking may explain some features of the long-term intellectual reaction to his program as well: it can be hypothesized that the academic history of the sociology of knowledge is the result of the *repression* of the *intellectual attitude* at the basis of the dissenting reflexivity within the social sciences which Mannheim's disSIM embodied.

The term "*repression*" is a psychoanalytical notion that I use here metaphorically to grasp a disturbing but essential feature of the reception process of Mannheim's program and of the constitution of the fields today associated with the name "sociology of knowledge" (and its variants). In psychoanalysis, repression denotes a defensive ego-mechanism whereby representations associated with certain drives are pushed out of consciousness, for the sake of the preservation of the psychic equilibrium. The metaphor of repression helps bring to light the relationship between the impact that the early liquidation of Mannheim's initiative had upon the cognitive design of academic sociology of knowledge, on the one hand, and the continuing tendency to overlook crucial features of Mannheim's project, on the other.

My thesis is that the loss of meaning of important aspects of Mannheim's program is at the same time *condition* and *consequence* of the then and currently *dominant modes of knowledge-production* in the academia in general, and the social sciences in particular. The current stage of Mannheim's reception (and of sociology of knowledge in general) has in common with the earlier periods that it downplays the dissenting dimension of Mannheim's thought. This, however, means that Mannheim's situation within the gnosiso-sociological field he is credited to have founded is eminently unusual in that this field developed to a large extent *expressly against* the oeuvre of its founder, *in view of* neutralizing its central aspiration. In other terms, this hypothesis implies that the foundational act of the gnosiso-sociological tradition is an

act of repression of its origins, while its history is the history of the constant efforts at maintaining this repression.

In psychoanalysis, to *bring to light* an act of repression is not a matter of contemplation: it rather entails to be working on *practically lifting the repression* that befell certain representations associated with a drive. However, since repression operates *inter alia* through loss of memories and meaning, the process of lifting the repression necessarily entails *interpretation* (“*Deutung*”). Therefore, although interpretation understood as the restitution of meaning is necessary as a means, it is not the ultimate goal of therapy. As Mannheim writes, in psychoanalysis,

“the working out of a ‘repression’ or a ‘complex’ not only aims at determining that this or that was the cause of the malady, but also to *free the patient of this malady by means of this knowledge*; i.e., to *bring about a change in his psychic being*. If psychoanalytic practical knowledge inclines toward general theory, in a different projection it is at one and the same time activity, desire to transform, and power to transform.” (Mannheim 1982b: 199-200, italics added.)

Because in Mannheim’s case what was repressed is the *intellectual attitude* which his sociology of knowledge embodied, the interpretative recovery of the lost meanings entails the *reactivation of the original impulse or attitude* that gave Mannheim’s project its impetus. The first step of this work should be to locate the neuralgic points of Mannheim’s disSIM that presumably trigger the defensive reactions on the part of the scientific mainstream. These points, I would contend, are the *reflexive* and the *transdisciplinary* claims of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge. These claims touch upon sensitive and related issues such as the role of academic intellectuals, the relationship between science and cultivation (self-formation and popular education), and models of integration of academic disciplines. According to Meja and Stehr, for the mainstream opposition to Mannheim’s disSIM, it was the transdisciplinary claim that was especially problematic.

“The prohibition against violating the entrenched cognitive division of labor in science was already evident fifty years ago, but today it has practically become a taboo against forms of discourse which threaten to challenge these boundaries (...). The largely successful restriction of Mannheim’s design for a sociology of knowledge to a sociology of knowledge more narrowly concerned with the sociological analysis of the genesis of ideas must be seen in connection with the growing institutional separation of sociology from neighboring disciplines. Trespassing of

boundaries can have serious professional repercussions since career decisions are made with reference to disciplinary traditions. The emerging cognitive identity of a discipline – the ‘scientization’ of theoretical programs – in turn legitimates institutional differentiation. Together with the growing professionalization of social science disciplines, the entrenched intellectual division of labor ensures that research programs which cross established boundaries, as is clearly the case with Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge, are difficult to sustain and easily subjected to criticism.” (Meja–Stehr 1993: 150-53.)

These considerations may contribute to a better understanding of the reasons for the scarce attention that the commentary literature has given to Mannheim’s writings bearing on sociology as a scientific discipline (see Neun 2019: 1-5; Kettler–Loader 2002: 5). It is worth noting that these are often quite confrontative texts that challenge key assumptions of the then and currently dominant disciplinary design. Despite this, they have never been read with the attention they deserve. It is likely that one of the reasons for this neglect is precisely their dissenting character, more precisely that they constitute a theoretical expression of a disSIM understood as a program for radical reform in the division of labor in science.⁷⁶

The texts to be analyzed here were written between 1930 and 1936, for some of them at a time (between 1930 and 1933) when Mannheim, as a newly appointed Professor to the chair of sociology at the University of Frankfurt, found himself in the position to further institutional changes going in the direction he sought. In other terms, these texts were born in the conjuncture (and in its immediate aftermath, 1934-1936) when Mannheim’s program for sociology and the social sciences had an opportunity-window to emerge as a disSIM with potential impact on the disciplinary structure of German social science, particularly sociology. Therefore, in the perspective of a lifting of the repression befalling the dissenting dimension of Mannheim’s

⁷⁶ Cp. (Kettler–Loader 2002: 5): “The intimate connections that interlink sociology of knowledge, sociological education, and the cultivation requisite for civic practice in Mannheim’s work have been obscured by the standardized debates over Mannheim’s book [*Ideology and Utopia*, 1929 – G.T.], especially after it was translated into English and incorporated into the canon of a sociology, notably American, driven, paradoxically, by the sort of teaching enterprise Mannheim sought to challenge; but the records of Mannheim’s disrupted tenure as professor in Frankfurt make the importance of his educational project clear.” See also (Buxton–Rehorick 1988: 72): “While commentators have alluded to the practical side of Mannheim’s thought, they have failed to indicate the implications of this orientation for our understanding of his intentions and work as a whole. This failure is not simply a matter of misplaced judgment; it stems from a much deeper malaise of academic life, much akin to the pervasive ‘intellectualism’ that troubled Mannheim so deeply”.

original project, one has to study and give prominence precisely to these writings, which most explicitly challenge the institutional and disciplinary *status quo* of the times.

Besides casual references to other publications from Mannheim, the main texts to be treated in this chapter are, in chronological order: the notes from the “General Sociology” course taught as Mannheim’s first class in 1930 in Frankfurt (“*Allgemeine Soziologie*”); the posthumous “Towards the Sociology of the Mind. An introduction”, from between 1930 and 1933; the “American Sociology” article, from 1932; the booklet on “The Contemporary Tasks of Sociology” from the same year; the “German Sociology 1918-1933” article, from 1934; finally, the article on “The Place of Sociology”, from 1935-36. The rearticulation of the transdisciplinary and intellectual dimensions of Mannheim’s program demands both an immanent analysis of these texts and a contextual inquiry into their sociopolitical and institutional background. I will begin with the latter (§ 39), then make a necessary digression (§ 40) on three operative concepts that will be put to use in the next four paragraphs (§§ 41-44), dealing respectively with Mannheim’s notions of “sociological attitude”, “fascist reprimativization” and “scholastic disciplinary habitus”, and finally with his conception of sociology as the basic science of the social-scientific disciplines.

§ 39. The institutional context of Mannheim’s writings on sociology

Loader and Kettler suggest that Mannheim’s “pedagogical” contributions during his tenure in Frankfurt have to be considered in the broader perspective of the Weimar debate about the “crisis of cultivation and education” (*Bildung*), the latest phase of an older conflict dividing the German cultivated elite between the advocates of a “traditional and elitist system of higher education, on the one side, and, on the other, the intellectual proponents of modernity who had variously called this system into question.” (Loader–Kettler 2002: 7.) The novelty of the phase in which Mannheim intervened was that the “progressive” and the “traditionalist” camps were themselves internally split.

“The advocates of the established institutions were divided between the genuine traditionalists, who upheld a curriculum centered on the old philology, with a canon of Greek, Roman, and German texts treated as ‘classics’, and radical revisionists, who used a romanticized Nietzsche – and the myth of the trenches – as their icon. The modernizers were split, in turn, between those who wanted schooling to be guided by the newer state of the sciences and the newer

requirements of the market for educated labor and those who wanted to adapt schooling to the requirements of fostering progressive social change.” (*Ibid.*⁷⁷)

At the center of the debate over the crisis of cultivation and the educational system stood the notion of *Bildung* (“cultivation”), decisively linked to the educational reforms – and the resulting institutional structures – carried out by Wilhelm von Humboldt, the “founding genius of German liberalism”, Minister of Culture from 1809, in the aftermath of Prussia’s defeat in the Napoleonic wars. Humboldt’s liberal reforms effected a thorough centralization, rationalization and extension of the state competencies in matters of secondary and higher education in Prussia, and, by emulation, also in the other German states (Ringer 1969: 24; Loader–Kettler 2002: 20-21). These reforms set the basic design for the next hundred years for the different institutions of secondary and higher learning – as well as their hierarchical relationships –, notably the universities, for which the newly founded University of Berlin became the model.

From an intellectual point of view, Humboldt’s university reform sprang from the contemporary idealist consensus about the idea of academic freedom (Ringer 1969: 23), itself based on a shared “neo-humanist ideal of cultivation” (Loader–Kettler 2002: 21). Authors such as Kant, Schelling, Fichte, Schleiermacher and Humboldt argued that the universities

“were not to be mere training schools for officials, as Halle had been. The arts faculty (*philosophische Fakultät*), not those of law, medicine or theology, should be at the heart of the new university. Pure learning in the Idealist sense was to be cultivated for its own sake. The state was to support this great objective without trying to exercise direct control over the materials learned and taught.” (Ringer 1969: 23.)

That “pure learning” was for its own sake did not mean that it was devoid of practical and social value. Its main stake was *human development* as such, which is always individual, according to Humboldt. This individuality (“*Grundeinheit*”), however, is not necessarily that of the unique human individual, but also that of the different levels of human community, the most important and encompassing being the Nation (*Volk*) (Loader–Kettler 2002: 21). What connects these distinctive planes is the assumption of *totality* and *organicity*. Contrary to the atomistic and mechanistic views ascribed to Enlightenment thinkers, in Humboldt’s conception

⁷⁷ Mannheim obviously belonged to this latter group within the “progressive” camp.

different levels of individuality are imbricated into each other like concentric circles, where the parts and the whole are in a relationship of co-constitution; at the same time, each individuality possesses its own singular forming principle (“*Bildungstrieb*”) striving to be realized empirically as an actual, perfect whole (*ibid.*).

Individual cultivation in the stricter sense supposes an *active* and *free* frequentation of other individuals striving for the same goal of holistic self-perfectioning. This relationship between individuals – conceived on the model of Leibniz’s pre-established harmony between monades – is mediated by the frequentation of cultural objects, concrete materializations of “objective cultural values” (*ibid.*: 23-24). “If the materials to be learned are properly selected, their contemplation can lead to wisdom and virtue. They can attract, elevate, and transform the learner. He can thus acquire an indelible quality, also called *Bildung*, which is a potential rival to the characteristics of the aristocrat.” (Ringer 1969: 87.⁷⁸) Cultivation engages the totality of the human being; it is not focused on developing specific skills, but on achieving some form of virtue and wisdom, which is at the same time also practical wisdom (“*phronesis*”): “[t]he full development of the personality and of a supple, wide-ranging habit of clear, original thinking was the goal.” (McClelland 1980: 125, quoted in Loader–Kettler 2002: 26.)

The reformers’ contention that the university was to become the prime institutional location for cultivation required a twofold reflection on the role of the *state*, on the one hand, and on the place and value of *science* and *specialized knowledge*, on the other.

With regard to the first question, the reforms resulted in a delicate compromise: freedom from external constraints being a condition of cultivation, the state should not intervene in this process (i.e., it should keep from interfering in scientific and intellectual matters in the university); it will, however, take significant advantages from this self-restraint insofar as cultivation fosters the creation of “moral men and good citizens”, as well as “more flexible and therefore capable servants of the state” (Loader–Kettler 2002: 24). Cultivation was in fact to provide a “political training based on the spiritual autonomy of the individual” (*ibid.*). This observation points toward the structural reciprocity between the ideal of cultivation formulated

⁷⁸ Cp. the definition of *Bildung* (cultivation) given in *Der große Brockhaus*, the standard German encyclopedia in Mannheim’s time in Germany: “The fundamental principle of education, it signifies a forming of the soul through the resources of the culture enveloping it. Among other things, cultivation implies a) an *individuality* to be developed, as unique starting point, into a personality endowed with form or enriched with value; b) a measure of *universality*, a wealth of essential meanings, to be won through the understanding and experiencing of objective cultural goods; c) *totality* or wholeness, meaning inner resolution and firmness of character (Brockhaus, II: 729, translated and quoted in Loader–Kettler 2002: 8-9).

by the reformers and the ruling elites in Germany: “[n]ot only was the elite the source of those who subscribed to the ideal, but also the operations of the institutionalized ideal helped to define the elite. Cultivation became a measure of social standing, especially for those without aristocratic background.” (*Ibid.*: 36).⁷⁹

Because the academics in the reformed institutions were also the purveyors and guardians of the state examinations giving access not only to the exercise of most white-collar professions, but also to the privileged status of state-functionary – not to mention that in Germany professors were *de jure* state officials –, it can be said that the “history of German higher education during the nineteenth century was intimately connected with the evolution of the German bureaucracy.” (Ringer 1969: 34.) Following Klaus Vondung, Loader and Kettler describe the professorate (Ringer’s “German Mandarins”) as the “socially active core” of the academically trained state bureaucracy, which was not only cultivated itself, but also directed the cultivation of others (Loader–Kettler 2002: 37). This “socially active core” (located mostly in the Humanities) was in a constitutively ambivalent relationship with the state: *as officials*, they depended on and were part of an authoritarian bureaucratic apparatus; *as ideologues*, however, academics kept a measure of independence from the state, making them fit for Loader and Kettler’s qualification of a “compromised but separate social sector” (*ibid.*: 37-38).

The other issue the bearers of the cultivation ideal had to deal with was the relationship between the specialized sciences and cultivation within the reformed academic institutions. Although Humboldt “distrusted the narrow, specialized training for utilitarian career skills prevalent in educational institutions before the reform period” (*ibid.*: 25), he was favorable to expert training and to specialized research insofar as it was underpinned and oriented by the rationale of cultivation. Between the two, Humboldt envisaged a productive and harmonious relationship: the specialized disciplines were to “supply matter that is not intentionally but intrinsically prepared for the use of spiritual and ethical cultivation. The essence of these institutions, thus, consists inwardly in linking objective science with subjective cultivation (...).” (Humboldt 1956: 82, quoted in Loader–Kettler 2002: 25).

⁷⁹ The German academics of the 19th and 20th century were themselves aware of this fact. See Friedrich Paulsen’s remarks: “The academically educated constitute a kind of intellectual and spiritual aristocracy in Germany... They form something like an official nobility, as indeed they participate in the government and administration of the state... Together, they make up a homogeneous segment of society; they simply recognize each other as social equals on the basis of their academic cultivation.” (Quoted in Ringer 1969: 35).

In the relationship between “objective science” and “subjective cultivation”, the first was in view of the second. Furthermore, Humboldt’s formulation “not intentionally but intrinsically” suggests a convergence of specialized research in different areas according to a qualitative – i.e., non-instrumental – rationality constitutive of the research activity itself.⁸⁰ The synthetic character of academic knowledge is not the result of an a posteriori act of synthesis of randomly produced results within the specialized disciplines but is always-already at work in each and every distinct area of scientific research. As Loader and Kettler aptly remark, this conception of the link between specialized research and cultivation contains *in nuce* the tension between the dominant “social forms of academic science and what Mannheim called (...) the ‘cultivated culture’ and its distinctive ‘cultivated stratum’ of intellectuals” (Loader–Kettler 2002: 26-27) – or, to use Nettl’s terms: between the scope and the quality dimensions in academic research and scholarship.

With the increasing specialization and methodological self-awareness of the sciences during the 19th century, this tension between cultivation and specialized research became ever more pronounced, and by the first decades of the 20th century grew into an antagonism (*ibid.*: 26). The dominant trend (somewhat paradoxically associated with the term “positivism”) was the separation of specialized research activity from philosophical justifications and from the cultivating mission of the university, resulting in an increasing “self-referentiality in the sciences” (*ibid.*: 29). The fate of the supposedly synthetic discipline of philosophy is symptomatic in this respect.

“As one among the cultural and ideographical sciences, philosophy claimed no authority over the designs and objectives of the physical sciences, and it had no special say either when new specialist disciplines like psychology and sociology appropriated its subject matter and transmuted its questions. These disciplines threatened to multiply without control as new fields of inquiry opened up or established fields were subdivided. While the individual sciences flourished, so did the diagnoses of critical disorientation. (...) [T]here was no (...) higher purpose credibly claimed for the universities of the time.” (*Ibid.*: 31).

Although the human sciences (with the lead of philosophy) rebuked the epistemological challenge of their methodological “scientization” at the turn of the 19-20th centuries, they

⁸⁰ Mannheim will speak of “substantial” versus “functional” rationality and (as will be shown below) he will also take up the idea of specialized researches intrinsically tending toward a qualitatively determined (sociological) synthesis.

opposed no consistent resistance to the “conception of scientific work as an unending accumulation of specialized knowledge” and the corresponding fragmentation of the academic community into closed circles of practitioners located in specialized institutes, as the major institutional consequences of the dominance of positivism (*ibid.*: 31-32).⁸¹ As Loader and Kettler write,

“the ever-greater emphasis on a scholarship of accumulated facts and empirical research weakened the traditional role of philosophy and the other human sciences – providing meaningful orientation for the larger public as well as for the constitutionalized university. The frame for Humboldt’s *e pluribus unum* was in dissolution. Without any interest in offering a philosophical rationale, the disciplines severed their ties from metaphysical presuppositions and normative claims. (...) An object-oriented science, intent on increasing the store of knowledge through collecting and ordering new data, was incompatible with the subject-oriented philosophy of cultivation intent on developing the individual personality to its full potential.” (*Ibid.*: 32-33).

As time passed, the contradictions between state interests and cultivation also became more apparent. Although the enthusiasm of reunification and the activism of statist “academic prophets”, such as the Prussian historian Heinrich von Treitschke or the economist Gustav Schmoller, helped in temporarily softening these incongruities, the trend was nevertheless clear: “[f]rom a trusteeship of institutions that had to be autonomous to be valid, which is how Humboldt and his successors saw the state’s responsibility, state agencies in the Bismarck era thought of themselves as designing and implementing a public higher education and research policy, a *Universitätspolitik*, as the powerful dual term has it in German – both policy and

⁸¹ Durkheim has noted in the same period: “la science, morcelée en une multitude d’études de détails qui ne se rejoignent pas, ne forme plus un tout solidaire.” (Durkheim 1967: 347.) In a later, posthumously published text, he wrote: “Chacun s’enferme dans sa spécialité, professe la science de son choix comme si elle était la seule, comme si elle était une fin, alors qu’elle n’est qu’un moyen en vue d’une fin à laquelle elle devrait être à tout moment subordonnée.” (Durkheim 1938: 13.) Much earlier than Durkheim, in the first tome of his *Cours de philosophie positive*, Auguste Comte has complained that “les habitudes dispersives précédemment contractées ont aujourd’hui poussé le régime préliminaire de la spécialité scientifique jusqu’à la plus désastreuse exagération, dogmatiquement justifiée par de vrais sophismes métaphysiques”, resulting in the fact that, from the totality of scientific knowledge, “chaque section de savants n’en connaît que des fragments isolés dont aucun ne saurait suffire à une conception vraiment decisive.” (Comte 1982: 393-94.) Similar complaints can be found in Simmel’s *The Tragedy of Culture*.

politics.” (*Ibid.*: 35.) This meant concretely that the “ministries prioritized objectives in research, practical consultancies, training needs, propaganda, and international status, among other things, and they allocated funds, appointed faculty, awarded public recognition, and gave advice bordering instruction.” (*Ibid.*)

These two concomitant tendencies – fragmentation of the sciences and a decreasing autonomy in relation to state authorities – were flanked by another form of “fragmentation”, that of a rapidly industrializing class-based society: “[t]he rise of the Socialist Party, the counter-organization of other parties, and the concomitant increase in the importance of both parliament and other social forums revealed a society divided into conflicting interest groups”, undermining the thesis of the organic unity of the German nation professed both by political propaganda and academic ideologues (*ibid.*: 38). In this respect, World War I seemed to come as a bliss for the mandarinat: the “civil peace” concluded between the Social Democratic Party and the government suggested that class-divisions could be overcome, and the political unity of the German nation could be re-established thanks among other things to the activism of the academic intellectuals (the “Ideas of 1914”).

However, the shock of the war casualties, the military defeat, the ensuing revolution, the conditions imposed by the Versailles peace treaty, the replacement of the Monarchy by the democratic Weimar Republic (and its new elite selection mechanisms), followed closely by an unprecedented economic crisis (hyperinflation), radically changed the existential and sociopolitical circumstances of the academic community. “Events no longer seemed to cohere, unity was disrupted, reality was discontinuous, the mood was ironic.” (*Ibid.*: 48.) After the war, the weight of the university in public discourse decreased as Modernist tendencies gained in strength in extra-academic culture, and as, on the other hand, right-wing reactionaries increasingly turned toward “popular prophets” such as Oswald Spengler (*ibid.*: 49).

From an institutional point of view, the position of moderate and conservative academics in the post-war situation was rather ambiguous. On the one hand, the forms of management of the educational institutions remained the same as before, leaving considerable power in their hands. On the other hand, however, the “mandarins” were challenged by the reform projects of the key officials of the republican regime, which “invited collaboration from professors (...) that implied dramatic shifts in the orientation of the established faculties (...)” (*Ibid.*: 49.) In this context, the fate of the “ideal of a tendentially unified academic cultural perspective informing and inspiring a public sensitized to its leadership by its own academic cultivation” became decisively linked to the question whether “a unity could be established in conjunction with the new parliamentary state, with its party formations and interest groups, or

whether it would be necessary to revert to something resembling the old monarchical structure. Or put another way: could one democratically extend the ideal of cultivation?" (*Ibid.*: 50.)

The answer of the moderate and conservative elements of the mandarinat to the educational reforms of the Weimar era was an overwhelming refusal to cooperate with the republican officialdom, despite the proximity to and sympathy for the so-called "Ideas of 1914" of the ministers and officials carrying the reform (i.e., despite their fundamental political affinities) (*ibid.*). This attitude of rejection is remarkable if one considers

"how much the rhetoric of this new university reform movement sounded like the language of 'cultivation', as it evolved from Humboldt's era. It contained the same vitalistic appeal for the connection of the institution with the sphere of life, the same attack on purely scientific specialization and careerism, the same hope for an organic community within the university, the same demand for addressing the student's personality in order to make him/her a better citizen rather than simply increasing the store of knowledge, the same belief that the university should have strong ties to the rest of the educational establishment, the same looking to the state for the means to carry out this reform while allowing for the continuing autonomy of science, all of which was subsumed under the call for a revitalization of the synthetic ideal of cultivation." (*Ibid.*: 54.)

To understand the overwhelmingly negative mandarinal stance toward the Weimar university reform movement, one must detect the elements in the reformists' discourse and actions that most thwarted the interests and worldviews of the moderate and conservative fractions of the academic intelligentsia. Loader and Kettler identify Carl Heinrich Becker (1876-1933), university professor, specialist of Arabic language and culture, close to Ernst Troeltsch, Max Weber and Emil Lederer in Heidelberg, under-secretary for higher education and two times cultural minister in Prussia, as the "leading voice for university reform" in Weimar Germany (*ibid.*: 52). On Loader and Kettler's account, besides actions in view of the democratization of university governance (giving more weight to students and untenured faculty), Becker aimed at changes in the curriculum in order to counteract the trend of fragmentation and specialization "in a way that would allow for more synthesis and thus a greater engagement with the larger sociopolitical environment." (*Ibid.*: 53.) To bring this about, and much in keeping with Humboldt's spirit, Becker also promoted new forms of interdisciplinary cooperation by "advocat[ing] a dovetailing of disciplines so that they did not simply stand next to one another vertically, but rather cut across one another horizontally." (*Ibid.*).

Becker, however, made it clear that the synthesis gained through this type of interdisciplinary engagement with social realities was a *political* one: “[i]n a twist on the standard meaning of the German term ‘*Kulturpolitik*’, he asserted that culture is a modality of politics as well as subject matter for policy, and he accordingly defined cultural politics as a ‘conscious deployment of spiritual values in service to the nation or the state in order to strengthen their inner cohesiveness and, externally, to help them grappling with other nations.’” (Becker 1919b: 2, quoted in Loader–Kettler 2002: 52.) Another major shift from pre-war mandarin positions was that, in his conception of political synthesis, Becker gave the newly emerging science of *sociology* a prominent role. “Chairs in sociology were a pressing need in Germany, he maintained, because ‘[o]nly by means of a sociological way of thinking can the spiritual habit be created in the intellectual sphere that when transferred to the ethical sphere becomes political conviction. In this way science becomes for us the path from individualism and particularism to the character necessary for citizenship’ [Becker 1919: 9].” (Loader–Kettler 2002: 54.) Sociology, in Becker’s view, was thus to assume a specific, political-cultivational role within the social scientific disciplines: to foster the creation of a “new type of German”, the “citizen of a democratized nation” (*ibid.* 51).

To understand the stakes of Becker’s idea of sociology as a synthetic and cultivational discipline, one must also consider the state of academic sociology in the Weimar Republic. Technically, sociology did not even exist yet as an academic discipline. The first sociology chair was created in 1919 at the University of Frankfurt. It was held by Franz Oppenheimer. By 1933, 15 chairs existed at 11 universities, totalling 55 full and part-time teachers of sociology (*ibid.*: 80-81). Although this shows a fast and steady development, “these appointments hardly achieved a thorough institutionalization of the discipline. The new chairs were mostly attached to other disciplines, such as national economy, or they were located in institutes that were not integral parts of the universities. In addition, there were serious divisions among sociologists themselves about the boundaries, methods, and objectives of the discipline.” (*Ibid.*: 81.) Furthermore, the three great figures from the first generation of self-styled German sociologists, Tönnies, Sombart and A. Weber, “were unable to build distinctly sociological institutional bases”, while the most prominent figure of German sociology, Max Weber, “had never called himself a sociologist and had not supported the call for sociology chairs.” (*Ibid.*) By the time of Mannheim’s appointment to the sociology chair in Frankfurt in 1930, there was still no degree program in sociology, consequently no required courses either. Sociology was an “option” in certain degree programs, and it was possible to write one’s dissertation under the supervision of a sociologist (*ibid.*: 189).

The fact is that this theoretical malleability and poor institutional delimitation of sociology were not altogether to the disadvantage of the practitioners of the dynamic young science. That the entry of sociology into the university occurred precisely at a moment of crisis of the academic institution, of its cultural ideal and the social strata at their base, especially harbored opportunities and makes it easier to understand Becker's bold claim that the "struggle over sociology", much more than a mere rearrangement of competencies between established and emerging scope-oriented disciplines, "is really the struggle over the new concept of academic science" as such (Becker 1925: 41, quoted in Loader–Kettler 2002: 55). This suggests that the constitution of sociology as an academic discipline raised the perspective of potential in-depth changes in the practice of the human and social sciences. That the institutionalization of sociology carried this unusually high stake, with both perils and non-hoped-for opportunities for the contending parties within and without the discipline, also accounts for the unusual virulence of the disputes that punctuated this process.

Although none of Becker's reform initiatives was to the liking of the moderate and conservative fractions of the academic community, his most vocal critiques – the historian Georg von Below, the Romanist Ernst Robert Curtius, the philosopher and pedagogue Eduard Spranger and the sociologist Leopold von Wiese – focused their attention on this last, most singular aspect of his proposal: the claim that sociology as a synthetic discipline was capable of "providing a wider sociopolitical orientation for the individual" (*ibid.*: 14). A review of the different angles of attack of these authors on this matter is revealing about how the different parties conceived the *stakes* of the process of the disciplinarization of sociology.

Georg von Below, "a strong supporter of the Empire and Ludendorff's wartime dictatorship", was among the first to react to Becker's *Thoughts on University Reform*, published in 1919 (Loader–Kettler 2002: 55). His rejoinder raised two main points against Becker: "the unsuitability of sociology for the purpose of synthesis" and the "political motivation of Haenisch [another reformer – G.T.] and Becker in promoting sociology and democratization within the university." (*Ibid.*: 56.) Sociology was not only unfit for the purpose of synthesis, von Below contended, but it was actually the paragon of the atomistic, reductionist tendencies associated with French Enlightenment, responsible for a conception of individuality as the deterministic result of the blind play of soulless social forces. For von Below, sociology was by necessity naturalistic and was, for this reason, antithetic to the philosophy of cultivation (*ibid.*). Furthermore, he maintained that the sociology chairs advocated by Becker were superfluous since the study of history, as practiced by von Below and his colleagues, already included the study of social relations. More generally speaking, sociology is, in fact, nothing

else but a “*method*” applicable in history and other human sciences. Hence, there is no reason to consider it a separate, specialized discipline either (*ibid.*: 57). According to von Below, the true rationale of Becker’s proposition could only be *political*. “The existing government was a party government, and the creation of these chairs was a way to force socialists and a Social Democratic Party agenda on the university, to violate its autonomy through politicization, as was the attempted enfranchisement of untenured faculty in university governance. (...) Sociology, then, was simply a ‘mask’, a means by which party opinions could hide behind abstract discussions.” (*Ibid.*: 57.)

Similar to von Below, Spranger and Curtius – whose critiques of Mannheim’s *Ideology and Utopia* were reviewed in the previous chapter – also “sought to preserve the nineteenth-century character of the university in the face of the new Weimar reform movement.” (*Ibid.*: 59.) Although differing considerably in their political sympathies, they agreed that the need of the day was a revival of the original, Humboldtian ideal of cultivation, and that sociology as the synthetic discipline envisioned by Becker could never become a partner in this process of restoration (*ibid.*: 60). According to Spranger, sociology is but the most recent manifestation of a general tendency in science toward specialization and fragmentation and is even the epitome of the increasing self-abandonment of science to the external rationale of “adaptation of practical abilities to the material here and now” (*ibid.*). Curtius’ attack was more specific than Spranger’s. The salvo against Mannheim’s *Ideology and Utopia* analyzed in the previous chapter contains its main thesis: because sociology undermines the autonomy of the spirit through its reduction to socio-economic determinants and similarly reduces all spiritual contents to either ideologies or utopias, a claim to make of sociology the central science of the humanities amounts to declare one’s will to destroy classical Humanism and with it the Humboldtian ideal of cultivation (*ibid.*: 61).

From a very different perspective, von Wiese also took on Becker’s idea of the political-cultivational role of academic sociology. The difference in perspective stems from the fact that von Wiese was himself a sociologist. More than that, von Wiese was a very effective organizer who achieved such a considerable institutional standing within the profession that he could act as a “gatekeeper” for sociology in Germany during the twenties and the early thirties (*ibid.*: 83). Von Wiese also had his own, clear and single-minded program for sociology: to turn it into an entirely autonomous specialized academic discipline (*ibid.*: 82). In the Becker-von Below polemic, he demarcated himself from both sides in one blow by suggesting that von Below was mistaken in identifying sociology with Becker’s wrongly politicized conception.

“Instead, von Wiese portrayed sociology as a specialized science (*Einzelwissenschaft*), a study of the forms of sociation with no larger claim to synthetic orientation. (...) [H]e contended that grounded knowledge of concrete factual interrelationships presupposed the elaboration of a distinctly sociological type of abstraction. No other discipline asked systematic questions about the forms of social relations. (...) The task of the discipline, he wrote, was ‘to describe, analyze, group, measure and systematize social relations’ (von Wiese 1921: 48-49).” (Loader–Kettler 2002: 83.)

The main point of divergence from Becker resides in von Wiese’s *rejection of the transdisciplinary role of sociology*, which as a discipline “could [not] go behind its constitutive categories” (*ibid.*: 84). Von Wiese accepted the necessity of concrete applications of his “relations doctrine”, but he insisted that “[u]nder no condition can sociology heed any demands of the times, except insofar as these are fully reconcilable with the priority of timeless theory” (*ibid.*: 99). According to Dirk Käsler, von Wiese’s program is “representative of a general movement in the human sciences, and especially sociology, toward ‘scientization’ (*Verwissenschaftlichung*) and depolitization. [Käsler] explains it by the eagerness of socially unestablished sociologists to secure their place within the academic mainstream as quickly as possible.” (Käsler 1984: 250-263, 442, quoted in Loader–Kettler 2002: 86.) Following this (mainstream) trend, sociologists like von Wiese, “moved away from the interpretation of meaning (*Sinndeutung*) and the ‘social question’ to more normative-indifferent, abstract ‘scientific’ theories (*Gesetzlehre*), and they sought to exclude Marxist and cultural-sociological approaches that were concerned with the public interpretation of reality.” (*Ibid.*)

Yet, even the unyielding resistance of the majority of academics to university reform could not hinder the stalwart minister Becker to realize at least one of his main aims: bringing “academically contested personalities and programs into the Prussian universities” (*ibid.*: 54). Thinkers such as Hermann Heller, Hans Kelsen, Carl Schmitt, Paul Tillich, Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno took advantage of Becker’s policies. When Oppenheimer’s position went vacant in Frankfurt, Becker sought to bring Emil Lederer, professor at Heidelberg, intimate friend of the minister and a Social Democrat, to fill the position. However, Lederer declined and suggested Karl Mannheim for the position, himself professor at Heidelberg and a close friend to him (Loader–Kettler 2002: 55).

Although no detailed records exist of Mannheim’s hiring, Kettler’s and Meja’s researches have shown that the process was everything but smooth (Kettler–Meja 1995: 143-145). Mannheim’s appointment went through after a conflictual back-and-forth between the

officials from the Prussian Ministry of Education – among whom Becker himself –, very determined to bring Mannheim to Frankfurt, and a faculty whose majority was opposed to the nomination. The fact that the position has also been offered to Hans Kelsen – like Mannheim, of Jewish descent and an outspoken supporter of the Republic – makes it unlikely that the objections raised against the author of *Ideology and Utopia* were made on political or ethnic grounds. The most likely reason for the hostility of the faculty is that “they wanted to keep out Karl Mannheim and his politically tinged sociology” from their university (Loader–Kettler 2002: 55).

Kettler and Meja intimate that this attitude of defiance had its reasons: “from his entry into the field of sociology, many established sociologists resisted Mannheim as a suspect and overambitious figure, aggressively challenging the tenuously settled constitution of the new academic enterprise.” (Kettler–Meja 1995: 117.) The mainstream social scientists aptly situated the neuralgic point of this challenge in the “characteristic contention that sociologists are the intelligentsia come to self-consciousness – and not (...) scientists addressing collective human phenomena”, and they likewise understood that the watchword of “synthesis” implied “transmuting the contest among competing disciplinary currents into a complex negotiation, with [Mannheim] as rapporteur – and ultimately arbitrator.” (*Ibid.*). In short, Mannheim’s challenge was perceived by this mainstream as an open threat to the *status quo*. Conversely, since for Mannheim “the problem of political education was inseparable from the institutional constitution of sociology, both as scientific discipline and as academic subject” (*ibid.*: 80), and “[s]ince Mannheim’s program for sociology was clear at the time of the appointment, it is safe to assume that Becker wanted precisely what Mannheim had to offer, a sociology with impact on public as well as professional debate, and a sociology oriented to cultivation for republican politics.” (Loader–Kettler 2002: 55.)

According to a 1928 survey on the “Tendencies in Recent German Sociology” by Franz Oppenheimer (whose chair in Frankfurt Mannheim would take up in 1930), two main schools were competing for influence within the emerging discipline. The first was Oppenheimer’s own “Frankfurt school”, which he described as a “sociology solely of civilization, and neither of culture, which we leave to the historians, nor still less of social philosophy, which we leave to the philosophers” (Oppenheimer [1928] 1932: 256, quoted in Kettler–Meja 1995: 119). The sociology of culture, as well as attempts at including broader theoretical (“philosophical”) issues and justifications into social theory, are thus assigned to disciplines *other* than sociology (history and philosophy, respectively). Kettler and Meja draw a connection between this conception of sociology and the hostility of Josef Hellauer, the Frankfurt Dean of social

sciences, toward Mannheim's appointment to Oppenheimer's chair, who objected to it on the grounds that Mannheim had no grounding in either political economy or legal studies, but rather in philosophy, making his approach "of little value to our students" (Hellauer's letter to the Ministry of Science, Art, and Education in Berlin, November 27, 1929, quoted in Kettler–Meja 1995: 119).

The second main tendency mentioned by Oppenheimer in the German sociological landscape of the times was that of von Wiese's "Cologne school". Taking the two Simmelian categories of "together" and "apart" as the fundamental concepts of sociology, von Wiese devised a formal sociological system in which social events and processes "were to be distinguished and classified according to a complex conceptual grid, focusing on types of relations as well as patterned formations." (Loader–Kettler 2002: 84.) However, as critics noted, this resourceful and painstaking project was limited by a lack of "testable explanatory propositions about either structure or function" (*ibid.*). Although von Wiese's scientific standing was not a matter of controversy in the profession, his influence stemmed not from the number of followers of his complicated doctrine, but from his key institutional positions in the German Sociological Association and in the *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, of which he was the founder.

As noted, von Wiese stood in a relationship of competition with Mannheim and, in accordance with the changing circumstances, actively sought to marginalize his opponent. After Mannheim's "star performance" at the Sixth Congress of German Sociologists in Zürich in 1928, overshadowing von Wiese's own presentation and followed by consensual reports made by the latter insisting on the cooperation and the complementarity of the existing approaches to sociology (his own "formal", Oppenheimer's "empirical" and Mannheim's "intellectual-historical-philosophic" types), the next two years saw a tightening of the control von Wiese and Tönnies exerted over the annual meetings of the Association, and a politically colored campaign in 1930 against an absent Mannheim as a propounder of historical materialism (as a "crypto-Marxist"). As Kettler and Meja report, yet a year later in 1931, "von Wiese's standard survey of the discipline firmly consign[ed] Mannheim's sociology of knowledge to the category of 'metaphysical and epistemological' studies classified as sociology only by mistake." (Kettler–Meja 1995: 120.)

This contextualization can lead to two diverging inferences. The first is that Mannheim was already losing the competition with von Wiese when he exiled himself in 1933 after the Nazi's seizure of power, and thus had no real chance to develop and maintain any far-reaching program for sociology in Germany, even if the Republic had survived the critical years between

1928 and 1933. The second conclusion puts the emphasis on the promising factors in Mannheim's position. He was indeed chair of sociology in Frankfurt. Vierkandt's invitation to Mannheim to publish his article on the sociology of knowledge in his *Handwörterbuch der Soziologie* (1932) indicates that he was not isolated within the profession. Nor did he lack politically committed students wishing for a more militant, liberal-leftist sociology. He also had the support of the highest-ranking officials in the Ministry of Culture. This second reading is common to various historians of German sociology such as Hans-Rainer Lepsius, René König, Ulf Mathiesen and Jürgen Habermas, all claiming that Mannheim was "emerging as the founder of a new generation of professional sociologists in Germany, offering a third alternative after his 'star' performance in Zürich, his widely discussed book, and his initiatives while at Frankfurt." (Kettler–Meja 1995: 120.)

From the point of view of this chapter's hypothesis, there is no need to take a definitive stance regarding these two diverging conclusions (despite my sympathy for the second one). It is enough to observe that from within the conjuncture itself, as it has been reconstructed here, it is consistent to interpret Mannheim's writings on sociology as the theoretical expressions of the disSIM he was leading.

§ 40. Three operative concepts: "disciplinary habitus" (Leclerc), "umbrella and polytheistic disciplines" (Whitley) and "catchment areas" (Nettl)

Before trying to articulate this thesis by turning to the analysis of Mannheim's writings on sociology between 1930 and 1936, I would like to make explicit my understanding of the key notion of "scientific discipline" that appears in my review of the stakes of the Weimar debate over sociology and cultivation by introducing and discussing three operative concepts that will prove fruitful in the interpretation of Mannheim's texts on sociology: Michel Leclerc's notion of "disciplinary habitus"; Richard Whitley's distinction between "umbrella disciplines" and "polytheistic disciplines"; and John Peter Nettl's concept of "catchment areas".

What is a scientific discipline? What is its function in the development of science? Is this notion monolithical or are there different types of disciplines? How are scientific disciplines constituted? What kind of relationships exist between individual disciplines? How should other oft-used notions such as "specialization", "fragmentation", "scientization", be understood in relation to the notion of discipline? These are some of the questions I wish to explore in this paragraph.

From a non-sociological point of view, a scientific discipline can be defined as a “set of discursive units whose specific configuration delimits an autonomous field of research and experimentation.” (Leclerc 1989: 23.) From a sociological point of view, however, the object “scientific discipline” appears from the outset as a specific, rational manifestation of social processes. From such a perspective, the immanent definition must be transcended in different directions: toward the discursive practice at the origin of the discursive units; toward the structure and inner functioning of the human groups performing this practice; toward the structure and dynamism of the disciplines themselves; and toward their place in the social process, in which, as institutions, they perform specific functions.

In a first approximation, a scientific discipline can be described as both the *product* and the *framework* of a *systematic mode of knowing actualized in specific (“scientific”) institutional settings*. From a sociological perspective, scientific disciplines are not less “social constructs” than scientific objects themselves. As Nettl puts it, “(...) the notion that any area of scientific inquiry is encased in a surrounding twilight of ‘reality’ is a scientific inversion of the real priorities; it is the surrounding which is ‘real’, and the central area of analysis which is ‘artificial’.” (Nettl 1966: 40.) If only for this reason, it makes little sense to define scientific disciplines on the basis of an “object that they would appropriate as their natural domain, by virtue of a division of scientific objects that would eventually exhaust reality.” (Leclerc 1989: 35.) On the contrary, scientific objects are the products of scientific work and the *disciplines* have a *structuring* function in this process of production, while at the same time being themselves its *products*.

In this respect, scientific disciplines display the characteristics ascribed by Bourdieu to the concept of *habitus* as “structuring structures”. Following the Bourdieu-inspired proposition of Michel Leclerc, the idea of “discipline” can then be redefined as “*disciplinary habitus*”, that is, as a

“system of objective and unconscious dispositions which, within an institutionally determined and prescribed cognitive space (the confines of the faculty, the department, the laboratory, etc.), orients the practice and mode of intellectual representations of agents situated in a group whose activities are instantaneously adjusted to the doxological norms of a given scientific field. The disciplinary *habitus* universalizes in the consciousness of an actor a general code conforming to the dominant paradigm of a particular community. (...) The disciplinary *habitus* can [thus] be understood as a mechanism through which the institutionalized scientific culture governs the thought and conduct of scientists.” (Leclerc 1989: 43-45.)

The *function* of disciplines in the scientific process can be explained by considering their relationship with other “units” of scientific production. In Richard Whitley’s conception, the notion of discipline is related to two other basic units: “research areas” and “specialties”. Research areas are “collectivities” defined on the basis of “some degree of commitment to a set of research practices and techniques”, as well as “agreed procedures for specifying research problems” (Whitley 1976: 472). Specialties, in turn, “are focused on explanatory models and definitions of the phenomena under consideration. Membership of specialties implies commitment to particular types of accounts and preferred ways of formulating the underlying object of concern.” (*Ibid.*: 473.)

According to Whitley, the degree and manner of institutionalization of specialties and research areas vary in accordance with the kind of more general integrative structures within which they evolve. These structures are what Whitley calls “disciplines”, defined as institutionalized “ordering principles” that “set the frame within which specialty concerns are developed and explanatory models formulated.” (Whitley 1976: 473.) Disciplines are “more removed from the day-to-day specification and transformation of cognitive objects than are specialties and research areas”; they “refer to particular ways of doing science and integrating the results. To be a member of a discipline is to adhere to a particular approach to scientific understanding applied to an aspect of ‘reality’.” (*Ibid.*) While it is true that all institutionalized disciplines are based on a dominant ordering principle, ordering principles can also guide scientific activities without being dominant. Additionally, the institutionalized ordering principles are themselves subject to change and contestation, “so there may be a plurality of constructions of the principle constituting the discipline” at a given time (*ibid.*: 474).

Most important, Whitley maintains that the structure of disciplinary fields is variable and shows two typical patterns, which he tries to catch with the ideal types of “umbrella disciplines”, described as “loose ‘holding’ organizations for diverse specialties”, and “polytheistic disciplines”, in which “scientific work is organized around divergent views of the discipline.” (*Ibid.*: 476.⁸²) In umbrella disciplines, “research production is predominantly

⁸² It is worth noting here that Whitley’s definition of “discipline ordering principles” is compatible with Leclerc’s Bourdieu-inspired notion of disciplinary habitus; to that extent, it might be hypothesized that as there are two basic ideal-typical disciplinary forms, there are also two corresponding ideal-typical *disciplinary habiti*: one that is characterized by a predominant orientation toward the scope-dimension of research, the other putting forward the qualitative element. This hypothesis will be explored in the next paragraph.

organized at the specialty and research area levels without direct reference to, or influence from, the discipline.” (*Ibid.*) In the polytheistic type of disciplinary organization, by contrast, “research is primarily distinguished in terms of metaphysical commitments which tend to focus on disciplinary identities.” (*Ibid.*)

In the case of umbrella disciplines, a very broad, general conception of science is presupposed in the background of researches where the hot center lies in often highly specialized endeavors, only loosely connected to the discipline’s ordering principles. Consequently, scientific activities concentrate here on “theoretically defined phenomena which are amenable to a limited set of technical approaches.” (*Ibid.*) In the polytheistic disciplines, by contrast, the ordering principles tend to remain central to actual research, notwithstanding a potentially high degree of specialization in certain domains. Whitley only hints at the reason of this fact, which is that the intellectual foundations of the polytheistic disciplines are “closely associated with current debates and issues”, hence the “research topics in the latter will be more influenced by commonsense understandings and by general conceptions of science. Research will not, here, be so specialized or self-contained.” (*Ibid.*)

In the polytheistic disciplines, furthermore, the lack of a common, tacitly presupposed objective standard of successful research (such as it exists in the umbrella disciplines) makes disciplinary authority strongly reliant on organizational authority. The plurality of contending views of the discipline will tend to be “linked to particular organizational units (...) localized in departmental structures, because these structures offer careers, social support and intellectual commonality.” (*Ibid.*: 485.) These structures, in turn, are more open (or more exposed) to “external agencies which provide resources and exercise influence”, such as the state or other goal-setting and resource allocating organizations, than are umbrella disciplines (*ibid.*: 486).

Although Whitley does not provide an explicit account of the logics making for disciplines clustering into precisely these two big types, the parallels that can be drawn with Netti’s distinction between scope- and quality-oriented innovation in research allow for the formulation of the following hypothesis. The umbrella disciplines seem to imply a predominance of scope-oriented research, while the focus on the quality dimension seems to be a constitutive feature of the polytheistic disciplines. The broad consensus about disciplinary goals and values in the umbrella disciplines, and the corresponding emphasis on specialty concerns translatable into technical problems, signal a preference for innovation understood mainly as the extending of the realm of the known, as an addition or modification of the stock of knowledge related to a given research field. However, the tacit acceptance of ordering

principles at the level of specialized research does not amount to the stagnation of umbrella disciplines since

“the formation of specialties, in a sense, is the institutionalization of alternative views on scientific aims, and new specialties imply changing disciplinary goals. (...) Obviously, any challenge to the dominant perspective in a discipline is a challenge to the established hierarchy; and, similarly, any attempt at altering the relative centrality of specialties is an attempt at reformulating the disciplinary definition. Competition over specialty importance implies competition over interpretations of ordering principles, and vice versa.” (*Ibid.*: 482.)

The scope-oriented innovations characterizing the umbrella disciplines fit well Frickel and Gross’ theory of SIMs as vehicles of scientific change and development. SIMs would help explain sociologically those key moments of scientific history when major discoveries are paired with significant attempts at altering the ongoing disciplinary arrangements (“scientific revolutions”). However, although these movements can be radical and upset existing disciplinary structures, the claims they carry, because they emerge at the speciality level, remain of a particularistic span and are motivated by professional considerations internal to the community of a limited number of highly trained experts technically capable of assessing the nature of the innovation. The situation is different with the polytheistic disciplines, where the existence of rival, even mutually exclusive, definitions of the ordering principle discount the possibility of a coherent disciplinary elite, “in the sense of a group of scientists acting as guardians and interpreters of the institutionalized ordering principle, legitimating specialty concerns and models and allocating resources. Instead, there is a plurality of views which are not institutionalized throughout the discipline (...)” (*Ibid.*: 485.)

This fragmented and pluralistic character of the disciplinary field in the polytheistic sciences has to do with two facts noted by Whitley, bearing strong resonances with Nettl’s conceptualization of the quality-dimension in research. Contrary to the scope-oriented umbrella sciences, the *committedness to worldviews* plays a constitutive role in the polytheistic disciplines. In the latter, “the choice of problems to be tackled is almost invariably influenced, if not governed, by criteria of social relevance and importance.” (Nettl 1969: 67.) These criteria, in turn, translate worldviews and interests of social groups and movements transcending the academic world. In other terms, to a variable degree, these disciplines are bearers of various *transdisciplinary, sociopolitical functions* (of which, however, the practitioners might not be fully aware). In them, the *qualitative* dimension of ideas remains salient: they often involve

dissent in the sense defined by Nettl of a “structured opposition of preferences in idea-systems”, “the acceptance or rejection of the axio-normative structures of given systems of thought, a rearrangement of the significance and interrelationship of known components”, the formulation and support of alternative axio-normative structures and calls for the necessary choice between them (*ibid.*: 65-67).

Accordingly, these two kinds of disciplines exhibit different developmental logics. To borrow another expression from Nettl, while the scope-oriented umbrella disciplines evolve through the “*colonization* of new areas and their integration into the existing stock of thought”, the qualitatively bent polytheistic disciplines advance through “[*d*]issent within the framework of basic givens” (*ibid.*: 78, italics added). The differing developmental logics in turn result in distinct structural challenges at the level of the necessity of *integration* of the scientific results specific to the two disciplinary types. Whitley tackles the case of the umbrella sciences through the prism of undergraduate education, which has the function to create what he calls a “mechanical solidarity” between research areas and specialties: “it provides the common background for cohesion in a differentiated and diverse system of research, and reinforces existing views of the discipline which have to be acquired before more specialized development can be undertaken.” (Whitley 1989: 491.) However, this integrative strategy suffers from an inner difficulty, coded in the very developmental logic – described by Nettl as “colonization” – of this kind of disciplinary structure.

“The more fragmented and varied research becomes, the more important for disciplinary coherence is this common integrative perspective, which simultaneously reaffirms disciplinary goals and orientates prospective researchers to their development in particular, legitimate ways. There is, however, a problem here in that as disciplines become more differentiated, any attempt at providing a common background for scientists runs the risk of becoming increasingly remote from scientific activities in specialties, and so ineffective as a means of their integration.” (*Ibid.* 491.)

In the case of the polytheistic disciplines, the emergence of novelty is mediated by the worldview-committedness of the researchers, their sensitivity to and connections with the needs, values and sociopolitical aims carried by broader, extra-academic social strata, groups and movements, as well as public and private agencies and institutions. This committedness is an important factor determining the emergence of new fields of study, methods, etc., their relative success or failure, and the general institutional and sociopolitical context to which they correspond. The problems raised by the needs and sociopolitical aims motivating innovation on

the quality dimension are complex and cut across disciplinary boundaries; when they emerge as scientific problems in an academic context, their study should in theory be able to treat these in their original complexity and unity, as totalities. At this point, however, emerges a contradiction similar to the paradox of the colonization process in the umbrella disciplines, but which is nevertheless specific to the developmental logic of the polytheistic disciplines: the postulated *autonomy* of the different scientific disciplines and sub-disciplines is difficultly reconcilable with their essential *interdependence*. These disciplines all necessarily postulate some underlying *totality* (the human being, culture, society, etc.), but they study only *partial aspects* of it, in a self-enclosed manner.

It follows that *interdisciplinarity* bears a very distinct role in the development of the polytheistic sciences. Taking as a starting point the same domain from which Whitley's prime examples for this type of disciplines come, Nettl remarks that "the view of society as a unity (...) is a common starting point in many branches of social science. Yet the fact is that few modes of analysis can do justice to the concept of society." (Nettl 1966: 39.) As he observes, social scientists tend to ascribe the difficulty to scientifically grasp societies *as wholes* to their "existential material", i.e., to the intrinsic quality of "society" itself. This, however, begs the alternative explanation, based on the equally plausible assumption

"that societies exist in a meaningful way and that the difficulties are due to the fact that the tools of social science cannot readily be coordinated to do justice simultaneously (1) to the sophisticated demands of different academic disciplines and (2) to the integrated functional reciprocity of a society. The implications of this postulate are that it may be the methodological, intellectual and above-structural separation of social science that prevents justice being done to the study of whole societies." (*Ibid.*)

In other terms,

"the apologia of incompetence [to scientifically grasp society as a whole – G.T.] refers not so much to diffuse 'reality' as to the other areas of inquiry which may be equally scientific, but are of a different discipline and method to the one central for our postulated social scientist. (...) In fact, the frontier of relevance is not defined by the line at which abstraction ends and reality begins (...) but by the limitations of methodological means at hand and ignorance of more suitable alternatives. Such limitations are partly genuine and partly imposed by the academic convention of self-disciplined specialization." (*Ibid.*: 40)

The process of disciplinary differentiation in the polytheistic sciences is the origin of a phenomenon Nettl calls “catchment areas” (*ibid.*). They can be described as those neighboring “fields” of inquiry into which usually a specialized researcher does not venture but which is nevertheless constantly presupposed by their specialized inquiries – “that which we shall mention but about which we shall not say anything”, so to speak. According to Nettl’s characterization, “the field they cover is a geographically inevitable suburb on the outskirts of the discipline itself, whose existence actually makes the scientific development of the discipline possible; without them, the necessary definitional precision of science could not be attained.” (*Ibid.*) Catchment areas have a structural importance for polytheistic sciences because they condition the very *possibility* of the “scientific” character of the human and social sciences (that is to say, their *analogy* with the physical sciences): they “make exactitude possible in inexact (i.e., nonrepetitive) circumstances by facilitating the removal of noncomparable variables in a theoretical (universally valid) system, *and then permitting them to be reintroduced at the end in the form of extraneous qualifications.*” (*Ibid.*) At the same time, “the cultivational efforts in catchment areas are not a methodological commitment; like judges’ *obiter dicta* they cannot be quoted or held against the theory to which they relate (...). Magically, they condition the theory but cannot invalidate it.” (*Ibid.*)

Catchment areas also have a crucial function in the *developmental dynamics* of the polytheistic sciences. Their opening and exploitation are a necessity proceeding from the above-mentioned contradiction between (1) the separation and autonomous development of the different disciplines, on the one hand, and (2) the consequently increasing need to relate them to each other, on the other. This need for interdisciplinary work is satisfied through a growing specialization of research in the catchment areas. “At a certain stage, a catchment area becomes so specialized as to justify its elevation into a new, separate discipline (social anthropology between anthropology and sociology, or social psychology between psychology and sociology). This in turn creates new catchment areas. I shall call the opening up of catchment areas ‘colonization’.”⁸³ (*Ibid.*: 41.)

⁸³ Obviously, Nettl’s use of the notion of “colonization” is not entirely consistent between his two 1963 and 1969 writings. In the later article, he reserves it for the sciences where the scope-orientation dominates, while in the earlier text he applies it also for social-scientific disciplines as well, in which the potential for dissent is high. However, since we are dealing here with ideal types, I don’t see this tension as a decisive one. The question is always one of salience, as Nettl puts it in his 1969 article. This is true also in Mannheim’s case, whose struggle – as I will try to show in the following paragraphs – focused precisely on the proportion and hierarchy between the two principles in human- and social-scientific disciplines, in particular sociology.

This has important implications for a theory of scientific innovation and change. First, it suggests that what is usually described as the process of fragmentation of disciplines through specialization does not happen *from within* the disciplines themselves, but through the opening-up and exploitation of catchment areas. In other terms, new disciplines emerge from *in-between* the neighboring disciplines, and this then has retroactive effects on the initial disciplines and the whole disciplinary field. Interdisciplinarity is a central issue for a theory of scientific change because “breakthroughs often occur first on the disciplinary frontiers in the catchment areas” (*ibid.*). This is also why, “[c]onscious of this valuable potential, each discipline (...) tries to occupy the catchment areas for itself on the grounds that it is exclusively the concern of the central subject.” (*Ibid.*) Nettl gives as an example the colonization of *political culture* as the catchment area of *political studies* by *political science*:

“Instead of assigning political culture – the catchment area of political studies – to history and psychology, political scientists increasingly occupy it as a fertile area which can fructify their researches in the acknowledged central areas of political studies. (...) [H]aving discovered the historians’ and psychologists’ tools for colonizing political culture we adopt the tools but reserve the right of exploitation to ourselves. The catchment area still exists, ‘owned’, perhaps, by us but exploited with borrowed tools.” (*Ibid.*)

As the case of political science with political culture shows, the colonization process implies the cross-disciplinary appropriation by a given discipline (here: political science) of scientific and methodological tools developed in the surrounding areas and disciplines (here: history and psychology), and their subsequent investment in the catchment area itself (here: political culture). As Nettl puts it, “[i]n analyzing political culture, we do not invite sociologists or psychologists in (...); we *become* sociologists and psychologists. To this extent the main discipline is affected by the import even *before* the catchment area is colonized with the new techniques.” (*Ibid.*: 42.) This, in turn, sheds light on the crucial fact that political culture, and in general any catchment area, “is not a thing or a fact or even a sector of hitherto undiscovered relevance. It is merely a *rearrangement (...) of the intellectual order of things, a new structural relationship between disciplines in academic ‘society’ and in social systems*. It, in fact, resembles the affect on certain social structures of any social change.” (*Ibid.*: 44, italics added.) As a matter of fact, the emergence of catchment areas in the polytheistic sciences always involve a measure of *intellectual action*, used synonymously with *dissent*, or *innovation* in

terms of *qualitatively salient ideas*. Conversely, one can expect the emergence of qualitatively salient innovations in contexts where new catchment areas are opened.

All three main concepts – disciplinary habitus, umbrella vs. polytheistic disciplines and catchment areas – expounded here are operative concepts. I mean by this that they are designed to help the interpretation of Mannheim’s texts on sociology between 1930 and 1936 as a thematic unit whose unity can be shown if one reads them as the theoretical expressions of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge as a dissenting scientific-intellectual movement (disSIM). As I said earlier, the specificity of this disSIM is its *reflexive* dimension: at its core is the claim of the necessity of dissent in the human and the social sciences and a consequent plea for the transformation and reorganization of institutional structures and research practices around the intellectual, or qualitative, dimension of the scientific endeavor.

As the previous paragraph has shown, Mannheim’s disSIM develops in a very particular conjuncture, both in terms of the social and economic crisis and the extreme volatility of the political situation, on the one hand, and of the institutional context of the academia and the phase of the development of the human- and social scientific fields within it, on the other. One of the main aims of Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge is precisely to study the correlations between these two sequences. Such a study, however, cannot be a contemplative act but must take the form of *self-criticism*. Indeed, the thesis of the necessary and constant correlation between science and social context imposes a *duty of reflexivity* upon the scientists. As Mannheim puts it in one of the many formulations of this insight (in the 1932 article on “American Sociology”):

“*Wissenssoziologie* (...) claims to have discovered that science itself is embedded in the stream of social and historical reality, wherefore even in cases when the sincere effort toward unbiased objective knowledge cannot be denied, the available supply of terms, the technique of questioning, the articulation and grouping of problems may be responsible for distortions which can only be detected by means of an intimate historical acquaintance with the correspondence between the development of science and the evolution of society.” (Mannheim 1953a: 189.)

Therefore, the basic insight of the sociology of knowledge according to which whether a theoretical statement is perceived as true or false, and how it is interpreted, itself depends on the interests and commitments of the assessors, should be applied reflexively. In the face of Mannheim’s thesis of the existential connectedness of thought, the reactions of the academic community were polarized in accordance with the degree of reflexivity the different individuals

could afford based on their political and institutional positions and affiliations. The outlook of the human- and social-scientific disciplinary field would necessarily be impacted by how the expectation of radical reflexivity inherent in Mannheim's intervention would be received and acted out. This, in turn, was dependent to a very large extent on how the social and political crisis would be solved and how this would affect academic life at large.

It is worth underlining that Kettler and Meja's remark according to which, "[w]hen Mannheim turns from philosophy to sociology in the early 1920s, he first stakes out a position for himself on the boundary between the two disciplines" (Kettler–Meja 1995: 117), is still true in the early thirties, in the sense that sociology was still largely a catchment area on its way to be constituted as a separate discipline. Exactly what sociology was, or was to be, was itself a major stake of the struggles surrounding the entry of sociology into the academia. In turn, the answer to this question would impact the structure of the human- and social-scientific disciplinary field. In other words, at the time of Mannheim's intervention, the question of how the emergence of this new discipline was to rearrange the "intellectual order of things" and what kind of "new structural relationship between the disciplines" it would result was far from being settled.

To be more precise, one important question was whether the new academic science would converge toward one or the other of Whitley's ideal types of disciplinary structure. It seems that German sociology, in this period, exhibited the structure of a polytheistic science, with several disciplinary ordering principles competing for dominance and with academic authority exerted more on the basis of holding the key institutional positions rather than on that of a strong consensus about disciplinary goals, values, methods and research-techniques. At the same time, the main competing schools (Cologne and Frankfurt) converged on certain key issues, giving shape to something like a dominant disciplinary *habitus* whose ideal of sociology was, paradoxically, closer to that of an umbrella discipline than to a polytheistic one.

Based on the analysis of his writings on sociology between 1930 and 1936, I submit that Mannheim took a stance against the fragmentation of the human- and social-scientific disciplines into a manifold of scope-oriented research-areas and specialties, grouped around a certain professional identity, and shaping the bases of a "scholastic" disciplinary *habitus* in sociology. It is this "scholastic" disciplinary *habitus* – understood as that "system of objective and unconscious dispositions (...) through which the institutionalized scientific culture governs the thoughts and conduct of scientists" (Leclerc 1989: 43-45) – that Mannheim will especially attack and try to replace with an alternative model.

§ 41. The sociological attitude and the freely bound intellectuals

These themes are explored in the first course (*Allgemeine Soziologie*, translated to English by Kettler and Loader as *Introduction to sociology*) Mannheim taught as the newly appointed chair of sociology at the Wolfgang Goethe University of Frankfurt in the summer semester of 1930. The course notes – which were found among the papers of Mannheim’s student, the sociologist Hans Gerth, after the latter’s death, and which were published only in 1996 – contain the most detailed and probably also the most impassioned expression of Mannheim’s conception of sociology.

According to Mannheim, far from being unique, the meaning of the word “sociology” is threefold: it can mean a *specialized discipline* (“*Einzelwissenschaft*”) characterized by its *object*; it can mean a *method*; finally, it can mean an *attitude* (Mannheim 2001a: 5). Before making explicit the sense of each of these notions, it is worth noting that the simple affirmation of the triplicity of the meaning of the notion of sociology is already a way for Mannheim to take a stand against von Wiese and Curtius who, for different reasons and with different arguments, both argued in favor of a restricted conception of sociology as a specialized discipline, and against von Below who claimed that sociology was merely a method applicable by different human sciences.

Mannheim does not deny the possibility that sociology *may* be a specialized science. He explains that as “*Gesellschaftslehre*”, sociology is defined by its own object, “society”, which can be grasped as the structured totality of social formations and social processes. However, this restricted conception of sociology as a specialized discipline reduces to what Mannheim constantly denounces in these lectures: a “university enterprise” (“*Universitätsbetrieb*”) in view of goals extrinsic to the original – transdisciplinary – vocation of sociology, the “rational mastery of the universe of human relations” (Mannheim 2003a: 19) and “the moral and social transformation of mankind” (Mannheim 1953c: 195). Consequently, Mannheim cautions against considering this meaning of sociology as the standard one. He sees the idea of sociology as specialized discipline as the result of the abandonment of “the social theory of ideas, as well as cultural sociology – precisely the matters that life demanded and that originally led to sociology”, and not incidentally the kind of endeavor that Mannheim himself was pursuing

(Mannheim 2001a.: 6).⁸⁴ In sum, the conception of sociology as a mere specialized discipline is predicated upon its detachment from its “existential base”, i.e., from the conditions of human life in a modern society that brought about the necessity and possibility of sociology in the first place.

Mannheim finds indirect support for this claim in the observation that sociology is undeniably also a “method applicable in all human sciences. (...) [P]hilosophy, literature, and the other human sciences can be treated sociologically.” (*Ibid.*) At first glance, this assertion seems to correspond to von Below’s standpoint on sociology. However, what Mannheim says is not that sociology as a specialized discipline, beyond having its own object, also has its own methods, which are in a way transferable and exploitable also in other human sciences (affirmation which is otherwise correct). With a tighter formula, Mannheim’s assertion is not that sociology *has* methods, but that it *is* a universally applicable *method of interpretation*, which is quite another thing. *Sociology as a method of interpretation* applying a singular point of view to all human-scientific knowledge is nothing other than *the sociology of knowledge itself*, which, while rearticulating the results of specialized and compartmentalized scientific work with the teleology of extra-scientific social life, also synthesizes said results by exhibiting their common origin and principle of unity: the cooperation of human beings for the satisfaction of their needs.

How is sociology capable of accomplishing this rearticulation and synthesis? The answer lies in the concept of *sociological attitude* (“*soziologischer Einstellung*”) or sociological “posture of consciousness” (“*soziologischer Bewusstseinshaltung*”). The sociological attitude is the third and most basic meaning of the notion of sociology according to Mannheim. It is in a relation both of *origin* and of *foundation* vis-à-vis the two other possibilities of sociology, whose extrascientific (or “transdisciplinary”) origin it thereby discloses. According to Mannheim,

“[i]f we want to grasp sociology more deeply, we must begin with man, with man who has become sociological. What is unsettling about the situation is that the whole man must undergo the most profound transformation in order to have access to the sociological way of seeing. It is a matter of new phase of consciousness, as understood in the philosophy of history. (...) This

⁸⁴ It seems that Mannheim did not foresee another possible way for the scholastic disciplinary habitus to uproot the sociology of culture (and the sociology of intellectuals) from its transdisciplinary sources, namely its conversion into a nonreflexive type of scholarship operating with purely communicative categories. See here, Chapter 4, §§ 27-29.

process of emergence is the most important developmental process in the history of the human spirit.” (*Ibid.*)

This rather grandiose proclamation of Mannheim contains two distinct claims that were already present in his 1924 “A Sociological Theory of Culture and its Knowability”. The first relates to his theory of conjunctive knowledge, more precisely to his idea of “contagion” as the fundamental kind of existential relatedness, a sort of merging with the things themselves resulting in an “extended concept of knowledge” upon which any kind of subject-object relationship, and the corresponding narrower sense of knowledge in epistemology, are tacitly predicated (Mannheim 1982b: 187).⁸⁵ “What is at issue in the discovery of attitude (*Einstellung*)”, writes Mannheim, is that “in the human sciences the scientific subject matter under discussion somehow constitutes itself in human life, that it is conditioned by the subject.” (Mannheim 2001a: 7.) The importance of the attitude stems from the deep, inextricable involvement of the knower in the known. Since “knowing”, in the frame of a conjunctive community, is always the actualization of a conjunctive social function corresponding to a “communal” need, it is always an *act* performed in and for a given practical purpose in a historically unique life-context. Hence Mannheim’s insistence on the practical and self-reflexive dimension of sociological knowledge properly understood: “you can only know and recognize what sociology is in the process of doing it.” (*Ibid.*: 9.)

The second claim contained in the above quote about the sociological attitude is also about sociology transcending the limits of specialized science, but in a different, *philosophico-historical* sense. Mannheim insists that the scope and significance of the emergence of sociology goes far beyond the “sectoral” problem of the disciplinary structure of academic science: the proper ground for the discussion of the status of sociology is not what it is customary to call the philosophy of science, but the *philosophy of history*: “This sociological human type, like the attitude belonging to it, is distinctly new; it poses an almost philosophy-of-history question in the history of human consciousness.” (*Ibid.*: 15.) The notion of attitude, which is at stake here, insofar as it is strictly correlated with this philosophico-historical

⁸⁵ Mannheim’s own formulation in the 1930 course: “Cognition has its origins in a way of conducting oneself towards the world, a way of relating to the world, a certain attitude. That is, however, not a theoretical but an existential act, something in being. It takes place between two entities in being. In short, what is essential is that the constitution of the subject matter turns into a subject matter of science when we establish a relationship (*Verhältnis*) to the things, and that cognition only takes place in the medium of this relationship.” (Mannheim 2001a: 8.)

problematic, does not have any “psychological” connotation: it certainly involves a conception of consciousness and subjectivity, but, as Mannheim constantly emphasizes, the origin of these notions is not empiricist and positivist psychology, but rather the philosophical reflection inherited from German idealism, in particular Hegel (*ibid.*: 9-10, 18).

In this philosophico-historical context, the sociological attitude can be defined as the latest stage of development in the history of human consciousness, which corresponds (adequately) to the structure of the world following the transformations and upheavals characterizing Modernity. The philosophy of history in question does not, however, imply any postulate of a providential course of history: the latter is perceived as objectively contingent, and not only from the point of view of ignorant actors behind whose backs the Spirit’s return to itself would inexorably take place. The emergence of the sociological attitude results not from a metaphysical, but from an utterly earthly necessity, experienced by Western man: to adapt to the civilizational changes brought about by his own vital-historical activity (*ibid.*: 20).

Also, is there nothing “natural” about the sociological attitude, nor does it correspond to any former performance in the history of the human species: its novelty is in this sense absolute, while its enactment is not self-evident. As such, it is a *possibility* open to contemporary persons according to which they *can* live their lives (and *must* do so, according to Mannheim’s wager, if they simply want to continue to exist...). The sociological attitude, however, is not something that would be given to all contemporary persons; rather, it is an existential posture which, to be effective and to be perpetuated, must be ceaselessly appropriated, elaborated, transmitted and cultivated by each individual who enacts it – and ideally by the greatest possible number of individuals (*ibid.*: 33, 35, 38, 52-58, 72).

How can the transformations and upheavals in question be described and what is the “movement of thought” which makes it possible to “elaborate objects sociologically”? What does the realization of the sociological attitude actually imply? The answer to these questions can be found in the concept forged by Mannheim (inspired most probably by Simmel⁸⁶) of

⁸⁶ Though Heidegger too uses a similar term in §§ 22-24 of his *Being and Time* – “Ent-Fernung”, literally: “distancing” –, more closely related expressions – “Lebenstranzendenz”, “Selbsttranzendenz” – are found in the first chapter of Simmel’s *Lebensanschauung* (Simmel [1918] 1994). The idea of “distance” itself is a fundamental category of Simmel’s sociology and permeates what one may call his implicit anthropology. It does not seem exaggerated to say that to the question posed by Simmel “How is society possible?”, the proper answer is: through distance. The Simmelian inspiration of Mannheim’s conception seems more likely than the Heideggerian one, among other things because of the similar expressions to Simmel’s one finds in Mannheim’s 1925 essay on “The Problem of a Sociology of Knowledge”, in particular “Selbsttranzendierung” and “Lebenstranzendierung”.

distancing from life (“*Lebensdistanzierung*”) or more simply, of distancing (“*Distanzierung*”). What do these concepts mean? Using terms other than those of Mannheim (notably those of the psychiatrist W. Blankenburg), one can say that distancing from life is to be understood as the “loss of natural evidence”: first of all, of the univocity of *meanings* (“*Bedeutungsrichtungen*”⁸⁷), and second, of systems of *norms* qualified by their *binding* and *unquestionable* character. Once subjects are “distanced from life”, the same thing can have fundamentally different meanings for them depending on the *contexts* in which they come to encounter it. Previously fixed and unambiguous meanings become *equivocal* and *variable*. In turn, the standards of appropriate behavior are seen as external to the subjects; the latter adhere to them only on the surface and “by convention”: they are now *relative* (*ibid.*: 10-13).⁸⁸

Why does such a phenomenon arise in the first place? “Why is there no unambiguous alignment of meanings today?” Mannheim’s answer, reminiscent of his posthumously published 1924 text, is that “the social differentiation of the group is the most immediate cause of the differentiation of the group’s alignment of meanings. As a matter of fact, every social differentiation attacks meaning”. However, “the destruction of a unified orientation to meaning” is brought about only by “differentiations which create diverse circles (*Lebenskreise*)

Moreover, it is likely that Mannheim’s recourse to Simmel’s notions has a polemical aim here, since “distance” is also a fundamental concept of the sociology of von Wiese, whose terminology draws heavily on Simmel.

⁸⁷ The likely origin of this rather artificially sounding term is probably the 1930 essay by the psychiatrist and philosopher L. Binswanger, *Dream and Existence*. Binswanger’s inspiration is Heidegger’s discussion of the “spatiality of *Dasein*” in *Being and Time*. The meaning of this concept in Binswanger’s text could be rendered as “significant directions”, that is to say, the fundamental dimensions of horizontality and verticality toward which *Dasein* projects itself and, through this projection, opens up a world. Mannheim read at least one article by Binswanger, which he cites in his lecture, namely *Vital Function and Inner Life History* (1928), in which however the expression “*Bedeutungsrichtungen*” does not appear. It is possible that Mannheim read in the meantime *Dream and Existence* and borrowed the term from it. However, if this is indeed the case, it is only the *term* that he borrowed and not the *concept* because in the use that he makes of it in his course, the meaning of “*Bedeutungsrichtungen*” is not significant directions but rather a set of meanings which draw a coherent context which guides the life of a group. It is something like a configuration, making it possible to put order in the subjective experience thanks to its harmonization with the structures of meaning governing and orienting the living together of a human community. It is likely that Mannheim’s recourse to concepts from the “Heideggerian galaxy” such as this one has, once again, a polemical aim: the sociologist seeks to neutralize or subvert the initial meaning of these concepts.

⁸⁸ Note the analogy between this movement of distantiation and loosening of communal ties, and the passage from communal culture to cultivated culture depicted in the 1924 “A sociological theory of culture and its knowability”.

whose orientation is antinomic by necessity.” (*Ibid.*: 16-17.) Such a situation arose for the first time in the West during the Reformation when “conflicts about validity and the notion that the world could be different” split the unambiguous orientation to concepts such as death, God, how one had to address God, etc., into radically different interpretations (*ibid.*: 14). This, in turn, arose on the basis of the fact that social and political integration of subaltern strata became increasingly challenging toward the end of the Middle Ages, i.e., that the diverse oppressed strata ceased to enact the standpoint of the oppressors (*ibid.*: 12; cp. chiliastic consciousness in Mannheim 1963: 211-19). The transformation of feudal societies into modern, class-based societies was a further key factor leading to the formation of antinomic groups and became the basis of the emergence of the proto form of sociological thinking, *utopian consciousness* (*ibid.*: 17, 22).

Since that time, this distantiation from life, the alienation or “devitalization” of the contexts of meaning and the existential acts which correspond to them, became systematic and proved to possess a kind of inertia: once started, it expanded and deepened to the extent that there were no longer any content “with regard to which a doubt could not arise, where reflexivity could not come into play. Religion, state, society, morals – all are subjected to the attitude of distance from life.” (*Ibid.*: 20-21.) Gaining in both extension and intensity, “distantiation affects not only the objects of the external world and social forms, but increasingly also the sphere of the self. One gradually begins to speak of the ego as of a third person.” (*Ibid.*: 21.) More than that, “one experiences oneself as something that could well be different. One is only a possibility of oneself” (*Ibid.*). The variability of experience is thereby experienced on two levels: the meaning of things is no longer simply a function of the contexts in which we meet them, but also of the various potentialities – possibly unknown – of ourselves that our encounter with them come to “actualize”.

In the last stage, finally, the “apparatus of thinking and living moves into the distance. Psychological ways of examining our feelings manifest themselves. The process goes further and thought itself is put at a distance. Sociology of knowledge comes into being.” (*Ibid.*) The distinctly sociological form of reflexivity is born when the individual or groups of individuals begin to *systematically* link their experience of the “loss of the natural evidence” of the inherited configurations of meaning and norms to the *social process* of which they themselves are seen as the “products” – i.e., from the moment that their lived experience of distancing from the configurations of meaning and norms prevailing in a given society is perceived by them as the consequence of a hitherto invisible wedge within their primary communities.

It is no coincidence that the absolute detachment (“*Loslösens*”) from everything (*ibid.*: 13), to which this process leads, as well as the characteristic feeling of *floating* which accompanies it, evokes in the philosophically informed reader the Heideggerian description of the affect of anguish. Like Heidegger, Mannheim too was looking here for something resembling a ridgeline which both separates the fundamental and conflicting possibilities of modern existence and at the same time designates their common matrix. In Mannheim’s eyes, the experience of distancing from life, or the loss of the natural evidence of the configurations of meaning and of the systems of norms, fixes the contours of the modern condition by shaping the common matrix for the great antagonistic “historical decisions” which give its physiognomy to the modern era. Based on what precedes, the antagonistic character of these “decisions” can be understood as fundamentally different ways of reacting to the consciousness of the *contingency* manifested in the experience that “all that exists could be otherwise”. The course of 1930 is largely devoted to drawing the typology and the “phenomenology” (in the Hegelian sense of the term) of these “decisions”, which are five in number, and to which are correlated five forms of consciousness, five distinct ways for the “Spirit” to react to the experience of distancing: utopianism, romanticism, existentialism, “reprimitivization” and finally... *sociology as attitude*.

Taking his reasoning a step further, Mannheim embarks on a second phenomenological analysis, this time in Husserl’s sense. Here, his aim is to characterize the sociological attitude from the perspective of the subject who “performs” or “enacts” it (“*vollziehen*”). Retaining the achievements of his philosophico-historical construction, Mannheim starts from the following assumption: if the sociological attitude is a novelty of a philosophy-of-history order, it must have relayed another type of attitude which was once dominant. Mannheim calls this formerly hegemonic attitude the “religious attitude”, to which he now contrasts the sociological attitude.

Unlike the archetype of the “religious person”, addressed by a world and things having an intrinsic meaning, and with which they find themselves in an I-Thou relationship, to the “distanced person” the world and things are mute and devoid of meaning. The relationship that the subject, lonely and isolated, maintains with the latter is an I-It relationship. More precisely, for the distanced subject, the meaning of the world, of things and of life is the object of an interminable quest and never manifests itself immediately but only through specific *mediations*. To make sense of it, something must always be put between the “It” and the “I”. The meaning of a given “It” (which in this case can also be another person) depends on the mediation through which the “I” tries to interpret and appropriate it. The choice of the “mediator” is largely left to the decision of the distanced subject. The latter thus has significant freedom in the face of

the objects of their experience, and this freedom is increased by the fact that *anything* can become the object of their experience.

Therefore, for Mannheim, the central characteristic of the distanced person is that they become capable of *experimentation*: they have the possibility of adopting an experimental posture of consciousness, of which the sociological attitude is the latest avatar. Hence, if the experimental attitude can be characterized by its dimension of negativity – in that it implies the profanation of all the meanings, rules and prohibitions which regulate the trade of religious man with the things of his world and with themselves –, Mannheim considers much more important the positive dimension of this attitude, which consists in accepting and confronting the variability and contingency of experience (in the sense of “*Erlebnis*”) by *experimentation* conceived as a *deliberate use of variation*, in order to regain control over experience. Accordingly, the attitude of the sociological person can best be described as “attunement to what comes into being”, the maintaining of a state of “a-tension” toward the possibilities which are only emerging, a conception of one’s own situation as part of a process which cannot yet be judged for lack of being able to know its outcome. In the language of the 1930 course, Mannheim’s wager is that the two antithetical terms of effectuation (or enactment) (“*Vollzug*”, “*vollziehen*”) and distancing (“*Distanzierung*”) are in a *dialectical relationship*: once the subject has been distanced (or alienated) from contexts of meaning and traditional normative systems, they can, at a higher level, *carry out* the act of distancing themselves, *appropriate and take control of this process* not as something they passively endure, but that they themselves actively perform (Loader–Kettler 2002: 194).

In this framework, distancing will no longer signify a “withdrawal-from-the-world”, a nihilist floating above the world and oneself, but an expansion-of-oneself (“*Selbst-Erweiterung*”), an increased knowledge and control of one’s limits, a capacity for understanding others, a realistic attitude to life, the possibility of conscious rational planning, etc. Distancing must therefore be perceived, according to Mannheim, not in the perspective of what is destroyed by it, but what it makes possible (Mannheim 2001a: 20, 35). As I alluded to it above, the sociological attitude is one possible way to react to the kind of distantiation – a universal phenomenon in modernity – that “must inevitably appear in a situation of social discontinuity (*Umbruch*)”, such as the one Mannheim and his contemporaries were experiencing (*ibid.*: 32). In such situations, “[o]ne becomes separated, and, in so doing, searches for the new form, which can be achieved only by turning what had been immediately one’s own into a matter of reflection. That is the basic situation of modern man (...).” (*Ibid.*) What everyone has in common in the conditions of Modernity is the *challenge* of *reflexivity* stemming with iron

necessity from a situation in which “even the fundamentals which could provide a standard of measurement have become problematical.” (*Ibid.*: 33.) Sociology arises as a *specific* (and according to Mannheim: adequate) response to the basic insecurity of modern existence “by taking the distantiation from life, which first manifests itself in scattered and accidental guise, and treating it as a systemic problem, as the modern form of search for the renewal of life.” (*Ibid.*)

It is not until Lecture 6, dealing with “fascist reprimativization” as one of the significant political and intellectual alternative answers to the crisis of the lifeworld caused by the experience of distantiation (and the consequent consciousness of contingency), that Mannheim makes it explicit that the sociological attitude is, in fact, the characteristic feature of a specific and narrow social group, the *freely bound intelligentsia* (*ibid.*: 37). Indeed, not everybody is capable of or willing to enact self-distantiation and take the risk of self-expansion. Rather, different strategies of *repression of reflexivity* seem to be the rule and the freely bound intellectuals appear quite exceptional among other social and even intellectual groups in their willingness and ability to withstand the “extraordinary unease” (*ibid.*: 33) stemming from the contemporary constellation and to search for a forward-looking solution. Since these typical strategies of repression of reflexivity are themselves an organic part of the situation in which the freely bound intellectual must find and provide orientation for itself and others, the sociological attitude as an ideal-typical *decision* cannot be understood irrespective of the *other possible historical-political-intellectual decisions* in the face of the crisis of “classical Modernity”.

§ 42. The sociological attitude and its enemies I: fascism and reprimativization

The starting point of Mannheim’s historical typology is the time period leading to the French Revolution during which the ascending bourgeoisie slowly distanced itself from the image of the medieval-ecclesial worldview by forging a counter-image of a world better than the actual one. Mannheim calls this counter-image “utopia”. He does not mean by this an unrealistic portrait of the future, but the “document” of a type of behavior that one can adopt in the face of a historical and social blockage crystallizing in the overwhelming hegemony of a unitary image of the world, but one which proves increasingly out of step with contemporary developments and the interests of the ascending social strata. Far from being a mirage, the concept of utopia as a counter-image of the world contains in itself the idea of the need for its

realization and the concomitant necessity of the shattering of the current social order. For the utopian consciousness, the possibility of making other worlds exist by going beyond this one – which amounts to the recognition of the *contingent* character of this world – is not a threat, but on the contrary a reason for living (*ibid.*: 22-25; cp. of course Mannheim 1963: 205-210).

In accordance with its dual character, both historical and ideal-typical, the “spirit of utopia” is not “nailed” to the historical conjuncture of the rise of the bourgeoisie – diverse strands of the ascending proletariat of the 19th century would take it up and develop it into new directions. Utopian consciousness is itself a posture of consciousness that arises when, for certain classes of modern society (and not for certain *elites*, as in the theoretical work of Pareto and in the political reality of fascism), the overthrow of the established order becomes both an ineluctable necessity and a feasible possibility (cp. again Mannheim’s essay on “The Utopian Mentality” in *Ideology and Utopia*). The intrinsic difficulty of utopia does not reside in the fact that it is unrealized (the tension toward the not-yet-there is rather its essence), but is revealed precisely in the phase when, victorious, it is put to the test of reality when it comes to be consolidated as the new reality. At this point, in the eyes of the partisans themselves, its abstract character on the one hand and its ideological character on the other can be revealed for the first time.

The problem of *romanticism* is quite different (Mannheim 2001a.: 25-28; cp. Mannheim 2003b: 148-49). According to Mannheim’s reasoning – which basically takes up what he wrote on the subject in the first part of his “A sociological theory of culture and its knowability” in 1924 –, the romantic person of the turn of the 18th-19th centuries went through the experience of distantiation made possible by the enthusiastic participation in political movements stemming from utopianism, but after the latter’s wave died down, disillusioned, they have retracted. Having lost the naïve, immediate belief in both the image of the world overtaken by utopianism and the image of the world conveyed by it, the romantic tries to reconnect with the contents of the pre-utopian era that remained meaningful to them in order to reestablish the lost immediacy. This is the matrix of conservative ideologies (here Mannheim obviously builds on his *Habilitationsschrift* on early German conversatism). In doing so, the romantic achieves two decisive performances which are correlated, namely the discovery of the “continent History” and the endowment of modern man with a singular capacity for empathy toward the contents of the past. Mannheim calls this tendency “neoprimitivism” and describes it as a paradoxical desire to achieve the authenticity of an immediate relationship to the distanced contents of the past (and in particular to its “myths”) through highly reflective theoretical performances – and

which can therefore only miss their goal (despite being extremely creative on other levels). Fruitful as it is, romanticism leads ineluctably to disappointment.

According to Mannheim, *existentialism* was born out of this internal crisis of romanticism (Mannheim 2001a: 28-30). It represents a third possible posture in the face of the experience of distancing resulting from the situation where the direct, “naïve”, unreflective relationship with present or past worldviews have become problematic. Thus, existentialism retains from romanticism the desire for an immediate relationship with life, but it renounces the concrete contents to which the romantic wanted to access. By renouncing it, existentialism hopes to avoid the pitfalls of the posture from which it stems, and therefore endeavors to find an ultimate “something” in man that is no longer conditioned, but rather itself conditions everything else. In doing so, the existentialist thinker indeed discovers something deep in man that no other school of thought would have succeeded in bringing to light. However, existentialism is doomed to the same failure as romanticism because the impossibility of an immediate relationship with life does not derive from the *mode of being* of what one is nostalgic about (therefore looking for “Being” instead of “beings”, for example), but from the fact that here again the dreamed access to the lost object is only possible through a reflexive act, which no philosophical feat will ever succeed in exorcising. Conversely, the immediate danger of this posture stems from its growing indifference to the concrete content of the existential act (in Heidegger, who is probably the one targeted by Mannheim in this case, of “resolution”), from its inability to inscribe it in historical temporality, and its blindness in relation to its dependence on a concrete sociohistorically anchored intersubjective context.

A second, greater danger, stemming from the one just mentioned, is the vulnerability of this attitude to an alternative posture that promises – and in a certain sense brings – success where romanticism and existentialism must both fail. Mannheim calls this posture “reprimitivization” (not to be confused with the “neoprimitivism” characteristic of Romanticism). Reprimitivization, as a process which, in different ways, affects intellectuals as much as “the masses”, is a phenomenon of *collective regression* to a level of primitive development of human behavior and forms the historical *condition of possibility of fascism*.

“This formation, a person who artificially becomes primitive after he has already become reflexive, is the problem of the moment. Fascism, taken in its decision about the world as a whole (*ganze Weltentscheidung*), is nothing but reversion to complete primivity and impressionist impulsiveness by types of men – among the leaders – who have already experienced the reflexive situation and who then say: ‘One cannot live like this any longer. We

want to found dictatorship and order.’ That is how it is among the leaders. (...) This move is historically congruent (*fällt zusammen*) with the petit-bourgeois strata, rooted in the soil, who do not understand the situation, but who understand enough to know that the old order is not working. The fear of death is never as great as the fear of social breakdown (*Nichtfunktionieren*). (...) That is why it is understandable that these primitive strata should suddenly become explosive and incalculable. ‘I need nothing but elan and enthusiasm.’ This type of public and this type of leadership come to the same conclusion, although at completely different levels, and they both arrive at a theory of impulsive action.” (*Ibid.*: 34.)

To understand what reprimativization is and why it constitutes a formidable danger – even greater than Mannheim had suspected in 1930 –, one must focus on the idea of regression, of “turning oneself back” (“*zurückzuschrauben*”). I understand reprimativization as a development whose possibility is coded into the structures of consciousness constituting modernity, but in a definitely different way as is the case with utopianism, romanticism and existentialism – or, for that matter, with the sociological attitude. Indeed, despite the historical continuity between all these forms, the passage from Romanticism and Existentialism to fascist reprimativization requires a *leap*: the before and the after are *heterogeneous* to each other. While the various forms of utopianism, romanticism and existentialism all come from the same socio-historical matrix (even though they are opposed *within* it, and to some extent *to* it), fascist reprimativization not only decisively breaks *with* this matrix, but it *breaks the matrix itself*.

Since reprimativization is a reversal or a turning back, one must first specify *what* is reversed, *from what* one turns back to something more “primitive”. What does it mean that fascist reprimativization is a *repression* (or perhaps a *forclusion*) of *reflexivity*? Or, to put it differently: what is the *common matrix* of all the other great historical-political-intellectual decisions made necessary by the structural crisis of the modern lifeworld, and that fascist reprimativization seeks to breach? My proposition is that this common matrix is what the philosopher Hans Blumenberg called the *concept of reality of modernity*. In this sense, the interrogation about reprimativization leads back to an age-old philosophical question: *What is reality?* How do we know that something is real?

According to Mannheim, although the common matrix in question is tacitly presupposed by the different political and intellectual tendencies at odds with each other, only the freely bound intelligentsia, whose vocation it is to *defend the project of modernity in its totality*, can make it explicit and articulate it thematically. The type of intellectual capable of this, writes Mannheim, dispenses with all the particular utopian projects of other social groups and thinks

of reality “in terms of an open system, constantly putting it in question”, testing its coherence in view of grasping society as a dynamic totality in a “structural interconnectedness”, that is to say, a “coherence that aspires to totality but that holds itself open to facts that cannot be comprehended from this point of view.” (*Ibid.*: 52.) The freely bound intellectual thus makes the fundamental wager that

“reality has a structure in which several structural tendencies are implicitly present and likely to intersect at a given moment, that every thinker is positioned in the medium of one of these wavelengths, that an image of the world abstracts itself from this location and is perhaps recognized at a later stage as a single wavelength which only appeared to represent a closed system, some kind of closed structural image – but that the world itself is much more multi-layered than the particular wavelengths we register.” (*Ibid.*: 54-55.)

Mannheim’s developments on this topic are very close to Blumenberg’s theorization of modernity. According to Blumenberg, the modern concept of reality makes the judgment “This is real” dependent on the occurrence of a *temporal sequence* of events. In this concept of reality, the real is defined as the *self-consistent realization of an open context* – “open” in the sense that *an ultimate guarantee of reality is not possible*. What determines the “reality” of a set of phenomena is its *internal consistency*, which is always exposed to newly emerging facts that can call this consistency into question. The reliability of the judgment “This is real” is therefore dependent on the possibility of integrating the various experiences which occur within this context from the *horizon of a future* which is only partially foreseeable and thus capable to “shatter previous consistency and so render previous ‘realities’ unreal.” (Blumenberg [1963] 1979: 33.) The modern idea of “reality” is a “borderline concept” whose meaning includes that only the ideal (but, of course, *de facto* always open) totality of a plurality of subjects could fully confirm a current individual experience. In the absence of a truly ideal intersubjective totalization, this concept of reality “has a sort of ‘epic’ structure, relating to the totality of a world that can never be completed or grasped in its entirety – a world that can be only partially experienced and so can never exclude different contexts of experience which in themselves constitute different worlds.” (*Ibid.*)

This concept of the reality of the context of phenomena, for which modern science provides the paradigm according to both Blumenberg and Mannheim, has two striking characteristics. First, it offers the possibility of rational calculation and advanced foresight, making it possible to effectively anticipate and control the emergence of factors whose

consequences may otherwise be unmanageable. The indissoluble flip side of this possibility lies in the fact that it is this same concept of reality which is the matrix of the various forms of utopia: it is only to the extent that “reality” not only admits the new and the unfamiliar but apprehends them as stimuli for human activity that something like a utopian world-aspiration has become conceivable. For that, it was necessary that reality be preferably *not* what is given entirely in the present intuition (nor besides what is guaranteed by an all-powerful creator God, as in the Middle Ages), but precisely that which, potentially, is in germ in a present virtuality whose realization depends on the subjective efforts exerted *in* and *against* the present order of things.

This leads to the paradoxical observation that, to the extent that it consists in denying the consistency of reality as a given, unchangeable fact, i.e., in being a negation of *this* reality, utopia is the active, revitalizing ferment of the modern concept of reality. By de-legitimizing the empirical matter of fact, by pluralizing the political world-aspirations (which will appear from certain standpoints as ideologies, from others as utopias) that want to act on the factual to overcome it in the name of the potentialities it carries, utopia comes to validate and legitimize the concept of reality of the open context. In this sense, romanticism and existentialism are governed just as much by the modern concept of reality as utopianism, even though their affective relationship to this common matrix is negative. It also follows that the mere possibility of a plurality of worldviews perceiving each other as ideologies (or mere “utopias” in the pejorative sense) is itself based on this concept of reality – and in this sense, the emergence of the total concept of ideology is itself also a typically modern fact which supposes in the background an awareness of reality as a “con-text”, i.e., a great text co-written from antagonistic perspectives, but whose totality nevertheless remains coherent in itself.

The second characteristic of this concept of reality is its inherent *fragility*, which stems from the fact that it is dependent on a *performance*, a confirmation or validation that is always to come and which, precisely, might as well not come at all. This means that living according to this concept of reality is laborious and risky, because its maintenance depends on the capacity to integrate and keep under control an uninterrupted series of new facts, to adapt oneself to them, to let oneself be transformed by the novelty. It is obvious that this burden is not always equally sustainable for everyone. Therefore, the question must be asked what happens when the consistency of reality as context is dismantled and when the subject who inhabits this reality feels that they lose control over it: in short, when, in times of crisis, inconsistency becomes the rule.

The situation described in *Ideology and Utopia* of the generalization of the critique of ideologies (in the sense of the total concept) resulting in “spiritual insecurity”, where the individual undergoes the agonizing experience of increasing distantiation both from their own ideology and from those of others, offers the picture of such a lasting inconsistency of reality as context. And, following a suggestion from Blumenberg, the will to get rid of this deep discomfort might not come through an effort to regain the lost consistency at a higher level, as Mannheim preconizes; instead, it may consist in “deliberately breaking through set patterns of formal consistency – a breaking-through which shows by the way it is handled that it does not spring from any failure or exhaustion of creative powers but, on the contrary, represents a conscious effort which can afford to disregard the quasi-objective principle of formal consistency.” (Blumenberg 1979: 47.)

It must be underlined that the destruction of the concept of reality as a formally consistent open context does not drive back to the Medieval concept of reality and feeling of life (according to the desire of the romantic person), called “guaranteed reality” by Blumenberg, in which the reliability of human knowledge is ascertained by an almighty and all-knowing good God. This “schema of the third instance”, or of the “absolute witness” – formulated philosophically for the first time by Saint Augustine and gaining its clearest expression in Descartes’ *Meditations on First Philosophy* –, is characterized by the fact that it “precludes the possibility of any one characteristic that might pinpoint the total reality of a given object.” (Blumenberg 1979: 32.) In other terms, for the Medieval concept of reality, “there is no instantaneous evidence of the ultimate reality (...). The given reality becomes certain only by virtue of a guarantee which has to be secured by thought in a complex metaphysical process.” (*Ibid.*)

On the antipode to this highly sophisticated and reflexive pre-modern attitude to life and the world, the concept of reality of fascist reprimativization is a regression to a primitive state of elaboration of affects and impulses whose most salient characteristic is precisely the *absence of reflexivity*, i.e., the lived experience of the *immediate and total givenness of the real in an act of perception*. Blumenberg names this the “*concept of reality as instantaneous evidence*” and locates its paradigm in *mythical consciousness*. This concept “presumes that reality present[s] itself as such and of its own accord, and that at the moment of its presence it [is] there and totally incontrovertible. (...) ‘Instantaneous evidence’ is a concept that involves the instant

recognition of ultimate reality and can be identified precisely through this implication.” (*Ibid.*: 31.)⁸⁹

My contention is that *reprimitivization* can be described as *the abandonment of the modern concept of reality as context in favor of the concept of mythical reality as momentary evidence of the sensible*. The question remains how to conceive the process of this abandonment of one concept of reality for another. Mannheim himself did not attempt to provide a theoretical explanation for it, despite the structural importance that this idea gains in his later writings, especially in *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction*. Therefore, relying on Sigmund Freud’s last writing, *Moses and Monotheism* and Blumenberg’s theory of myth, I have tried elsewhere to offer a working model for the “conversion” or restructuring of individual consciousness from a concept of reality as open context to one of reality as instantaneous evidence (Tverdota 2016: 93-98). Here, I wish to recall only the main points of my analysis.

In his ultimate theoretical effort before his death, Freud tried to explain the potential of efficiency of quasi-psychotic mass-religious and mass-political phenomena – which present an analogy with fascist reprimitivization, of which Freud tried in this way to offer his own account – through the transposition of the individual phenomenon of *latency* and *compulsive return of traumatic experiences* of early childhood to the history of the human species. The crux of Freud’s theory of mass susceptibility is that only the phenomenon of the *return of the repressed* can account for the way in which sudden, structural and lasting psychic changes are brought about at the level of a whole society. As he puts it, “[i]t is especially worthy of note that every memory returning from the forgotten past does so with great force, produces an incomparably strong influence on the mass of mankind and puts forward an irresistible claim to be believed, against which all logical objections remain powerless (...).” (Freud 1939: 136.) In other words, the tremendous tensions between the opposing forces at play in repression can result in some cases in an explosive discharge – the energetic side of the sudden return of the repressed in the form of an acting out – which is responsible for the effect of astonishment and adhesion associated with mass-religious or mass-political phenomena.

⁸⁹ See also (Blumenberg [1971] 2014: 362-63): [The concept of reality of myth] “contains the idea that reality offers itself as such and in its actual presence, without requiring constant and indefinitely prolonged subsequent interrogation, and that it can satisfy the need of theoretical and plastic certainty, while also guaranteeing eudemony in the enjoyment of a serene intuition. The closed intuitiveness of mythical figures and stories (...) is resistant to a concept of reality as an open context, where what is expected of the experience to come is that it corrects the current experience, rather than confirming it in a pattern of repetitive types.”

If we apply this schema to fascist reprimativization, we can hypothesize that the regression of a concept of reality as an open context to a concept of reality as instantaneous evidence – and the consequent foreclosure of the reflexive dimension of the relation to the world – *must* presuppose a mechanism of the type of the compulsive return of the repressed. The analogy is corroborated by the fact that this regression, which is signaled by the bypassing of rationality, deeply affects the subject's relation to the truth, which no longer passes through an intersubjective process of continuous confrontation of “adumbrations” always in perspective, but through a dazzling conversion of affects meaningless in themselves into *significance*, “conferring on the statement thus accentuated a weight which no longer seems to require any argumentation.” (Blumenberg 2014: 347-48.)

Freud names three conditions under which the repressed can achieve the goal of entering consciousness and submitting it to its demands. The first is the weakening – for various reasons – of counterinvestments aimed at forgetting the trauma; the second is the hormonal strengthening of the drives that are linked to the repressed (this is particularly the case during puberty); finally, the third condition, the most significant from the point of view of the problem under investigation here, is the following. “Whenever recent events produce impressions or experiences which are so much like the repressed material that they have the power to awaken it. Thus the recent material gets strengthened by the latent energy of the repressed, and the repressed material produces its effect behind the recent material and with its help.” (Freud 1939: 152-153.) This condition is the most significant because it is the only one that can easily be influenced externally, namely through political propaganda.

In his analysis of Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*, Blumenberg attempts to give a model for such influence by confronting the Freudian model of the return of the repressed to the schema of the Platonic anamnesis, to show both its “formidable” and “disastrous” political potential (Blumenberg 2014: 347). While in Plato the authenticity of a memory is guaranteed by the original experience of the Idea by the soul before its birth, in Freud's model, it is to the contrary the emergence (or the return) of the repressed memory that elicits the experience of the indisputable evidence of being in front of an “Idea” (i.e., something true in and by itself). According to the above-mentioned third condition of the return of the repressed, the unconscious perception of a strong resemblance between the archaic working for its return and current impressions – coming for example from myths and political symbols simulating the features associated with archaic contents – is by itself capable of overcoming the resistance of the ego against the tendency to repetition,

“the reception of the myth then becoming this compulsive anamnesis of latency thanks to which Freud explains the transfer of all archaic affects to the father of the origins restored as monotheistic divinity. Such a mobilization and such a transfer of archaic affects must be at work in the *mythization of ideologies* [“*Mythisierung von Ideologien*”]: that which dispenses with any rational legitimation and must, although having no demonstrable history, have the aspect of the archaic of origins making a return must appear to be disproportionately powerful and in league with all powers. (...) [T]he function of the late fictitious mythologies consists [precisely] in capturing the association of truth in favor of what is considered to be ancient”. (*Ibid.*, italics added; cp. Mannheim 2003b: 160.)

In sum, the mythization of ideology as a mode of operation of fascist reprimativization is to be understood on the model of the possibility inscribed in the Freudian theory of the simulation of the richness of meaning through *de facto* meaningless archaic figures, which are nevertheless experienced as “true” simply because of having been latent, i.e., “having suffered the fate of repression, the state of what remains in the unconscious” (Freud 1939: 163), before their compulsive return. In a situation where the concept of reality as a context is no longer able to provide orientation for large swathes of the general population, where, for them, the naive relationship to ideology has become just as impractical as a secondary, “reflexive” relationship, the process of the mythization of ideology turns out to be a highly effective tool to bend the consciousness of disoriented subjects to the demands of far-right political leaderships.

§ 43. The sociological attitude and its enemies II: functional rationalization and scholasticism

How do these developments relate to the claim that Mannheim’s writings on sociology between 1930 and 1936 are to be read as expressions of a reflexive disSIM, whose object is the status of dissent in the social sciences, and whose aim is the reorganization of the latter around the intellectual, or qualitative, dimension of scientific endeavor? That there is a specifiable link between the state of the human and social sciences, in particular the process of disciplinarization of sociology, and the breakdown of the “democracy of reason” into a “democracy of feeling” (Scheler’s expressions), is suggested by Mannheim through the rhetorical repetition of an identical formula – “I want order!” –, first uttered in the first lecture of “*Allgemeine Soziologie*” when discussing the “scholastic drive” (“*Schulbetrieb*”) as the dominant disciplinary habitus of

contemporary academic science, and a second time in the fifth lecture when discussing reprimativization and the mentality of fascist elites.⁹⁰

The logical link that allows for the unexpected parallel between the process of fascization of society and the de-intellectualization of academic knowledge can be elaborated by looking at Mannheim's concept of *functional rationalization*, introduced in his 1935 *Mensch und Gesellschaft im Zeitalter des Umbaus* (the English translation and expanded version of this text appeared in 1940 under the title *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction*), which develops further the sketchy theory of fascism expounded in Mannheim's first Frankfurt course. How does the concept of functional rationalization help to connect reprimativization to the dominant "scholastic" habitus in academic institutions?

According to Mannheim's definition, is said to be functionally rational "a series of actions [that] is organized in such a way that it leads to a previously defined goal, every element in this series of actions receiving a functional position and role", and which "co-ordinates the means most efficiently". (Mannheim 1940.: 53.) This doesn't mean that the (externally given) goal itself is rational or that it has been set through rational deliberation. "Whether a series of actions is functionally rational or not is determined by two criteria: (a) Functional organization with reference to a definite goal; and (b) a consequent calculability when viewed from the standpoint of an observer or a third person seeking to adjust himself to it." (*Ibid.*) As examples, Mannheim invokes an army or a bureaucracy in which the average actor does not need to have a holistic insight into the entirety of the organization or into the overall strategy in order to perform adequately a functionally rational act or series of acts. For functional rationality to occur, rational organization and efficient coordination of the means and calculability in terms of the rules of goal-realization are the determining factors. Yet, for the individual to adapt to functionally rational work-processes, "functional self-rationalization" is also often necessary: it entails habitual control and subordination of one's impulses, will and inner motives to an aim external to oneself (*ibid.*: 56).

According to Mannheim, a structural characteristic of his epoch is the pervasiveness of functional rationalization, which is directly proportional to the degree of industrialization of a society: the more advanced the division of labor and organization in a society, "the greater will

⁹⁰ Mannheim says in his first lecture that the work in the scope-oriented contemporary humanities is all too often motivated by an "arbitrary: 'I want order'" – the same formula he uses later in Lecture 5 to characterize the whys and wherefores of "fascist reprimativization": "'One cannot live like this any longer. We want to found dictatorship and order.' That is how it is among the leaders." (Mannheim 2001a: 4, 34.)

be the number of spheres of human activity which will be functionally rational and hence also calculable in advance.” (*Ibid.*: 54.) Mannheim’s appraisal of this tendency is unequivocally negative: “bound to deprive the average individual of thought, insight, and responsibility”, the all-pervasive functional rationalization of all spheres of social activity has “paralyzing effects (...) on the capacity for rational judgment.” (*Ibid.*: 58.) To that extent, it appears as directly responsible for the political irrationalism of the broad masses in times of crisis and forms the hotbed of fascist reprimativization.

“This is the state of affairs which has led to the growing distance between the elite and the masses, and to the ‘appeal to the leader’ which has recently become so widespread. The average person surrenders part of his own cultural individuality with every new act of integration into a functionally rationalized complex of activities. He becomes increasingly accustomed to being led by others and gradually gives up his own interpretation of events for those which others give him. When the rationalized mechanism of social life collapses in times of crisis, the individual cannot repair it by his own insight. Instead, his own impotence reduces him to a state of terrified helplessness.” (*Ibid.*: 59.)

It is not difficult to recognize the extent to which these developments of Mannheim are indebted to Georg Lukács’ theory of reification expounded in the first section of the third essay of *History and Class Consciousness* (1923) titled “Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat”. Showing this debt will give a better grasp of Mannheim’s association between what he sees as a detrimental disciplinary habitus in the human and social sciences on the one hand and fascism on the other. According to Lukács’ reading of Marx’s theory of commodity fetishism, the capitalist subsuming of use-value to exchange-value, that is, the organization of the whole of social life for the sake of commodity-exchange (“the market”), is at the root of the phenomenon of *reification*. This expression means to say that, in a market-society, all forms of human interactions tend to be mediated by the commodity-form, and that the act of commodity-exchange as the universal paradigm of human relations results in the objectification and the becoming independent of these relations in the consciousness of the actors, thus gaining the character of a “thing” (Lukács 1971: 85-87).

Lukács’ asserts that the capitalist mode of production separates the worker from the means of production, while it uproots the process of production itself from its communal embeddedness and subjects it to the purely rational, supra-communal standard of productivity. The process of reification first arises in the modern factory, characterized by a fully rationalized division of labor, resulting in the loss of autonomy of the workers over the results of their own

productive activity, which confronts them under the alien form of the implacable power of capital, and in the fragmentation, quantification and specialization of the work-process itself, entailing the fragmentation of the very subjectivity of the workers, in order to ensure the full calculability and increased productivity of the productive process (*ibid.*: 88-89).

“Neither objectively nor in his relation to his work does man appear as the authentic master of the process; on the contrary, he is a mechanical part incorporated into a mechanical system. He finds it already pre-existing and self-sufficient; it functions independently of him, and he has to conform to its laws whether he likes it or not. As labor is progressively rationalized and mechanized his lack of will is reinforced by the way in which his activity becomes less and less active and more and more contemplative.” (*Ibid.*: 89.)

Reification does not stop at the doors of the factory: it gradually gains all those spheres of social life whose rationalization can further the development and extension of the capitalist mode of production. Reification thus extends to justice, administration, science, etc. (*ibid.*: 93-96). When the commodity-relation becomes the universal mediator of any possible relation between human beings, including one’s relation to oneself, reification becomes the one “formally unified structure of consciousness that embrace[s] the whole society” (*ibid.*: 100). What is of particular importance from the point of view of the topic discussed here is Lukács’ insistence that science and philosophy are not exempt from the iron necessity of reification. Like in all the other spheres of life colonized by market-logics, here too the “specialization of skills leads to the destruction of every image of the whole.” (*Ibid.*: 103-104.) In turn, the obliteration of the whole means that science and philosophy cut themselves off mentally and institutionally from the social whole in which they are embedded:

“[Modern science] will then find that the world lying beyond its confines, and in particular the material base which it is its task to understand, its own concrete underlying reality lies, methodologically and in principle, beyond its grasp. (...) Science is thereby debarred from comprehending the development and the demise, the social character of its own material base, no less than the range of possible attitudes towards it and the nature of its own formal system.” (*Ibid.*: 104.)

It is on this last idea of Lukács that Mannheim builds in his Frankfurt lectures when he calls out the affinity between what he calls “scholasticism” in science and fascism in politics. From Lukács’ concept of reification, he retains the idea of “(functional) rationalization” and

coins the notion of “scholasticism” as the form functional rationalization takes in contemporary academic science, describing it in the manner of a dominant disciplinary habitus (Mannheim 2001a: 3-5). At the same time, Mannheim takes care of blunting the anti-capitalist political edge of Lukács’ notion by talking about “industrialization” in general, without mentioning that, for Lukács, the functional rationalization entailed by reification could not be understood outside of the thesis of the colonization of the entire social realm by market-logics.⁹¹

This renders Mannheim’s (tacit) use of the category of reification somewhat inconsistent, because it reinforces the very tendency it is supposed to counter: “the divorce of the phenomena of reification from their economic bases and from the vantage point from which alone they can be understood.” (Lukács 1971: 94-95.) It also entails that Mannheim rejects class-based revolutionary political praxis as the solution to reification. Instead of revolutionary organizing, Mannheim preconized *to reinforce a type of rationality* which he saw *at odds with functional rationality* – within science and in society at large: so-called “*substantial rationality*”. This gave the advantage to Mannheim’s proposal of opening the perspective of counteracting reification (functional rationalization) within the particular domain of science and academic life, in historical circumstances unfavorable to revolutionary political praxis. In doing so, he avoids the more pessimistic stance of Lukács in this regard, who simply denied the possibility of thwarting the formalism and fragmentation of science and academic life on the ground that a radical change in the superstructure cannot be brought about “on the soil of bourgeois society.” (*Ibid.*: 109-110.)

Mannheim defines substantial rationality as “the capacity to act intelligently in a given situation on the basis of one’s own insight into the interrelations of events.” (Mannheim 1940: 58.) A substantially rational act is always founded on knowledge gained from first-person experience of a *situation* in a given *context*. It is an *existentially connected, conjunctive*

⁹¹ Mannheim was more faithful to Lukács’ ideas in 1924 in “A sociological theory of culture and its knowability”. There, he summed up Lukács’ key theses as follows. “It has often been pointed out that the same (bourgeois) rationalism manifests itself in the new economic systems as in early modern natural science. When the qualitative is reduced to the quantitative in the observation of nature, it is the same structural change in attitude toward things as when commodity production takes the place of production of goods for one’s own needs. Just as the world of goods, which still comprises in the natural economy all sorts of qualitatively distinct goods, qualitatively distinguished as use values, is seen in the capitalist system from its commodity-aspect alone, which is to say as merely an equivalent for a numerically specifiable amount of money, so do, for this inclination of consciousness, all things and later also all human beings appear ever more and in growing measure transformed: they appear only in so far as they can be taken into account by a rationalistic calculability.” (Mannheim 1982b: 156.)

knowledge. It is also *synthetic*, *holistic* and *practical* since it relies on an insight into the situation as a whole in which the actors seek orientation in view of action. By equating substantial rationality with “capacity for independent judgment” (*ibid.*), Mannheim stresses that an act based on this kind of intelligence is an *autonomous*, externally non-directed act, whose origin is the self of the actor. Not just any kind of self, though, since substantial rationality is linked to one’s “cultural identity”: the seat of one’s capacity to act in a substantially rational and autonomous way is not the universal, supra-communal self, but the *conjunctive-communal self* (*ibid.*: 59).

Furthermore, by considering Mannheim’s examples of “self-rationalization” corresponding to substantial rationality, i.e., self-observation and reflection, substantial rationality also appears as the condition of *reflexivity*. Indeed, not only does substantial rationality give intelligent theoretical insight into a situation in view of acting in it, but it also retroacts on the acting subject. Mannheim speaks of “self-transformation” and “self-reorganization” occurring when one is confronted with the failure of the habitual strategies to deal with a situation whose complexity or novelty exceeds the capacity of understanding and orientation of the person (*ibid.*: 56-57). In such cases, “reflectiveness preserves life by helping us to adjust ourselves to new situations so complex that in them the naïve and unreflective man would be utterly at a loss.” (*Ibid.*: 57.) This corresponds exactly to the function of sociology as attitude in Mannheim’s first course in Frankfurt.

In light of the above, it is now possible to answer the question about how “scholasticism” as the dominant disciplinary habitus can contribute to the rise of fascism. Scholasticism contributes to it to the extent that it undermines substantial rationality, or the capacity of the average citizen to achieve autonomous intelligent understanding of their situation, and the ability to maintain a rational and reflexive orientation in times of crisis. This is unavoidable because the scholastic tendency to systematization in view of universal or communicative teachability and authoritarian tradition-building results necessarily in the severing of the intrinsic connections between the social sciences and extra-academic social life as its material base (Mannheim 2001a: 3-5). Like reification in Lukács, the scholastic drive expands the sway of communicative thinking and functional rationalization to the detriment of the substantial rationality at work in conjunctive (or qualitative or intellectual) knowledge: the “retailing of knowledge in standard packages”, characteristic of contemporary higher education, “paralyses the impulse to question and to inquire”, making graduates “incapable of remaining attuned to changing circumstances” (Mannheim 2003b: 167). Mannheim’s struggle during the years 1930-1936 was for the preservation of the conjunctive/qualitative/intellectual dimension of sociology

in the process of its disciplinarization, as against the dominant tendency of its schooling into a purely scope-oriented specialized discipline.

“The point of what we are doing is a search for a new method through which we can shatter the fabrications of the schools. (...) Sociological man does not think according to a scholastically systematic method; he feels his way through the intermeshing weave of the actual situation. *Because we destroy this capacity in school, we create individuals who can no longer think authentically in their lives.*” (Mannheim 2001a: 47-48, italics added.)

In keeping with the spirit of Becker’s reform plans, Mannheim’s 1932 brochure on the *Present Tasks of Sociology* attributes a prominent role to sociology in the civic education of the citizens of the Republic. He writes that, if the process of democratization is to be pursued in a non-dictatorial way, “mass enlightenment and schooling” were urgently needed to instill in the public “forms of thinking and orientation that had hitherto been available only to very small ruling circles.” (Mannheim 2001d: 149.) According to Mannheim, only sociology, defined as the “life orientation appropriate for man in industrial society (...)”, is capable of providing the “rational foresight” and the faculty to “act responsibly on the basis of factual diagnoses” needed in times of crisis (*ibid.*: 151). Mannheim restates here the theses expounded in his 1930 course: sociology’s transdisciplinary, dissenting and intellectual vocation of providing “individual and collective life orientation” meets a major obstacle in the tendency to “excessive formalization and premature scholasticism”, embodied by a theoretical and purely immanent general sociology (von Wiese is targeted here) on the one hand, and by the empiricism and pragmatism devoid of any larger theoretical orientation (like Oppenheimer’s line of inquiry, also typical of “American sociology”, see below), on the other (*ibid.*: 152-53.)

However, behind these obstacles stands not some kind of malicious conspiracy, but what I call – merging Mannheim’s and Leclerc’s expressions – the scholastic disciplinary habitus corresponding to the excessive functional rationalization brought about by reification in the scientific and academic institutions. Their consequence is that the individual practitioners of the human sciences “are so completely adjusted to their particular tasks and so taken up with the difficulties and details of their special spheres that they cannot see why just these particular tasks presented themselves in the course of history.” Thereby, “the scientific man (...) is unconsciously guided by certain dominant habits of thought which have spontaneously grown up in society and which [he] unwittingly takes over.” (Mannheim 1940: 205-206.) This creates a situation in the contemporary social sciences where the awareness that the scientist could have

of “objective factors which are, so to speak, potential aids to his comprehension of the social system” and their own place within it, become inhibited (*ibid.*: 212).

This blindness of scientists toward their position in the superstructure often turns into an unconscious *resistance* when *sociological self-reflexivity* is expected from them, that is to say, when the question arises of the correlation between their mental frames and theories, on the one hand, and their social habitat, institutional affiliations and links to the structures of social domination, integration, stratification, etc., on the other. Also, sociological self-reflexivity is never far away when one is confronted to the question of the structural role of *dissent* in human- and social-scientific scholarship, since it necessarily entails the link between scientific research and scholarship on one hand and worldviews and political aspirations on the other). Indeed, this question cannot be examined without the answer applying to the questioner themselves. To take up Mannheim’s expression in his first Frankfurt course, such an uncommon challenge can trigger an “extraordinary unease” on the part of the scientist not inclined to this kind of exercise. Yet, it was exactly such a recursively applied sociological self-reflexivity that Mannheim had to offer to his pairs under the label of the sociology of knowledge, whose essential performance he summed up in his 1934 article on “German Sociology (1918-1933)” in the following, remarkable way.

“What the school of Durkheim and Levy-Bruhl in France did in the way of pointing out the system of logic peculiar to primitive tribes, German sociology of thought began to do for the different groups and periods in western civilization. The results of *Wissenssoziologie* became embarrassing when the investigation showed that (...) these differences penetrate into the realms of philosophy and the different scientific disciplines. The realization of the fact that the scientific research is colored by the social and historical standpoint of the investigator led to an attempt at careful self-criticism. We know that (...) our thinking is largely conditioned by our social status and that our logic is a particular and not a general one. That is why every theory is preceded by a subconscious selection of the elements which shall penetrate our problems and theories. Not all elements of reality find their way into our consciously formulated theories, but only those which are admitted by the conscious control. This conscious control, again, is guided by latent wishes and forces. In this way not only is the content of the theory itself influenced, but the conceptions and logical categories of the mind of different groups are affected by social forces.” (Mannheim 1953c: 220-21.)

In Mannheim’s understanding, the sociology of knowledge is essentially a tool for sociological self-reflexivity and self-criticism in the hands of the scientist, who *may* thereby be

revealed to themselves as intellectuals – i.e., as formulators and propounders of worldviews. This sociologically reflexive self-criticism is not primarily a theoretical but a practical, viz., a political act: to turn the official interpreter of worldviews and political positions themselves into an object of public interpretation and criticism, whose terms are not set in advance by the interpreters themselves in such a way as to produce only reassuring and self-reinforcing results... For Mannheim, the distinctive accomplishment of the sociology of knowledge is in this sense less the step of the generalization of ideology-criticism than the becoming recursive of the sociology of knowledge, that is to say, its non-apologetical application to the social scientists themselves.

In his 1932 brochure on the *Present Tasks of Sociology*, Mannheim was insistent that such an evolution became possible only because in Germany, sociological studies were initiated by the extra-academic, oppositional intelligentsia. The entry of sociology into the academia, the unlikely existence of sociology of knowledge as such, could not be read otherwise than as the sign of a decisive shift in the *social composition* of the German professorate.

“If today there is an awakening of demand for the inclusion of the sociological point of view in the posing of problems in the human sciences, this too has a sociological cause. This desire does not simply emerge from the *immanent* development of human-scientific inquiry, but is rather a reflection of the fact that the extra-academic circles for whom the sociological approach first became urgent are encroaching ever more in the academic sphere. This is happening in proportion to the contacts and exchanges taking place in public life between them and the traditional representatives of official science. The categories and angles of observation of the two groups of thinkers are also ever more in the process of mutual penetration. This suffices to make it clear that more than methodological considerations are at issue (...).” (Mannheim 2001d: 151.)

The changes in the social composition of the academic community have a significant impact on the very conception of academic science. Only individuals whose mental habits have been shaped by direct experience of social struggles and the antagonisms that structure social reality are capable and willing to appreciate the fact that “[t]he social process only becomes recognizable when people try to affect it and confront it with their interests”, and that “[t]he contemplative desk-work of theory (...) becomes productive only when it lives, at least in a mediated fashion, within one of the volitions that animates its historical surroundings.” (Mannheim 1982b: 277, transl. mod.) In other terms, it takes a “particular manner of life” to

discover and accept that *dissent is the condition of possibility of the knowability of society*, and that “it is not the willing subject that knows, but rather collective volitions in and through the knowing subject. (*Ibid.*: 277-78.)

What is at issue here can be formulated with more precision by saying that the stake of the question whether and to what extent individuals having such “politicized” experiential background and “manner of life” are represented in the academic community and find the opportunity to bear on its institutional and cognitive design is the *capacity of academic science to acknowledge the fact of extra-academic epistemic production and the consequent appreciation of the particularity and limitations of academic science itself*. Mannheim is extremely emphatic when it comes to this question. As he puts it in *Ideology and Utopia*,

“it appears that our conception of science is much narrower than the scope of present-day knowledge; and that attainable and communicable knowledge by no means ends at the boundaries of established present-day sciences. (...) [L]ife affords possibilities of knowledge and understanding even where science plays no part. (...) The upshot of this was that the practical man dealing with concrete situations, and applying his knowledge informally, was more intelligent than the theorist who observed only a limited sphere because he was imprisoned by the presuppositions of his science. It became more and more obvious that the former had some knowledge in realms where the latter – i.e., the modern intellectual theorist – long ago ceased to have any knowledge. (...) The fact that sciences are cultivated in academic surroundings constitutes a danger in that the attitudes adequate to the understanding of an actual sector of human experience are suppressed in the contemplative atmosphere which prevails in academic institutions.” (Mannheim 1963: 164-65, 166, 173.)

It follows from Mannheim’s reasoning that if science is to transcend its self-imposed limitations and illusions, there is no other way but to intensify the exchanges between the academic and extra-academic intellectual elites and to increase the representativeness of the latter within academic science. However, such a demand faces two major challenges. The first is to bring recognition for extra-academic epistemic practices as legitimate and scientifically valuable intellectual performances. This passes necessarily by a criticism of the dominant conception and the proposal of an alternative concept capable of encompassing these non-traditional or subaltern forms of intellectual activity. The second challenge faced by the demand of democratization of academic science is the already discussed tendency to suppress dissent (i.e., the qualitative knowledge associated with substantial rationality) responding to genuine

social needs within academic science in favor of a scope-oriented, scholastic disciplinary habitus.

Mannheim did address both challenges in his 1932 brochure on the *Present Tasks of Sociology*. He builds his response on the dichotomy of *cultivational vs. specialized knowledge*. The dichotomy is only partially new. It is easy to recognize in it the previously discussed conceptual pairs of conjunctive vs. communicative knowledge, substantial vs. functional rationality (as well as Nettl's dichotomy of the qualitative/intellectual vs. the scope dimensions of academic scholarship). Mannheim gives the following definitions of these two notions:

“(...) we oppose cultivational and specialized knowledge to one another (...). By specialized knowledge [*Fachwissen*] we shall understand all the forms and contents of knowledge necessary for the solution of a scientific-technical or organizational task. A knowledge whose advantage consists in pure applicability and in its capacity of being separated from the purely personal is in essence always addressed to distinctively differentiated tasks in the social process, in a manner that is both particularistic and specialist. By cultivational knowledge, in contrast, we shall understand the tendency toward a coherent life-orientation, with a bearing upon the overall personality as well as upon the totality of the objective life-situation (...).” (Mannheim 2001d: 154.)

Mannheim's definitions suggest that specialized knowledge is akin both to communicative knowledge and functional rationality: its rationality is instrumental, external to the personality of the actor and context-independent, while its epistemic results are technical and of particularistic scope. Cultivational knowledge, on the other hand, is akin to conjunctive (more precisely: intellectual) knowledge and substantial rationality: founded on one's whole personality and one's embeddedness in a community, it aims at the totalization of a situation and the breaking through its initial limitations toward a broader view in order to provide orientation beyond the situation of reference.

To address the first challenge sketched above – to bring recognition to extra-academic epistemic practices as legitimate and scientifically valuable intellectual activities –, Mannheim can start from a relatively comfortable rhetorical situation insofar as the topos of the university as the leading agent of cultivation was still the official standpoint of the German professorship, despite the decreasing credibility of the claim. This is the tacit presupposition of Mannheim's assertions about sociology as an academic discipline becoming the modern heir to the old cultivational ideal and about the ensuing adjustment of the notion of cultivation making room for the consideration of the epistemic output of non-academic intellectual groups. Mannheim's

main gesture is to establish that the cultivational ideal of the German university is only the particular instantiation of a generic, transhistorical social function, whose essence is, for a “representative social stratum”, to arrive at a coherent life-orientation and worldview in order “to awaken a certain conviction” in diverse publics (*ibid.*: 155) – what I suggest calling the *intellectual function*, a notion which I will explore in more detail in Chapter 7. As Mannheim puts it, “[a]ll decisive culturally representative groups have until now achieved this one task in a variety of ways. The humanistic form of cultivational knowledge was itself only one of many possible outcomes. It is therefore impossible to equate cultivational knowledge with humanism.” (*Ibid.*)

In this text, written for an oral presentation in front of his peers, Mannheim understandably does not attack the substance of the Humanist ideal of cultivation.⁹² Instead, he insists on the *plurality* of the forms of cultivation within a single period, writing that “it is very likely that altogether different groups in the intelligentsia, and especially the groups that originate in the directly active sectors of social reality, will spark their cultivational knowledge on different substrates [*Substraten*] (...).” (*Ibid.*: 155, t. m.) The contemplative study of classical languages and archetypal role models from Antiquity can be one way to enact the distantiation from one’s own accidental and sectoral activities, to achieve a fruitful remoteness from immediacy and attain a broader view of human affairs, but it is by no means the only one. Indeed, there is today the “possibility that certain life situations with completely unclassical contents might also lead to such distantiation from life and to self-expansion [*Lebensdistanzierung und Selbsterweiterung*].” (*Ibid.*: 156.) This is more than just a possibility, since, as a matter of fact,

“[w]e can see that, without our having contributed much to it, a new type of genuine intelligentsia is arising spontaneously by virtue of the fact that there are ever more persons who are discovering, while wrestling with social problems, the problems of socialization as fate⁹³

⁹² Mannheim offers a detailed study of the contrasting “aristocratic” and “democratic” ideals of cultivation in his essay “The Democratization of Culture”, written probably around and/or shortly after the Nazi takeover, in which, by contrast with the *Present Tasks of Sociology*, he provides a stringent criticism of the Humanistic model (Mannheim 2003c: 171-246). See also (Loader-Kettler 2002: 183-187).

⁹³ It seems likely to me that “socialization” (“*Vergesellschaftigung*”) is to be taken here in Tönnies’ sense of the replacement of community ties with market-logics in the context of modernization, on which Lukács himself builds his criticism of reification in *History and Class Consciousness*, and on which Mannheim in turns draws to build his notion of functional rationalization.

and the sociality of our humanity, and this insight is leading them to just such a deeper understanding of self and expanded understanding of the world as quite differently situated themes of life did at an earlier time.” (*Ibid.*)

Mannheim’s constation about the existence of a new, fresh, and rich intellectual life outside the academia based on a genuine, personal encounter with unknown contemporary social worlds, is immediately followed by this rhetorical question: “Is it not the responsibility of a university that cares for a genuine cultivational knowledge to incorporate these spontaneous and organic impulses and to build these new forms of cultivational experience into its plans of education and cultivation?” (*Ibid.*) Mannheim’s point here was probably not only to ask for recognition for these non-traditional intellectual groups, but also to suggest that such *acquaintance with contemporary social reality is, in fact, in the best interest of the university itself, if it seriously aspires to keep up its role as an agent of cultivation.* As he put it a few years later, but still in the spirit of his writings on cultivated culture from the 1920s: “[e]very person who comes into an elite from some other section of society brings with him new interests and new points of view and enriches the atmosphere in which this elite lives. At the same time, he is a mediator between the elite and those other groups to which the elite must turn for its audience.” (Mannheim 1940: 88-89.)

§ 44. Synthesis and transdisciplinarity: sociology as the basic discipline of the human and social sciences

As to the second challenge – how to make the case for sociology as the bearer of cultivational knowledge and more generally for dissent in the increasingly scope-oriented human and social sciences –, Mannheim’s *Present Tasks of Sociology* sets off on an accommodating note toward the general trend of specialization of research and the fragmentation of the university “into an assortment of specialized schools”, writing that such tendency corresponds to the authentic need of highly differentiated modern societies for specialized knowledge (*ibid.*: 154.) However, adds he, to admit that “cultivation without specialized knowledge no longer suffices today” does not mean that cultivation is not itself a similarly authentic social need and that science does have no role to play in its satisfaction (*ibid.*) The question is whether this need is substantiated within contemporary science.

Mannheim’s answer is affirmative and points toward two interconnected phenomena he observes in present-day human- and social-scientific thought which he sees as the

manifestations of such a need: the increasing demand for *synthesis* and *transdisciplinarity*. Mannheim's diagnosis according to which the tendency to synthesis is the actual wave in the human and social sciences is, in fact, a recurrent and insistent theme of his writings since his 1917 conference on "Soul and Culture", through the 1921-22 article "On Weltanschauung" and the 1924 "A Sociological Theory of Culture and its Knowability", until the core essay of *Ideology and Utopia*, "The Prospect of Scientific Politics", from 1929 (to mention only the most important texts). What seems distinctive in Mannheim's treatment of this theme in his writings on sociology in the first half of the 1930s is that *synthesis* becomes more clearly linked to the problem of *inter- and transdisciplinarity* on the one hand, and to the particular role played by *intellectuals* in this process, on the other.

The role of the intellectuals in this context can be understood based on the following reasoning: insofar as the bearers of the generic idea of cultivation (i.e., of the intellectual function) can be defined as "intellectual strata", and insofar as this idea includes the search for and providing of orientation for the general public on the basis of a holistic appraisal of one's life situation (through sociology as "attitude" and "method"), interdisciplinary synthesis and transdisciplinarity appear as genuine intellectual needs in the double sense of *conditions for intelligent insight* (for substantial rationality) and of the *peculiar need of the intellectuals themselves*, as distinguished from non-intellectual actors.

In the *Present Tasks of Sociology*, Mannheim discusses the problem of interdisciplinary synthesis under the title "Sociology as the study of the general interconnectedness of social-spiritual events (Sociology of culture)."⁹⁴ (Mannheim 1932: 22.) Interestingly, instead of "sociology of knowledge", the parenthesis Mannheim apposes to the title features "sociology of culture". The first denomination was reserved in the previous point of the brochure to the movement whereby the *particular* specialized human and social sciences transcend their own boundaries toward their material base by using sociology as a method. The second ("sociology of culture") is used to signify the sociological synthesis of "the *totality* of cultural areas in relation to the life of society". The distinctive feature of the sociology of culture is that it "dares to synthesize the series of events that have been torn apart by the historical studies conducted

⁹⁴ The title of the chapter in German is "Soziologie als Lehre vom Gesamtzusammenhang des Gesellschaftlich-Geistigen Geschehens (Kultursoziologie)". The first portion of Mannheim's brochure has not been included in Kettler and Loader's translation in (Mannheim 2001). The following analysis will thus be based on the text of the German original.

in the specialized disciplines in the humanities, economics and the social sciences.” (*Ibid.*, italics added.)

The necessity felt by the sociologist to leave their well-defined fields of expertise stems not from their “insatiable excessiveness”, but from the *goal of sociology* as such: *to grasp reality in its original interconnectedness*. Indeed, “reality”, as Mannheim writes in a caustic tone, “has not done the favor for researchers specializing in particular subfields to develop in carefully defined disciplinary tracks, none of which knows what is going on in the other.” (*Ibid.*: 23.) However, it is equally obvious that, from a scientific point of view, there can be no question of grasping reality simply as it presents itself for pre-theoretical consciousness. Mannheim therefore defines the central problem of sociology as a synthetic discipline with the not easily translatable expression “*Verklammerung*”, which can be rendered in English with the words “interlocking”, “interconnectedness”, “fastening together”, or “interwovenness” (on this, see the remarks in Loader–Kettler 2002: 195, 206-207.)

“By the problem of interconnectedness, we mean the task that consists in tracking events in historical and social happening even where they lead us from one discipline to another. (...) The events must therefore be displayed in the same contexture in which they were originally connected. We must not fragment them for the sake of abstract concepts: art, science, literature, economics, society.” (Mannheim 1932: 22.)

As to the question why it is precisely *sociology* that is the best equipped to complete the task of “fastening together”, Mannheim replies by implicitly restating the fundamental thesis of his sociology of knowledge.

“If we attach special importance to the sociology of culture (...), the reason for this is that we really have to look for the center of gravity of the connection between different cultural fields in the life of society. Because if we ask this question why different cultural areas are interconnected, our answer is this: not because they are part of a Spirit floating freely somewhere, but because they express the lives and destinies of specific groups of people. With the existence of these groups of people, the projections of the Spirit also cease. As the fate of these groups changes, so does the content and form of the spiritual life associated with them.” (*Ibid.*: 24.)

Sociology in its most ambitious form as *sociology of culture* thus appears as an essentially *synthetic discipline* which *restores the original connection of cultural and*

intellectual life by following up the threads of the social process as they appear in the segmental vistas of the different specialized disciplines and fastening them together through the points where they penetrate and presuppose each other.⁹⁵

“The actual sociological momentum lies in emphasizing this interdependence of sequences of events: in the search for the probable original interconnectedness of events, in considering nothing in isolation and abstractly, but in finding the basic structures of the symbiosis, the coexistence in which the different elements and spheres live together. These were only temporarily pulled out by abstract science from the unity of happening. In essence, ‘sociological thinking’ means this ‘possibility to see in context, in coherence’, to grasp seemingly isolated data from the contexture of social life.” (*Ibid.*: 23-24.)

As I suggested above, the rationale for interdisciplinary synthesis is a peculiarly intellectual need both in the trivial sense that it is the need *of* intellectuals (as opposed to non-intellectuals), and in the sense that it is the *condition of intelligent insight* (the exercise of substantial rationality). I would like to make the meaning of this statement more explicit. First, what is meant by *intellectual need*? The answer to this question can be read off in an *a contrario* fashion from Mannheim’s following statement on the consequences of the possible failure to effect such a synthesis.

“If it is not possible to find suitable methods for integrating knowledge, if it is not possible to create a type of scientist who can think quickly and penetrate the essence [of phenomena] without getting stuck in the details, then it may happen that human knowledge will overgrow the human being, that knowledge is there as a potentiality, but that, in concrete cases, when it comes to the solution of concrete difficulties in life, it is not disponible to us.” (*Ibid.*: 53.)

⁹⁵ Mannheim gives the following illustration of such a process of “follow-up”, which strongly resembles what he wrote on the matter in his 1925 “The Problem of a Sociology of Knowledge”. “In order to penetrate the event context of a group, we can take the analysis of the form of the economy as a starting point. This takes us further to the analysis of the form of power that is related to, rooted in, and made possible by the form of economics. The form of power contributes to the formation of the form of the army and the administration, and at the same time makes its mark on the form of the family. The latter, in turn, has a direct impact on education and a person’s social character. The form of the family then has an impact on the development of gender and eroticism, and thus on a broad layer of the emotional world. From here it becomes possible to analyze poetry, etc.” (Mannheim 1932: 24.)

The stake of interdisciplinary synthesis is a *transdisciplinary* stake: the capacity for scientific, academic knowledge to contribute to the solution of social problems not in a technical-pragmatic sense, in the manner of functional rationalization, but in the sense of fostering the substantial rationality necessary for orientation, or “intelligent insight” into complex situations and multifaceted challenges. The synthesis effected by sociology is always situational (i.e., conjunctive) and transdisciplinary because it *gains its guidelines for integration from the needs arising in concrete social contexts*, themselves part of the total social process. Inversely, if synthesis proves to be unachievable, i.e., if the qualitative/intellectual dimension is wiped out of science, we will all end up buried, impotent, under an ocean of scope-oriented, communicative knowledge detached from any conjunctive life-space.

It is worth noting the original way Mannheim interpretes and solves the old problem of the *disproportion* between what the individual is capable to know and the immensity of accumulated knowledge. He suggests that the source of the disproportion (and the subsequent individual feelings of alienation and impotence) does not lie in a quantitative disparity (cp. Simmel 1968 and Mannheim [1917] 2012).⁹⁶ Although Mannheim’s rhetoric is in general combative in his writings on sociology from this period, it is remarkable how impassionate his discourse becomes – featuring expressions such as “dangerous”, “menace”, “chaos”, “a science of that is not worth knowing” – when he comes to this subject.

“In view of the growing amount of the material of science it would be dangerous further to accumulate facts without choice. The loss of command over the material at this juncture has become a serious menace to science as such. The desire to bring order into this chaos is at least as justified as the attempt to isolate and exactly to define individual fragments of it. *Genuine problems, real scientific tasks are only those which impose themselves on the basis of the general trend of science (...) which emerge from the group consciousness of society struggling for its existence and its livelihood. (...) [W]e would rather renounce statistical exactness than forego seeking answers to those questions which seem important to us. Should it not be possible to save these questions, then the cruel name of a ‘science of that which is not worth knowing’,*

⁹⁶ For a recent formulation of the conception according to which this *is*, actually, a *quantitative problem*, see (Collins 2000: xvii): “Ironically, as scholarship has filled in more gaps and given firmer contours to what formerly was just coming into focus, we face new obstacles to understanding. We suffer from cognitive overload, from having amassed too much information to assimilate it. Disciplinary specialization and subspecialization are predictable in an academic profession that since 1960 has grown worldwide to a size dwarfing anything before.”

which was originally applied to academic, dry classical philology, would befit our science.”
(Mannheim 1953a: 192, italics added.)

Thus, it is not because of the sheer scope of scientific knowledge that the individual's mind is incapable of appropriating it and feels alienated and powerless. It is the other way around: the quantitative problem (and the corresponding feeling of being overwhelmed) emerges as such only *because of the shrinking of the qualitative dimension in scientific endeavor* – it stems, in other terms, from the loss of anchorage of scientific work in conjunctivity, from the refusal or learned incapacity to recognize one's worldview-committedness, one's transdisciplinary connection to the economic and political forces governing society. The result is the loss of meaning of the scientific endeavor itself. It is precisely *this* loss that is experienced by the alienated consciousness as a feeling of being overwhelmed by a quantitatively overpowering mass of knowledge. Interdisciplinary synthesis is thus, in this sense, an elementary transdisciplinary-intellectual need. The peculiarity of this need is that it *transcends* the confines of the academia, but it can be satisfied only through the constitution of sociology as a scientific discipline endorsing a cultivational function *within* the academia.

As I stated above, synthesis is a need of intellectuals also in the other, more basic sense that is the ideational correlate of those intellectual groups taking advantage of the changes in the social composition of the academic community (Mannheim spoke of the “democratization of culture”, see Mannheim 2003c: 171-246). To be more precise, the will-to-synthesis is carried specifically by the freely bound intelligentsia that Mannheim saw gradually penetrating the academic realm of his times. On the other hand, the already established academic elite, as well as the newer generations of more scope-oriented specialists, do not aspire to synthesis, despite the fact that, according to Mannheim, as scientists, “[t]he *specialist* (...) needs the *sociologist* as a mediator and carrier of the emerging synthetic questions and of the knowledge of the current state of development of related research results.” (Mannheim 1932: 55, italics added.) Mannheim repeats this statement a few years later, in a footnote to his *Man and Society* (1935/1940), with the difference that there the sociologist as the agent of synthesis, as opposed to the scientist/specialist, is explicitly called the *intellectual*.

“In certain periods, the integration really consists only in an exchange of social experiences. (...) [*S*]cientists at this stage confine themselves to the exchanges of achievements between different *specialists*. This kind of synthesis, however, is for the most part only mechanical and

it is really the task of the *intellectual* with the help of *constructive imagination* to evolve a sort of picture or idea of the world from these partial segments.” (Mannheim 1940: 212, italics added.)

Mannheim calls “*constructive imagination*” the peculiarly intellectual skill necessary to carry out this synthesis aimed at fulfilling the transdisciplinary need for orientation in concrete life-situations apprehended in a holistic perspective. He expounds this notion in an article written in 1932, laying out a biting criticism of the aimless empiricism he saw as the main characteristic of the “American sociology” of his times.⁹⁷ The beginning of the article – written with the pretext of reviewing a collective publication under the direction of Stuart A. Rice – focuses on the praiseworthy features of “American sociology”, in contrast to the shortcomings of German sociology on the same scores. Somewhat surprisingly, Mannheim sets off from the observation of the exaggerated individualism characterizing German sociology – as against the successful cooperation and effective organizing of research in the United States, exhibited by the book under review (Mannheim 1953a: 185-186). However, as all the Mannheimian tributes to “American sociology” in this article, this one is double-edged as well: the praise prepares a bitter criticism to be expounded thereafter (viz., that the cumulative character of “American sociology” is based on the unilaterally communicative character of the knowledge produced). However, in this case, Mannheim’s claim also contains a genuine criticism of the fragmented character of German sociology, in which most practitioners of the profession were busy with concocting their own self-contained and idiosyncratic systems, without much knowledge of what the others were doing (see Loader–Kettler 2002: 84).⁹⁸

Mannheim’s second tribute, similarly double-edged, relates to the practical character of sociological research in the United States, to its closeness to the problems of everyday life – the

⁹⁷ The likely explanation (which is of course not an excuse) for Mannheim’s surprising overgeneralization about sociology in the U.S.A. is that he was not well acquainted with the latter (hence the use of the quotation marks on my part when talking about “American sociology”). Obviously, sociology in the United States could not be reduced to the picture Mannheim had of it when he wrote his review article. For indications that significant trends in early American sociology were very much in tune with Mannheim’s own aspirations, see (Romero 2019).

⁹⁸ Insofar as “von Wiese had a better reception among the relatively small circle of American sociologists at the time who were eager to introduce theoretical and systematic component into the wild variety of conceptually improvised empirical undertakings characteristic of American sociology in the 1920s and 1930s”, Mannheim’s blow might also have been directed against von Wiese in particular (Loader–Kettler 2002: 105, note 17).

lack of which Mannheim so bitterly criticized in the overly scholastic German sociology of his times. Thus, in American sociology,

“[e]ach work starts from a practical problem, from a social task calling for immediate solution. The sociologist is called upon to help in finding this solution. The typical problems of American sociology arise from the immediate necessities of everyday life (...) most of the subjects treated fall under the heading of what in Germany is called ‘social policy’ (...) juvenile delinquency, juvenile gangs, ghettos, immigration policy, etc. (...)” (Mannheim 1953a: 186.)

In setting forth the positive aspect, Mannheim’s subsequent criticism already echoes from afar. Although the fact that practical problems determine the work of American sociologists is very praiseworthy, the questions which problems are central and *why*, *how* we study them and *why*, from *what perspectives* and with *what questions*, along *what legitimate social and political goals*, etc., strangely fall outside the scope of scientific reflection. As a result, the social scientist becomes somewhat of a bureaucratic executor dealing with details whose connection to the whole vanishes from their sight. By losing the connection with totality, the scientist *loses the meaning of their work*, because this meaning is manifested only in the perspective of its function played in the social whole. This, of course, does not render scientific work functionless. The situation is in a sense worse than that, since this function will be given to the scientist *externally* and merely *implicitly*, exposing them to becoming an instrument in the hands of social and political forces to which they have made themselves oblivious. Thereby, the (social) scientist relinquishes their intellectual function, becoming a cog in the kind of functionally rational bureaucratic organization which Lukács regarded in *History and class consciousness* as a consequence and at the same time a source of reification.

“Limitation to practical problems of this kind tends to segregate single phenomena from the social fabric with which they are interwoven, thereby disintegrating the whole of social life. An endeavor toward clarity and exactness, evidenced by the choice of well-defined and concrete subjects, is accentuated by the use of notion-patterns ready for use by anyone. Every phenomenon will be subjected to an analytical treatment laying bare of its correlations with these notion-patterns. Thus the variety of problems and aspects will be reduced to a single set of terms. The appreciation of a scholar will depend on his skill in handling the technique of research and on his ingenuity in experimentation.” (*Ibid.*: 187.)

“American sociology” is characterized by an analytical treatment of phenomena resulting in a fragmentary and isolating approach disintegrating the vision of the whole. The purely communicative conceptualizations entail a leveling treatment of the qualitative diversity of social singularities and shift the emphasis of sociological endeavor from the problems and objects of science toward the adequacy of the methods and techniques used in research with a disincarnated, formal standard of exactness. With Mannheim’s words, “such works aim in the first place at being exact, and only in the second place at conveying a knowledge of things.” (*Ibid.*: 189).

It must be emphasized that the arguments raised here against “American sociology” in particular run through all of Mannheim’s writings on sociology from this period. The acerbic criticism of the hypertrophy of communicative thinking and scope-oriented research and teaching ties into the problem of the loss of meaning of the scientific process, due to the impossibility of integration of research results for lack of anchorage – and of knowing oneself anchored – in a world-aspiration, that is to say, for lack of a transdisciplinary orientation. Like in the 1930 Frankfurt lectures, where he spoke of scholasticism and “*Schulbetrieb*”, Mannheim points out a kind of force of inertia, a self-sustaining movement within the scientific process which gives itself as ultimate goal the pure and simple reproduction and reapplication of its own presuppositions and methods, without any other rationality than this reproduction itself. In this, it obviously has an affinity with the general process of capitalist reification and alienation (functional rationalization), making science as such, and sociology in particular, a simple instrument of self-knowledge of the socio-economic system, as it presents itself from the point of view of those who “run” this system. From this tendential self-referentiality of social science directly follows the scientist’s renunciation to independence and critical thinking in relation to the powers governing the social totality in which scientific and academic institutions are a subsystem.

Against this tendency, Mannheim observes that “empirical data are only useful if they are enlightened by a constructive hypothesis, by a theory of social processes in general.” (*Ibid.*: 189.) Of course, mistrust of metaphysical speculations is warranted, but “it is a misunderstanding of positivism to try to know reality without having theories” and, in general, “[u]nwillingness to discuss basic questions (...) does not benefit positive research.” (*Ibid.*) Mannheim argues that there exists a *third term* between metaphysical guesswork and directionless empiricism, namely *constructive imagination*.

“We must distinguish between ‘speculative’ and ‘constructive’ mind; the latter is as indispensable to any empirical research as the former is detrimental. To think speculatively is to sit at a desk and conceive casual and uncontrolled ideas on all things on earth and in heaven. To think constructively means to build up, by an effort of constructive imagination, a structure which is embedded in the phenomena themselves but cannot be detected by direct observation of any individual fragment of reality.” (*Ibid.*)

Constructive imagination – which could also be called “synthetic imagination” or “realistic imagination” – denotes the intellectual capability to intuit the structural interconnections between phenomena by taking a transdisciplinary problem – given in the experience of social struggle – needing solution as the guiding thread for attaining a holistic insight.

“In order to know social reality one must have imagination, a particular brand of imagination which I should like to call ‘realistic’ because it does not create fiction but exerts itself in binding together apparently unrelated facts by means of a vision of structural correlations which alone enables us to see the framework into which every fact, even the most casual one, is fitted. Like other qualities required for science, such as self-criticism, control of methods, etc., this realistic imagination must be cultivated through generations.” (*Ibid.*: 190.)

What is distinctive about the synthesis effected by the intellectual-sociologist is that it is based on the constructive kind of imagination, nourished by an intimate experience of social struggles, while the attempts at synthesis in prior stages of scientific history consisted in spontaneous, sporadic and mechanical exchanges carried out from narrower points of view by specialists in different fields (Mannheim 1940: 212), in a way fitting Nettl’s notion of “colonization”. The problem with this understanding of synthesis is not simply the partial and unsatisfactory character of its results, but more pointedly the fact that it contributes to feeding the very logic that made synthesis necessary in the first place. Mannheim’s idea of synthesis does not indeed denote a casual, spontaneous and sporadic act that arises as the reflex or correction of the consequences of free competition among scientific groups.⁹⁹ Genuine

⁹⁹ This is true despite the dialectical twist in Mannheim’s conception of scientific synthesis supposing that it is precisely the developmental logic based on free competition that paves the way for a genuine synthesis, with more and more scientists spontaneously (but in fact due to the pressure of sociopolitical tendencies and needs)

synthesis in Mannheim's sense entails a deep-going, *systematic transformation in the very mode of academic knowledge production*. Since he did not really get a chance to experiment with concrete practical solutions, Mannheim did not provide many details on this score. Nevertheless, two of his essays – “Towards the Sociology of the Mind”, from between 1930 and 1933, and “The Place of Sociology”, from 1935-36 – contain indications as to the probable direction in which he would have sought these solutions.

Both papers begin with the emphatic assertion of the transdisciplinary function of sociology. The earlier text hits a critical tone, writing that “by following the hallowed principle of specialization at any price, even at the risk of losing sight of the pivotal question inherent in the subject (...) sociology has come dangerously near to discarding its identity and its primary objective, which is the rational mastery of the universe of human relations” – a universe which is “not tailored to the designs of a compartmentalized academic tradition.” (Mannheim 2003a: 19.) The later text is more forward-looking and emphasizes – like other writings of Mannheim from the 1920s and 1930s – the already ongoing *spontaneous* movement toward interdisciplinary cooperation in the contemporary human and social sciences:

“in England, as in America, France and Germany, we find today the most diverse branches of the social sciences increasingly working on questions that lie on the periphery of their respective specialized spheres. Merely by following-up consequentially the separate links in the long chain of causality they are inevitably brought up against facts and problems of other specialized branches of the science of society, or, to put this more precisely, from their specific field they get to see the functioning of *society as a whole*.” (Mannheim 1953b: 195-96.)

While this movement is spontaneous in the sense that it is not the result of external pressure or coercion, it is also *necessary* in the sense that it answers to a structural trouble afflicting the entirety of the contemporary human and social sciences, namely that “the specialized social sciences are no longer in a position themselves to elaborate and complete the theory which underlies their particular investigations, or to follow up the historical diversity of the phenomena they encounter”, while the need to do so continues to be felt stronger than ever (*Ibid.*: 200.) Through the metaphor of a badly working bureaucracy, Mannheim situates the origin of the trouble in the *inefficient division of labor* in these sciences.

recognizing the unviability of the former logic and therefore looking for an alternative form of integration of specialized research.

“Our division of labor is (...) like that in a badly organized bureaucracy where a question which the officials of one department are unable to solve (and these are mostly the problems concerning the social foundations of given facts) is simply passed on to those of the next, with a brief covering note: ‘wrong department. Refer to department ———’, so that having gone the round of the departments the question is as near solution at the end as it was at the beginning.” (*Ibid.*: 202.)

The problem of the day, therefore, is not the lack of specialized knowledge regarding the different cross-sections of human reality, “but rather the fact that there is so far not enough consistent endeavor to bring together out of the detached results of the social sciences those elementary facts which are fundamental to all of them.” (*Ibid.*: 197.) The need for interdisciplinarity calls forth a specific institutional formation capable of serving as an agent of synthesis, a *discipline* in which the constructive imagination of the intellectual could be instantiated.

In recent decades, Mannheim writes, the different specialized disciplines in the human and social sciences tried to overcome this trouble “by considering for a time psychology and history as the sciences basic to them”: psychology, “because every human activity is a product of the mind and rests therefore upon the laws inherent in the latter”; history, because “it is the record of the endless variability of human institutions and that their range of mutability can only be determined with its help.” (*Ibid.*: 200.) Although these two sciences are indeed of topical importance for synthesizing knowledge in the human- and social-scientific disciplines, Mannheim contends that no genuine synthesis can succeed on their bases insofar as “they themselves do not contain those points of view by which the principles of the changes in human life can be found, the latter being mostly based upon interaction and the laws of ‘living together’.” (*Ibid.*)

The incapacity of history and psychology to effect the needed synthesis on their own grounds is shown by their convergence in recent decades toward the position of distinctly *sociological* problems. In history, this happened through the coming to the fore of comparative studies, revealing social structures as the consistent variable that allows to compare diverse historical stages and conjunctures. In psychology, the trigger to recognize the need for sociology was the understanding of the impact of the social background (and its variability) on the typical behavior-patterns of individuals (*ibid.*: 201.) Thus, as Mannheim observes, rather than answering the synthetic questions passed on to them from other specialized human and

social sciences, “the more history and psychology (...) become engrossed in their new tasks, the more they tend to develop new sociological facts and problems without, however, being in the position to combine these facts and problems into a general, unitary picture of society or to elaborate them into a system of ultimate, social elements.” (*Ibid.*: 202.)

For these reasons, history and psychology ultimately turned out to be like other specialized human- and social-scientific disciplines. “Like the latter, both have of late tended more and more to transgress the boundaries of their respective fields, and like the other separate social sciences, psychology and history have through this process of expansion only come to discover the significance of sociological problems.” (*Ibid.*: 200.) Psychology and history, hitherto candidates for being a basic science, have behaved just like any other specialized social science: by colonizing borderline territories, they have contributed to opening and fertilizing the catchment area now known as sociology, today in the process of becoming a separate discipline, but they themselves could not give the required basic design for integration.

The reason for this failure, however, is not to be found in the “object” of these sciences, as if the problem was that so far it was not the *right* specialized science that attempted the task of synthesis – as if sociology *as a specialized science* would be better equipped for the undertaking. The problem is, rather, that such a task cannot at all be realized by *any* specialized discipline, not even sociology... at least not as a specialized science (“*Einzelwissenschaft*”). An integrative theoretical view of the whole of the social process can be carried out only by a science whose *exclusive task* is precisely nothing else but the elaboration of such a view – and which, therefore, is not a specialized science.

“[C]ooperation between the social sciences can be established only if the coordination of the problems of those sciences and the comparison of the results reached by them is made the specific task of a scientific discipline which has as its *raison d’être* the construction of a consistent general theory of society – and that discipline be *Sociology* as the basic discipline of the social sciences. (...) [I]t is absurd to expect that there can be any organic division of labor in the field of the social sciences without general sociology as the basic social science.” (*Ibid.*: 203.)

Sociology as the proposed basic science has three levels, according to Mannheim. While the tripartite division offered in “The Place of Sociology” combines elements from two prior writings – “The distinctive character of cultural sociological knowledge” and “The Present Tasks of Sociology” (Mannheim 1982a: 100-118; 1932: 6-10) –, it also contains novelties.

From the two previous writings, Mannheim keeps the distinctions between *systematic* (or *general*) *sociology*, *comparative sociology*, and *structural sociology* (which was named in earlier writings *dynamic* or *historical sociology*). *Taken separately*, their respective tasks are also roughly the same as in the earlier writings of Mannheim. Thus, systematic, or general sociology has the mission to “retrace the variability of social phenomena to those *basic elements* and *basic concepts* of a more or less axiomatic character which make society possible at all.” (Mannheim 1953b.: 204.) However, the way in which this endeavor is linked to the second level, that of comparative sociology, seems to diverge from previous theorizations. Indeed, it is not comparative sociology that is based on systematic or general sociology, but rather the opposite: the basic elements and concepts theorized by the latter must originate from comparative work (*ibid.*: 205).

In turn, both systematic/general sociology and comparative sociology appear as subaltern aspects of a more general endeavor, predicated upon a holistic vision of historically unique social conjunctures. The reason for this is that all the formal relations and types worked out by systematic/general sociology and comparative sociology are historically generated forms produced and reproduced in concrete, historically unique contexts and circumstances. The third and ultimate level of sociological endeavor which deals precisely with these actual, effective configurations producing the general forms is called *structural sociology*, whose task Mannheim defines as the “building up [of] a simplified sketch of the circulation of events (*Kreislauf*) in different societies.” (*Ibid.*: 206.) This structural sociology is itself divided into two parts: *statics* and *dynamics*, the first dealing with “the problem of the equilibrium of all the social factors (...) in a given social structure”, putting forward “what makes different societies work”, while the latter focusing on “those factors which are antagonistic in their respective tendencies”, that is to say, “those principles which in the long run tend to a dis-equilibrium and thus bring about changes which transform the social structure.”¹⁰⁰ (*Ibid.*: 206-207.)

For these reasons, Mannheim defines *structural sociology* as the *synthetic sociological discipline*, the institutional site for the exercise of constructive imagination: “because it is its especial task to deal continually with the elaboration and the comparison of the social structures as wholes (...), it is only structural sociology which is capable of a comprehensive synthesis of all these facts which are the outcome of the separate social sciences.” (*Ibid.*: 208.) It must be

¹⁰⁰ “Statics” and “dynamics” may correspond to some extent to the distinction made by Mannheim between ideology and utopia in the essay on “The Utopian Mentality” insofar as the first tends to the stabilization of the actual social order, while the latter seeks its overcoming through the deepening of its constitutive contradictions.

noted that structural sociology is not only the synthetic sociological discipline, but it is also the highest level of sociology *as the basic discipline of the human and social sciences* and, thereby, *the super-discipline of all these sciences*. This means, again, that sociology thus understood is not just *another* newly emerging specialized discipline – like social psychology, political anthropology, cultural studies, etc. –, which will somehow find its place in the already existing structure of the human- and social-scientific disciplinary field. The place of sociology as a *basic* discipline is hierarchically *superior* to the other sciences: *sociology as the basic science entails a profound reorganization of the intellectual and institutional order of things in science, a new kind of hierarchical relationship between the disciplines upsetting the currently prevailing academic division of labor*.

Notwithstanding the hierarchical relationship, Mannheim postulates a *dialectical link* between *specialized research* and *synthesis*. On the one hand, the material for synthesis is made available by the specialized disciplines; on the other hand, the directions for specialized research are given in and through the synthetic hypotheses produced at the level of structural sociology, to be tested and refined according to the specialized researches they trigger, and so forth.

“Sociology, therefore, is (...) on the one hand a clearing-house for the results arrived at by the specialized social sciences and, on the other hand, a new elaboration of the materials on which they are based. (...) But structural sociology could not present this wider hypothesis if it had not at its disposal the fruits of the analytical work done by systematic and comparative sociology, or if it did not keep in constant touch with the various specialized branches of knowledge.” (*Ibid.*: 208.)

It must be underscored that the hierarchically superior place of sociology does not mean that synthesis is averse to specialization. Indeed, structural sociology presupposes the results of the latter and *synthetic knowledge is integrated into specialized research*, first under the form of *new, standard knowledge*, and second under the form of *new hypotheses* to be tested and modified in and through specialized research. I believe this is what Mannheim had in mind when, in keeping with Humboldt’s ideas on the matter, he wrote the following.

“*Schemes of specialization* which isolate certain aspects of reality for the purpose of topical analysis *must, at their very inception, bear some sort of a design of the ultimate syntheses* which reestablishes and articulates the context of the original subject. (...) Synthesis may be expected to grow only from observations made with a view to integration. To argue that the business of

integration must be adjourned until the pertinent facts are assembled in the respective fields is to misjudge the nature of the synthetic procedure. *Integration does not begin with the completed accumulation of facts, but rather with each elementary act of observation.* (...) To repeat, *integration* is not merely a final adjunct to the fact-gathering routine; it *embraces the whole process*, beginning with the research design for relevance and proceeding to the condensation of the pertinent material assembled regardless of its departmental pedigree.” (Mannheim 2003a: 19-22, italics added.)

What does it mean that specialized research bears “some sort of a design of the ultimate synthesis”? The answer can be read off from Mannheim’s subsequent remark that, *a contrario*, “[a] vast portion of the sociological output has no cumulative character because it lacks the design for relevance to subsequent use.” (*Ibid.*: 22.) The fact that a scientific observation bears a design of the synthesis of which it will be a part means that it is *devised for use beyond its initial context of reference*, that is to say, that it is *transferable, transcontextual, or intellectual in nature*. “The prerequisite of a cumulative core of generalizations in the social sciences is a growing body of *negotiable knowledge*, that which has meaning in diverse fields of inquiry and is amenable to use in new and subsequent frames of reference.” (*Ibid.*, italics added.) What distinguishes transcontextual knowledge from universal or communicative knowledge is its existential connectedness to the *needs* of human groups – the meaning and function of this kind of knowledge can be understood only in relation to these *needs*, which cut across disciplinary boundaries *as well as* the boundary between science and non-science. From this, it follows that *sociology functions as basic science only insofar as it assumes and performs the essential transdisciplinary (intellectual) function of mediating between science and the teleology of extra-scientific social life as its material base*. In other terms, *sociology’s suitability for interdisciplinary synthesis is predicated upon its transdisciplinary function*: it serves as a bi-directional passageway whereby the “impulses” from the extra-academic social fields are translated into scientific problems and language, opening science to the guidance of practical life, giving scientific work its principles and direction, while at the same time (and in the opposite direction) also “opening practical life to the guidance of sociology” (Loader–Kettler 2002: 4).

These considerations have consequences on two levels of the scientific division of labor: on the level of the *everyday practice of science* and on the macro level of the *self-regulation of scientific development*. On the first level, it seems clear that, in order to produce specialized knowledge for transcontextual use, a *thematic division of labor* – in which the themes to be

explored are inspired by the experience of social struggles and motivated by the fulfillment of social needs – has precedence over the traditional articulation of research around the principle of departmental specialization motivated by the free competition of scientific agents.

“The growing interdependence of life demands of the student of human affairs an increasing facility in seeing things in their relationships. This will not be the fruit of intuition, but of a thematically focused division of labour. If the still dominant order of specialization may be termed vertical, the needed type will have to be horizontal. It must center around concrete subjects, rather than one single aspect of many, loosely aggregated items of information. (...) while the vertical division of labour relieves the specialist of a full account of his subject, the alternative method of specialization converges on given topics from a multitude of directions in which pertinent relationships may be located. (...). The aim is a condensed account of those relationships which are relevant to the generalizing approach to a chosen subject. The adoption of this type of procedure does not end specialization of the departmental type; it merely superimposes on it a plane of operation of a different tilt.” (Mannheim 2003a.: 22-23.)

Mannheim’s idea here is that specialized research must be guided by the higher level of thematic research taking transdisciplinary problems arising in the experience of social struggle as its objects: it is the thematic research that determines what is worthy of becoming the object of specialized study – in order to be subsequently integrated into the *multidisciplinary thematic research* itself.

The overcoming of a purely vertical division of labor in favor of a regime of thematic and horizontal scientific cooperation goes counter to the dominant developmental logic of science, captured by Netti as “colonization”. Mannheim’s proposal implies a new form of regulation of how catchment areas are opened and exploited by not letting this function be exerted in a haphazard way by the specialized disciplines themselves (which would lead only to a further fragmentation of the scientific field), and bestowing it rather to sociology as the basic discipline of the human and social sciences. In this model, the process of expansion of social and human scientific research could still be carried out at the level of the specialized disciplines (and specialization itself would continue its way), but it would be realized according to the regulative frames given in and through the synthetic and transdisciplinary work conducted in the sociological disciplines. In sum, Mannheim’s plan appears to have been to use sociology – a not yet scholasticized discipline, still close to the state of a catchment area – as a sort of Archimedean point from which to reverse the current mode of production of scientific knowledge based on competition between actors atomized in a colonial structure of knowledge.

Chapter 7 – Intellectual knowledge and the sociology of intelligence

§ 45. Aim and structure of the chapter

What remains of Mannheim's project for reform of the disciplinary structure of the social sciences almost a hundred years after its formulation and its subsequent, rapid dissolution? At first sight, the answer seems simple and straightforward: not much of it subsists, since Mannheim's project failed to realize the in-depth transformation that it sought to bring about. The value of Mannheim's abortive attempt would thus be mainly "historical": it would give an interesting glimpse into an early (and surpassed) state of the evolution of the social sciences, into what seemed possible and desirable to a leading social scientist in a peculiar and unique historical conjuncture – the so-called crisis of "classical modernity" in the Weimar Germany of the 1920s and 30s (Peukert 1989) –, which coincided with the early history of the sociological discipline. To borrow Craig Calhoun's formulation, "[o]ne might treat this topic entirely as a history of ideals, unrealized ideals, for most of the thinking that went into the creation of a new role for sociology went unactualized, or only partly actualized." (Calhoun 1992: 374.)

This understanding, however, overlooks that many of Mannheim's concerns and questions reconstructed in the previous chapter appear to be persistent issues in the history of sociology well beyond Mannheim's times. If, for instance, one takes a glance at the development of American sociology in the 20th century, one will observe a constant "tension between the older conception of sociologists as intellectuals and the newer drive to professionalization", that is to say, a "clash between the older heritage of the critical intellectual and the modern claims of the value-free professional" (Gouldner 1962: 207), a common concern to many sociologists, among whom Mannheim, C. Wright-Mills and A. W. Gouldner are the best known names. In a way comparable to Mannheim, these authors have often advocated for a more ambitious idea of sociology as a "conception of how to live and a total praxis" (Gouldner 1970: 504), and more specifically as a tool to "assist individuals in understanding their position in the world and enable them to control it rather than to be controlled" (Romero 2019: 12). These authors shared Mannheim's concern with transdisciplinarity and tried to contribute to "close the gap between the discipline and the general public by working to develop a sociology

that gives people the knowledge required to address social problems.” (Galliher and Galliher 1995, cited in Romero 2019: 12.)

As Mary Romero has recalled in her 2019 ASA Presidential Address, the antagonism expressed in the critical-sociological literature in the second half of the 20th century between committed (“critical” and “public”) and “value-neutral” scientific practice and expertise (also referred to as “professional” and “policy” sociologies, see below), is actually as old as the discipline itself. According to Romero, the official history of American sociology unduly promoted one particular school, the Chicago school, as the original paradigm of the discipline in the United States, committed to the ideal of sociology as a value-free, specialized science adverse to activist scholarship, while marginalizing or outright disregarding the contributions of Du Bois’ Atlanta school, the Settlement school of Jane Addams and Hull House, all three scientifically innovative and rigorous advocates of social justice (Romero 2019: 4-11, 16).¹⁰¹

Closer in time to the present, the 1990s saw the fulfilment of Gouldner’s prediction made in 1970 of “the coming crisis of Western sociology”: it was a decade where diagnoses of sociology’s “impossibility”, “decomposition”, “identity crisis”, “disintegration” abounded (for references, see Holmwood 2007: 47). Expectedly, these diagnoses coincided with a renewed interest in the problems – central to Mannheim’s writings on sociology analyzed in the previous chapter – of interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity, and the place of sociology in the social scientific disciplinary division of labor. While he did not mention Mannheim’s name in this context, Craig Calhoun recalled that, at its beginning and for a long time during the 20th century, sociologists vindicated their discipline as a *synthetic science*, although this has often meant in practice that sociology occupied something like an *interstitial position* between the other social sciences (Calhoun 1992: 137). Castigating the current division of disciplinary labor because of its tendency toward overspecialization and ineffective interdisciplinary communication, its hampering of the formulation of holistic hypotheses about the “fullness of social life” and its uselessness for “practically relevant public discourse”, Calhoun uses an image for the lack of synthetic endeavor in contemporary sociology that strongly resembles Mannheim’s metaphor in “The Place of Sociology” about social science functioning as a badly organized bureaucracy:

¹⁰¹ Romero’s claim resonates in an interesting way with my hypothesis regarding Mannheim’s place in the gnosis-sociological tradition put forth at the beginning of the previous chapter in that both the current canon of American sociology and that of the sociology of knowledge are predicated upon an interest-driven initial act of repression of key founding figures of the discipline (Romero 2019: 1; for other calls for a strengthened historical consciousness within sociology, see Calhoun and VanAntwerpen 2007).

“we [sociologists] are like industrialists who, having established a division of labor among the producers of various components – wheels, axles, seats, engines – see no need for an assembly process in which the various components are brought into relationship with each other. On this analogy, the ‘car’ we would attempt to create from the products of diverse labors within and without our discipline would be a general understanding of social life.” (*Ibid.*: 185.)

If the existence of these common concerns and points of convergence in contemporary sociology and Mannheim’s writings suggests that, despite the inactuality of the latter’s project for reform reconstructed in the previous chapter, his ideas may have some significance for sociologists today, it is not necessarily clear what this significance consists of. A possible answer to this interrogation may be given if one turns to a contemporary debate within the sociological profession over the status and meaning of so-called *public sociology*. This ongoing debate, impressive for its breadth and intensity, is particularly interesting in that it focuses most of the above-mentioned preoccupations common to Mannheim and contemporary sociologists. Among these, the most important problem is the *compatibility of the role of social scientist and that of intellectual*, and more pointedly, the role of *intellectual knowledge* within social-scientific research and scholarship. Yet, a striking feature of the debate is that this problem, and especially the notion of intellectual knowledge, remain mostly implicit, most discussants being unaware of their centrality. As I will try to show in §§ 46-48, in the absence of a clear and explicit notion of intellectual knowledge, the stakes of the debate over public sociology and the solutions offered by the participants cannot but remain in a relative vagueness.

Where I see the peculiar value of Mannheim’s contributions to this debate is that they contain the premises of such a notion of intellectual knowledge and thereby can help shed a new light on the questions disputed. However, Mannheim’s contributions to the theorization of the notion of intellectual knowledge can do more than help clarify some tenets of this debate. They also have the potential to reshuffle the very idea of what the sociology of intellectuals is about and to suggest new roles for it within academic and non-academic research alike. To actualize this potential, I will proceed in two steps: one more critical, the other more constructive.

In the first, critical move in § 49, I will analyze some of the influential and standard definitions of intellectuals developed by various sociologists of intellectuals, showing their blind spots and arguing for the necessity of adopting an alternative approach to the intellectual question. The last three paragraphs of this chapter will then tackle the task of offering an explicit formulation of the concept of intellectual knowledge and discuss how it turns the sociology of

intellectuals into a sociology of intelligence. To set up my framework, I will first draw on the contributions of authors who share the insight of the centrality of the notion of intellectual knowledge for the sociology of intellectuals (§ 50). I will then turn to the analysis of Mannheim's most decisive theoretical contributions to this problem (§ 51). Finally, I will sketch new directions for research in the sociology of intelligence (§ 52).

§ 46. Michael Burawoy: the four faces of sociology

The lively contemporary debate over so-called “public sociology” was initiated by Michael Burawoy's 2004 ASA Presidential Address. Although based mainly on a reflection on American sociology, Burawoy's theme has struck sensitive chords in many other national contexts as well (see for example Goldberg–van den Berg 2009; Holmwood 2007). As critics have observed, Burawoy's talk sparked a wide variety of reactions and criticisms from different ideological and philosophical standpoints existing today in sociology, giving a hint at the deep cleavages regarding what sociologists consider their science *is* or *should be* (Goldberg–van den Berg 2009: 767). Accordingly, the very *meaning* of Burawoy's address has been an object of debate, various readers attributing different and often contradictory messages and intentions to it. Still others pinpoint the murkiness and indeterminate character of the author's central categories, allowing for confusions to arise in the first place. Anyhow, the intensity and breadth of the debate itself show that Burawoy's speech has put the finger on a ticklish point central to contemporary sociologists' understanding of their professional identity and the tasks of their discipline. My present considerations do not pretend to make justice to the complexity of the debate. I want to limit myself to point out and reflect on certain “unthought thoughts” involved in the discussion, trying to draw attention on neglected issues that I believe are important because they help situate the debate in a wider context transcending the disciplinary limits of sociology.

According to Burawoy, public sociology is defined by the fact that it “brings sociology into a conversation with publics, understood as people who are themselves involved in conversations.” (Burawoy 2005: 7.) Seemingly self-referential, this definition in fact carries a decisive assumption, namely that sociology – as “professional sociology”, see below – is not “public” from the outset. It is normally a “private” activity, in Kant's sense of the “private use of reason”, involving a kind of rationality characteristic of actors in bureaucratic organizations in which “functional rationality” (in Mannheim's sense detailed in the previous chapter) must prevail over the free use of reason as a “scholar”, i.e., as an intellectual (see Kant [1784] 2006:

19). The logical consequence is that, to become “public”, sociology as a private occupation must be transmuted or “transubstantiated” through an as yet unspecified kind of intervention.

Within public sociology, Burawoy distinguishes two types: “classical” and “organic” public sociologies. As critics and commentators have pointed out (Goldberg–van den Berg 2007: 771-72; Sapiro 2009: 15), the “classical” type refers implicitly to a certain historically defined category of *intellectuals*, which Gisèle Sapiro calls the “universalist critical intellectual”, embodied by the “Dreyfussard man of letters” intervening in public debates using their symbolic capital, that is to say, the “charismatic authority” they hold over a certain (in this case obviously a “mainstream”) public. Public sociologists who fall within this category participate in debates mediatized in rather “elite” settings such as TV or radio shows, interviews and discussions, books, journal articles, editorials, speeches, etc., trying to reach an audience that goes *beyond* academic publics. Burawoy is somewhat dismissive of this type because, as he claims, its publics are “generally invisible in that they cannot be seen, thin in that they do not generate much internal interaction, passive in that they do not constitute a movement or organization, and they are usually mainstream.” (Burawoy 2005: 7.)

Burawoy calls the other type – which he clearly prefers to the first one – “organic” sociology.¹⁰² The difference with “classical” public sociology is that in this case “the sociologist works in close connection with a visible, thick, active, local and often counter-public”, for example with “a labor movement, neighborhood associations, communities of faith, immigrant rights groups, human rights organizations”, making room for processes of “mutual education” between the two parties to take place. “The project of such public sociologies is to make visible the invisible, to make the private public, to validate these organic connections as part of our sociological life.” (*Ibid.*)

This notion of “public sociology” is itself part of a quadripartite division Burawoy proposes of the discipline of sociology, which includes “policy sociology” (whose only difference with public sociology is that it mobilizes sociological knowledge to solve problems *determined by a client*, whereas public sociology “strikes up a dialogic relation between sociologist and public in which the agenda of each is brought to the table, in which each adjusts to the other”), “professional sociology” and “critical sociology” (*Ibid.*: 9.) The declared intention of Burawoy’s intervention – which he characterizes with the Bourdieusian term of “classification struggle” – is to contribute to *changing the power relations of the four types of sociology* within the profession, primarily in favor of public sociology, *while at the same time*

¹⁰² As a guess, Burawoy might be taking this from a phrasing I found in Fals Borda (1991: 5).

preserving the currently prevailing hierarchy between the dominant couple of “professional sociology” and “policy sociology” on the one hand, and the “subaltern mutuality” of “public sociology” and “critical sociology” on the other. With his own terms, Burawoy’s goal is to contribute to shifting from a model of “despotic” domination to a kind of “hegemony”, by which he probably understands some form of *negotiated subordination* of “public” and “critical” sociologies to “professional” and “policy” sociologies (*ibid.*: 18).

Revealingly, Burawoy begins his characterization of the four kinds of sociologies with *critical sociology* – but not, as some of his critiques have tended to say (Holmwood 2007: 47; Goldberg–van den Berg 2009: 777), because he would put it in a foundational role. Quite the contrary: Burawoy’s intention is to give reassurance that he will precisely *not* make such a move. The sociologist is very clear and explicit regarding this point.

“Champion of traditional public sociology, C. Wright Mills (1959), and many others since him, would turn all sociology into public sociology. Mills harks back to the late 19th century forefathers, for whom scholarly and moral enterprises were indistinguishable. There is no turning back, however, to that earlier period before the academic revolution. Instead we have to move forward and work from where we really are, from the division of sociological labor.” (Burawoy 2005: 9.)

Burawoy thus distinguishes his own proposition from Mills’ critical sociology by explicitly renouncing the idea of radical reform of the discipline he sees enclosed in the idea of “turning all sociology into public sociology” (which, as the previous chapter has shown, was basically what Mannheim’s project was about). Burawoy, in other terms, begins by declaring that he does not want to make sociology a “cultivational” discipline, and especially not a *basic* discipline, as Mannheim proposed (see here Chapter 6). For Burawoy, sociology is and should remain “an honest specialized science”, as Curtius had recommended it. What he asks for is a larger spot under the academic sun for “critical” and “public” initiatives, which he sees as being sidelined in the current state of disciplinary arrangements.

To this one should add that despite some ambiguous formulations, Burawoy thinks that critical sociology not only should not but as a matter of fact *cannot* be foundational at all. What misled some of his critics in this respect is Burawoy’s contention that “[i]t is the role of critical sociology (...) to examine the foundations – both the explicit and the implicit, both normative and descriptive – of the research programs of professional sociology.” (*Ibid.*: 10.) Referring to Lynd, C. Wright Mills, Gouldner, feminism, queer theory and critical race theory, Burawoy

adds: “[i]n each case critical sociology attempts to make professional sociology aware of its biases, silences, promoting new research programs built on alternative foundations. Critical sociology is the conscience of professional sociology just as public sociology is the conscience of policy sociology.” (*Ibid.*) That these assertions do not in any case entail claiming a foundational role for public sociology is made entirely explicit a few pages later: “As I have already insisted, at the heart of our discipline is its professional component. Without a professional sociology, there can be no policy or public sociology, but nor can there be a critical sociology – for there would be nothing to criticize.” (*Ibid.*) The internal hierarchy of the discipline’s basic components is clear: professional sociology is the independent core; critical sociology is the dependent periphery logically subordinate to the former.

For Burawoy, the reason why professional sociology (what von Wiese called a specialized science, *Einzelwissenschaft*) is the *sine qua non* of all the other components of the discipline is that it provides a whole list of epistemic items such as “true and tested methods”, “accumulated bodies of knowledge”, “orienting questions”, “conceptual frameworks”, as well as, on these bases, “legitimacy and expertise for policy and public sociology”. (*Ibid.*: 10.) Following the model of Lakatos, Burawoy conceives professional sociology as constituted by “subfields”, themselves articulated into “research programs”, each carrying its own “assumptions, exemplars, defining questions, conceptual apparatuses, and evolving theories”. (*Ibid.*) Examples of research programs given are “organization theory, stratification, political sociology, sociology of culture, sociology of the family, race, economic sociology”.¹⁰³ Furthermore, the developmental logic of these research programs, is presented as being perfectly *immanent*: they “advance by tackling their defining puzzles that come either from external anomalies (inconsistencies between predictions and empirical findings) or from internal contradictions”. They then “degenerate as they become swamped by anomalies and contradictions, or when attempts to absorb puzzles become more a face-saving device than a genuine theoretical innovation”, thus giving way to new programs. (*Ibid.*)

Importantly, Burawoy dedicates attention to the *type of knowledge* involved in the purely immanent “puzzle solving” activity of professional sociology. Borrowing the term from Habermas, he calls this type of knowledge “instrumental knowledge”. In Habermas’s theory, “instrumental action” is a kind of action governed by *technical rules* based on *empirically*

¹⁰³ Burawoy’s list seems rather heterogeneous, and the examples do not always seem to involve the same kind of objects. For example, is “culture” as object of sociological study at the same level as “organization theory”? What about “political sociology” and “sociology of the family”? Etc.

testable knowledge, resulting in conditional predictions in a *context-independent* language. Instrumental action is conceived as a subtype of Weber's category of "goal-rational behavior", which also includes so-called "strategic action". This latter comprises all forms of interaction between humans that are means-oriented (their goal being pre-given) and impersonal, i.e., in which the motivational background, history, social position, etc., of the acting subjects is indifferent to the outcome of the interaction. Habermas' notions of instrumental and strategic rationalities are opposed to the concept of "communicative action", characteristic of the intersubjective matrix where social roles and identities are formed through the collective appropriation of consensual norms crystallizing in the structures of everyday language and speech (see Habermas [1981] 1984, Vol. 1, Chap. III-IV and Vol. 2, Chap. VI.)¹⁰⁴

It seems that Burawoy has this concept in mind when, to the "instrumental knowledge" of professional sociology he opposes the "reflexive knowledge" characteristic of reflexive sociology. Despite this, the question of transdisciplinarity remains absent from Burawoy's discussion and he is not prompted either to recognize that the development of scientific paradigms in "professional sociology" may well be linked to broader (nonacademic) social processes. In parallel, the contradictions of the trend toward specialization and disciplinary fragmentation are similarly disregarded. Significantly, the sociology of knowledge as a topic is entirely absent from both Burawoy's and his critics' discussions.

In light of these considerations, it is easier to understand why "critical sociology" can play only a peripheral role here. According to Burawoy, the task of "critical sociology" is to "examine the foundations (...) of the research programs of professional sociology" (*ibid.*: 10), that is to say, of *particular* research programs, not of professional sociology *as such*, i.e., not the very *structure* of the disciplinary field itself. The sociology-of-knowledge question of the source and origin of the perspectives reflected in these research programs is avoided. More importantly, it is unclear why questions about "biases, silences, alternative foundations" should

¹⁰⁴ It is noteworthy that Habermas' widely known term of "communicative action" overlaps in an unfortunate way with Mannheim's notion of "communicative knowledge". The terminological overlap is unfortunate because the *meaning* of these two notions does not at all coincide, Mannheim's concept of communicative knowledge corresponding precisely to what Habermas calls instrumental knowledge... The situation is complicated by the fact that both Mannheim's and Habermas' concepts are rooted in the same tradition of critical theory going back to Marx through Lukács and Weber. The two authors thus develop a similar critique of the nefarious displacement by the developing market-society of forms of knowledge, actions and behaviors that do not reduce to instrumental and strategic rationality (to functional rationalization and communicative knowledge, in Mannheim's terms), but use the same term to denote opposite tendencies.

be “outsourced” from within “professional sociology” to “critical sociology”. Is this not a clever way to keep professional sociology safe from any serious criticism – for example from seeing the project of a sociology as a non-evaluative, private, immanent, a-critical and communicative scientific practice a problem in itself?

§ 47. Burawoy’s conception of public sociology: critical perspectives

What about public sociology, though, which is, after all, the central stake of the debate sparked by Burawoy’s intervention? Is Burawoy’s conception on this score more coherent and convincing than it was for “critical sociology”? My answer is that insofar as the notion of “public sociology” is part of the same constellation in which the primacy of “professional sociology” understood as a communicative (in Mannheim’s sense), immanently developing, a-critical and private epistemic activity producing instrumental knowledge is considered an unquestionable axiom, one can expect similar difficulties to arise as in the case of “critical sociology”. This can be shown by evoking some of the criticism that has been addressed to Burawoy by authors who would like to see *less* public sociology than what exists today. These critics are helpful because they develop their objections not so much by refuting Burawoy’s arguments but rather by simply drawing the conclusions that logically stem from his position.

As already mentioned above, Canadian sociologists Goldberg and van den Berg take aim at Burawoy’s standpoint first by reminding that what the latter calls “classical public sociology” is part of the wider and well-established tradition of “public intellectuals” in the United States and elsewhere. The point of Goldberg and van den Berg is that this tradition “is not so much a tradition of public *sociologists* as it is one of public *intellectuals*, some of whom *happen* to be professional sociologists but many of whom are not (...).” (Goldberg–van den Berg 2009: 771.) For this reason, the authors wonder “why and how *sociologists in particular* should be called upon to conduct themselves more like such public intellectuals.” (*Ibid.*: 772.)

Most of the critiques formulated by Goldberg and van den Berg in their article follows the same pattern as this objection. On the one hand, Goldberg and van den Berg recognize the existence and legitimacy of what Gisèle Sapiro names the “universal critical intellectual”, the committed *citizen* who uses their intellectual skills to advance a cause in the public arena. On the other hand, they object to Burawoy’s conception of public sociology on the grounds that, insofar as one considers (professional) sociology – *as does Burawoy* – as a specialized, value-free, and private epistemic practice producing instrumental (Mannheim would say

communicative) knowledge, sociologists are mere professionals who do not have more legitimacy or responsibility to act as intellectuals than any other member of society.

This reasoning is convincing as far as Burawoy's conception is concerned, but it is based on the begging of an essential *sociology-of-knowledge question*, which both Burawoy and his critics avoid, namely whether the idea of a science without presuppositions is tenable in the first place. In other terms: isn't there an irreducible intellectual element in *all* sociological (and more largely social- and human-scientific) scholarship and research? It is to be noted that the begging of this question is made possible by Burawoy's axiom (shared by his critiques) that the instrumental kind of knowledge ascribed to "professional sociology" is and must remain the basis of any kind of integration of the sociological discipline – an axiom secured in Burawoy by the "outsourcing" of the critical and reflexive dimensions from within "professional sociology" (core) to "reflexive sociology" (periphery).

Another argument – this time in the context of "organic public sociology" – raised by Goldberg and van den Berg against Burawoy is also illuminating. Speaking about the possibility of putting sociological knowledge to practical use as *expertise* (and hence testing the real-life relevance of theoretical knowledge), the authors write: "few, if any, 'professional' sociologists would feel the need to object to any of this in principle but they would not call it 'organic public sociology'. They would call it 'applied sociology' (...)." (*Ibid.*: 774.) Like the previous objection, this criticism hits the nail on the head. In Burawoy's conception, it is indeed unclear whether the *kind of knowledge* produced and mobilized in and by "organic public sociology" is at any rate *different* from the *instrumental knowledge* (and the corresponding sociological practices) characteristic of "professional" sociology. In other terms, it is unclear whether the "intellectual intervention" of the "organic public sociologist" consists barely in *applying* the results and the methods of "professional" sociology in a non-academic setting, or if the knowledge produced and mobilized in the frame of "organic public sociology" is *qualitatively different* from the instrumental-communicative knowledge manufactured by "professional sociology" (sociology as a specialized science). The second gnosiso-sociological question that is thus begged by both Burawoy and his critics is whether "professional" and "public" sociologies are *qualitatively* different epistemic practices, or if public sociology is simply the *application* of the instrumental-communicative knowledge produced in professional sociology.

This drives us to the last argument of Goldberg and van den Berg that I would like to discuss here, and which they consider the decisive one: "As inspirational as [organic public sociology] must be to some, the question is how is the *quality of knowledge* affected by anchoring research practices to programmatic positions expressing clear strategic affinities

between activist-oriented scholars of movement activism and the mobilization projects of the publics that they study?” (*Ibid.*: 790, italics added.) Expectedly, the authors consider that this “quality” is either lessened or is unaffected by making sociology public. However, more than the answer itself, it is the *logic* of the objection that is really interesting. This logic is the same as in the previous objections, albeit here the problem is posed more pointedly. Goldberg and van den Berg’s question can be reformulated in this way: what would change to the “solidity” of “professional” scientific knowledge if it were *applied*? Their answer is: *nothing*, and again, this answer is coherent and difficult to counter – at least if one understands by sociological knowledge instrumental knowledge produced in a self-contained manner by a community of specialists who, as specialists, pose themselves *outside of* (or *floating freely above*) the society they are studying, and who alone are legitimate and skilled enough to judge the “quality” of the knowledge produced by their own professional community. Since this is exactly Burawoy’s conception of professional sociology, the critics’ argument hits the target.

However, as was the case with the previous two objections, this one is also based on the begging of an essential gnosis-sociological question – posed most explicitly in the context of participatory action research (see next paragraph) – concerning the *right conception of sociological (and more generally social-scientific) knowledge*. Indeed, the issue cannot be reduced to a matter of “quality” of a supposedly *uniform* knowledge, at least not before the *gnosis-sociological question* of a possible *qualitative difference* between two types of knowledge – communicative/specialized/technical/instrumental/scope-oriented/functionally rational *versus* conjunctive/cultivational/intellectual/qualitative/substantially rational – is theoretically and practically settled, which is clearly not the case here since the problem is not even posed in the first place. Indeed, the difference between the two kinds of knowledge may well explain the tension existing between participatory action research (and assimilable endeavors), driven by an active, world-changing orientation (for which Mannheim coined the term “sociological attitude”) and professional sociology, in which this drive is thoroughly repressed. Thus, before dogmatically declaring that one must choose between “changing society” and “understanding society”, as do Goldberg and van den Berg (*ibid.*: 785), one should give serious consideration to the basic gnosis-sociological intuition that *participation and involvement may well be constitutive of our knowledge about society*.

This intuition is taken up and developed in a constructive manner in a paper by Craig Calhoun titled “Social Science for Public Knowledge”. Although Calhoun’s article is not explicitly a reaction to Burawoy’s intervention, it nevertheless addresses its central themes. The first contribution of Calhoun’s piece to the topic under discussion is a criticism of the artificial

separation of “public sociology” and “critical sociology”, as it is laid out in Burawoy’s talk. As Calhoun correctly remarks, “[a]ddressing public issues does not mean merely bringing social science to already clearly formulated problems. It [also] means analyzing why problems are posed in particular ways and what the implications are. (...) It means locating blind spots and questioning whether taken-for-granted appearances are as real or transparent as they seem.” The point is, then, that “the tasks of critique are not of merely academic significance but rather of considerable public import.” (Calhoun 2008: 3.)

To say it with other words, there is an intrinsically “public” dimension to sociological reflexivity as such: becoming reflexive in sociology also means to become aware of those social dimensions of (social-)scientific activity that academic life tends to conceal. As Mary Romero wrote in her 2019 ASA Presidential Address, “[b]eing reflective of our own social stratification and inequality in the discipline and the Association is a vital beginning to nourishing a sociology engaged in social justice for a better world.” (Romero 2020: 25.) It is also in this sense that self-reflexivity must be an organic part of the “new political sociology of science” envisioned by contemporary authors (see Frickel–Moore 2005).

The second contribution of Calhoun’s piece to the debate initiated by Burawoy is the discussion of the problematic opposition between *basic* and *applied* science, or between “professional sociology” and “public sociology” (and “policy sociology”). As Calhoun pointedly remarks, “[p]ublic social science is not simply the ‘application’ of previously accumulated knowledge. It is part of the process of forming, testing, and improving knowledge. This is obscured by the dichotomy of pure vs applied (...).” (Calhoun 2008: 4.) This dichotomy also “implies a temporal and intellectual order of discovery-then-application that is often not how knowledge develops in the real world.” Furthermore, it “encourages a hierarchical structure of scientific knowledge in which allegedly ‘pure’ research is seen as more ‘basic’ than ‘applied research’. This sort of hierarchy is especially pernicious for activist research.” (*Ibid.*: 5.)

These critical remarks on the concept of “application” lead to the problematization of Burawoy’s conception of professional sociology itself. Indeed, as Calhoun writes, “[t]he commonplace notion of application is also misleading because it relies on an understanding of scientific knowledge as the accumulation of established truths. Not only are ‘pure’ scientists held to work most completely in the realm of these truths (no matter where their funding comes from). The truths are held to be certain, settled, and independent of context or formulation.” (*Ibid.*) To use Mannheim’s terms, Calhoun tackles the assumption that scientific knowledge is normally communicative and is independent of its context of formulation, as well as of the

perspective of its formulators. This assumption is what backs Burawoy's belief in the universal applicability of the knowledge produced by professional sociology, which in turn explains another tacit assumption of his, namely that the public sociologist's intellectual intervention is indifferent to the type of knowledge at play in the intervention itself (cp. also Holmwood 2007: 59).

To this assumption, Calhoun counterposes the thesis that "the idea of knowledge oriented towards the world around us, arising from an interest in that world, its processes and its problems, is basic to public social science." (Calhoun 2008: 15.) This kind of knowledge is the basic material of "public social science". It is a knowledge "that inform[s] action and judgment internally rather than externally"; that is "always embedded in history and change and as a result never completable"; that "stresses the plurality of perspectives – and indeed the importance of perspective itself"; that "locates knowledge in particular settings (...), embedded in efforts to work out particular problems"; that "approaches knowledge in terms of the methods for knowing, and thus again in terms of action"; and that "emphasizes the social and temporal character of knowledge" (*ibid.*). In sum, this is the kind of knowledge which based on Mannheim I will describe below as intellectual knowledge (see here §§ 50-51).

While doing away with the idea of *application*, Calhoun is insistent that this idea of "public social knowledge" does not make the distinction between "basic" and "epiphenomenal" knowledge obsolete; it rather reformulates the difference following the criterion of *transferability* or *cross-contextual validity*. Therefore, the question becomes: does the knowledge arising in relation to a *given context* allow to solve analogous theoretical and practical problems arising in *other contexts* (Calhoun 2008: 4)?¹⁰⁵ The introduction of this criterion upsets the hierarchy of the different kinds of sociologies envisioned by Burawoy by opening the way to consider public and reflexive sociological knowledge – which are always linked to given contexts – as basic knowledge. This, in turn, makes possible to conceive the peculiar activity of the public sociologist not through the paradigm of "expert consultancy", but as "intellectual intervention" proper (on this see here § 49).

¹⁰⁵ "There are at least three senses in which some knowledge is more basic: (1) it provides a basis for discovering or developing new knowledge, like a good theory, a useful research technique, or an exemplary research study that guides by analogy; (2) it articulates a pattern in social life, a causal relationship, or an explanatory mechanism that is useful in grasping otherwise different phenomena; or (3) it is of widespread significance – usually because it describes a more or less generalizable phenomenon. But none of these senses of 'basic' knowledge requires us to see the tackling of practical questions as mere 'application' (...)." (Calhoun 2008: 4.)

It is therefore not surprising that all the items listed by Calhoun in the excerpt that follows – using one’s specific perspective to reveal unseen patterns; providing contextual understanding for activist work; inciting to self-reflection; suggesting alternative tactics based on the holistic evaluation of a given situation – all involve qualitative, intellectual skills and knowledge.

“The kind of expertise that academics offer will seldom be simply accumulated facts, and especially not about the domains in which activists work. But researchers may be able to analyze data in ways that reveal previously unseen or at least inadequately demonstrated patterns in the facts. They may be able to clarify understanding of some of the broader contexts that influence the specific domains in which activists work. They may be able to help activists reflect on their own movements and struggles, partly through knowledge of how other struggles have played out. They may bring knowledge of tactics to expand the repertoires of activists. And they, the social scientists, are likely to learn a great deal from their public collaborations and discussions.”
(*Ibid.*: 6.)

In the next paragraph, I wish to explore further the question of the nature of knowledge involved in public sociology opened by these considerations of Calhoun.

§ 48. Participatory action research (PAR), community-based research (CBR) and the problem of intellectual knowledge

My discussion of the debate over public sociology and the criticism exerted against Burawoy’s propositions would be lacunary if I did not address the case of “organic public sociology”, which is after all the example Burawoy sets in front of his fellow sociologists as to how to understand and practice public sociology. I will begin with a terminological remark: instead of speaking about “organic public sociology”, I will use the more widely known terms of “participatory action research” (PAR) and “community-based research” (CBR) to name the initiatives to which Burawoy refers. In analyzing this type of research, I will take as my leading thread Calhoun’s idea of “public social knowledge” – what I will further elaborate in the following paragraphs as “intellectual knowledge” – and gauge whether and in what ways it is instantiated in PAR and CBR.

In the broadest sense, one can talk of participatory research “[w]henver a group of people put their heads together to puzzle out a problem that concerns them collectively and join

hands to come up with ways of dealing with it.” (Park 1992: 30.) Participatory research gains another, more specific sense when it is co-opted as a research and knowledge-creation practice in a more academic sense. As Park notes, the entry of this kind of research into the academia was part of a political process whose motivation was mainly to “expand the domain of intellectual knowledge, turn upside down the relationship between theory and practice, and restore the place of ordinary people as the creators of knowledge”, and was based on the insight that “knowledge that serves human needs can be created by means other than those described in social science methods textbooks.” (*Ibid.*: 30-33.)

Historically, PAR originated as a political practice “that attempted to put the less powerful at the center of the knowledge creation process; to move people and their daily lived experiences of struggle and survival from the margins of epistemology to the center.” (Hall 1992: 15.) It traditionally combines three activities: *research*, *education*, and *action*, and presupposes that the goal of collective empowerment does not go against but actually enhances the “deepening of social knowledge” (*ibid.*: 16.) The politically more radical strands of PAR are seen by its practitioners “as initiating a process of disindoctrination that allows people to detach themselves from the myths imposed on them by the power structure and that have prevented them from seeing their own oppression or from seeing possibilities for breaking free. Transformative action can be seen as the strategic goal to be reached in the medium or long term.” (*Ibid.*: 23.)

Initially “a tool, which social movements, activists, trade unionists, women on welfare, the homeless or any similar groups use as part of a variety of strategies and methods for the conduct of their work”, one of the rationales for the cooptation of PAR in the academia has been to challenge the positivist research paradigms and the scope-oriented dominant knowledge-producing habitus that increasingly characterizes the human- and social-scientific disciplines (*ibid.*: 25). The intra-academic promotion of PAR is motivated by the diagnosis that the idea of the *significance* of research and the general social need to better understand the world in which we live is oftentimes supplanted by the academic overrating of “trivial additions of new ostensibly general findings”, driven by an “epistemology that suggests that the accumulation of knowledge is like the accumulation gravel in a pile, and that every small fragment of stone is a meaningful addition.” (Calhoun 2008: 14; cp. also Nettl 1969.)

However, Hall cautions that despite the efforts made by participatory researchers, “scope-oriented” research remains typical in the academia, “[t]enure, promotion, peer recognition, research grants, and countless smaller codes of privilege [being] accorded through the adding up of articles, books, papers in ‘refereed’ journals and conferences”, a process that

puts “academics under economic, job survival or advancement pressures to produce in appropriate ways. And (...) this structural pressure [also] plays havoc with academic engagement in the participatory research process.” (Hall 1992: 25.)

After these preliminaries, I now turn to that *specific kind of participatory research* that Burawoy mentions as the exemplary realization of “organic public sociology”: so-called “community-based research” (abbreviated as CBR) (Burawoy 2005: 20). As I indicated, CBR can be seen as a sub-type of PAR, insofar as it is a method of knowledge-production which understands “knowledge” as being directed at realizing socially and politically relevant aims, among which to bring about desirable social changes. It is a *specific* type of participatory research in that it is conceived by its practitioners as a “campus-community partnership”, that is to say, an endeavor which “engages faculty members, students, and community members in projects that address a community-identified need.” (Strand et al. 2003: 5). In other terms, the peculiarity of CBR within the larger PAR tradition is the stress it puts on the *relevance* of this tradition *for higher education*, “especially as a response to the challenges that colleges and universities currently face in exploring partnerships with communities in addressing pressing problems.” (*Ibid.*: 6.)

When contrasted not with other (more militant) forms of participatory research, but with conventional academic research, CBR appears as having two distinctive features. First, it is explicitly aimed at producing “knowledge that meets a community-identified need” (Strand et al. 2003: 6). The idea of *usefulness* and *relevancy for a community* is emphasized and is contrasted to the primary aim of conventional academic research, which is “to advance knowledge in a discipline”, a motivation *immanent* to a specific social group, the “scope-oriented” part of the scientific community. Using Mannheim’s terms, one can say that CBR seeks to generate *qualitative, conjunctive knowledge*, which is always function of a communal need, whereas the kind of knowledge produced in conventional academic research would be situated closer to the ideal type of communicative knowledge (*ibid.*: 7).

This first feature – the focus on the “needs” of the community – has two implications: first, CBR entails a measure of *critical and holistic appraisal of society*, in which one recognizes *structural injustices* leading to the insatisfaction of certain basic human wants; second, insofar as research is guided by community-identified needs, and insofar as “real-world problems are seldom just sociological, or biological, or economic, or physical”, CBR necessarily “transcends disciplines”, both in the sense of interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity (*ibid.*: 10).

The second distinctive feature of CBR is the blurring of the frontier between researcher (the academic scientist or the “outside expert”) and researched (a community as the “object

population”), making for a “more multifaceted, informal and long-term relationship” between them, by contrast with a “limited and task-oriented relationship” typical of conventional academic research (*ibid.*: 6). This blurring of the boundaries is based on a crucial presupposition of CBR (and indeed of all forms of PAR), namely that the academic community is *one* among various producers of *knowledge* in general, and of *intellectual* knowledge in particular (see below §§ 50-51). In this regard, I believe Strand and his colleagues make an important and salutary move when they compare community-based organizations (which one could abbreviate as “CBOs”, to liken them to “SMOs”, i.e., the “social movement organizations” in resource mobilization theory) to institutions of higher education not, as Frickel and Gross do (see here Chapter 4, § 33), on the basis of them both being *rationaly organized institutions* (which can be taken for granted here), but on the basis of *both of them being producers of knowledge* (*ibid.*: 9).

The positive aspect of Strand and colleagues’ reflection on their practice is that the relationship between the academic or expert as an external figure intervening in a non-academic context and the local members of an activist group struggling with the satisfaction of a crucial communal need is explicitly put to the fore as a problem. Yet, there are ambiguities burdening the conceptions of Strand and colleagues regarding the question about what the respective partners each bring to the research, and how the specific kind of knowledge capable of fostering the satisfaction of the communal need emerges. A closer reading suggests that communicative categories have a rather important weight in their conception of “public intellectual knowledge”. This orientation is indicated by the theoretical framework of Strand and colleagues, resource mobilization theory, as well as by their reliance on the category of interest to explain the motivations of the heterogenous partners in CBR-type initiatives, despite them recognizing the importance of the partners sharing a *common worldview* (*ibid.*: 8).

“Academic and community partners’ needs and interests are bound to diverge in some significant ways beyond their common goal to produce useful and quality research findings. On the academic side, some priority is likely to be given to providing students a valuable learning experience, and perhaps enhancing the faculty member’s teaching credentials or producing publishable research that otherwise furthers their career. The institution might have some goals as well, such as improving its community image, and recruiting and retaining students. On the community side, partners seek concrete benefits for the agency and individuals involved in the research. They need research reports of sufficient quality and usefulness, but also may have some subtle interests: satisfying funders, smoothing interagency political tensions, or bringing

together a disorganized community. Recognizing and helping each other meet these different needs is important to strong CBR partnerships.” (*Ibid.*: 9.)

Strand and associates seem to be vacillating between a conjunctive and a communicative understanding of “public social knowledge” and therefore do not provide a sufficient basis to elaborate a thematic concept of intellectual knowledge clearly distinguishable from the “instrumental knowledge” ascribed to “professional sociology” by Burawoy. Yet, to truly understand the stakes and the meaning of the debate over public sociology, it seems necessary to dispose of such a thematic concept. To formulate it, it is naturally tempting to turn to the sociology of intellectuals for instruction. It is even surprising that the contributors to the debate over public sociology, most of whom are sociologists, do actually never refer to this field of study (or for that matter to the sociology of knowledge), despite many of them either explicitly posing the problem in terms of a “clash between the older heritage of the critical intellectual and the modern claims of the value-free professional” (Gouldner 1962: 207), or at least recognizing that the debate’s larger frame of reference is indeed the notion of “intellectual” going back to the Dreyfus affair in France (Jacoby 1987; Sapiro 2009: 31; Goldberg–van den Berg 2009: 771-772). Disappointingly, however, when one turns to the sociology of intellectuals, although one gets a lot of definitions of intellectuals, there is much less material regarding intellectual knowledge. The next paragraph will study some classical ways of framing the question of intellectual life and to reflect on why the concept of intellectual knowledge is not seen as a worthwhile subject of study in the sociology of intellectuals.

§ 49. Standard sociological definitions of intellectuals and their problems

Defining intellectuals is a reputedly difficult task (Eyerman 1992: 33). This difficulty is often summed up by invoking Zygmunt Bauman’s famous formula stating that all definitions of intellectuals are self-definitions (Bauman 1987: 8). However, the meaning and implications of this thesis are rarely discussed, as if the formula somehow spoke for itself. But is this really the case? After all, *why* would all definitions of intellectuals be self-definitions? More pointedly: *why* does defining intellectuals automatically turn the definer into an intellectual?

The first element of answer given by Bauman is that the category of “intellectuals” was never intended to be a descriptive one: “[i]t did not draw an objective boundary of the area it denoted, neither did it assume the pre-existence of such a boundary (though it did indicate the pool from which the volunteers might be sought and recruited). (...) The category was, so to

speak, a widely opened invitation to join in a certain kind of practice of a global-societal import.” (Bauman 1987: 1-2.) A second element of answer, related to the first, is the manifold diversity of the existing definitions of intellectuals. Again, the reason of this diversity is not theoretical. It resides in the intrinsically *political* character of the *practice* denoted by the term “intellectual”. Who can claim to be an intellectual, and more pointedly, who can claim to define who intellectuals are, are not purely theoretical matters insofar as they entail the *share in a certain form of power*, which Bill Martin and Iván Szélenyi – inspired by Bourdieu’s notion of “symbolic violence” – call “*symbolic domination*” (Martin–Szélenyi 1987). To be an intellectual is to wield a specific form of power, which not only differs qualitatively from economic or political power (in the more restricted sense of the term) but is also *independent* from these: its authority is *self-referential* or *self-grounded*.

Therefore, definitions of intellectuals are systematically contested by intellectuals because of the performative nature of the act of definition, which on the one hand draws frontiers between intellectuals and *non-intellectuals* (wielders of symbolic power vs. those subject to it, “knows” and “know-nots”) and on the other hand seeks to renegotiate existing lines of force *within* the intellectual community. As Bauman writes, “every definition they [intellectuals] propose is an attempt to draw a boundary of their own identity”, and “[e]ach boundary splits the territory into two sides: here and there, in and out, us and them.” (Bauman 1987: 8.). In sum, to give a definition of intellectuals is a *performative act* consisting in two aspects: attributing oneself intellectual competencies (setting oneself *apart* from non-intellectuals), on the one part; situating oneself *within* the constitutively *agonistic* intellectual field, on the other.

This analysis of Bauman’s formula may help better understand its meaning, but it does not yet explain why the latter is summoned when sociologists of intellectuals point out the difficulty of defining intellectuals. What is the *nature* of the difficulty invoked? Is it a theoretical or a practical embarrassment? If the idea that intelligence involves the exercise of symbolic power is correct, it seems legitimate to surmise that the origin of the discomfort is practical, rather than purely theoretical. It resides probably in the unavoidable exposure of the definer’s relation to power and domination in the very act of (self-)definition (involving an act of “distinction” in Bourdieu’s sense). It could be objected that basically any utterance can be revealing regarding one’s attitude to the social and political order. However, the case of the definition of intellectuals is special because, as Bauman suggests, its theoretical content is *directly* informed by an act of *distinction* through which the definer lays claim on a certain status and privileges within a given social order, to the exclusion of others.

Bauman sees the above-described complex as the origin of a form of bad faith constitutive of many sociologies of intellectuals. This bad faith is manifested in that

“[m]ost definitions [of intellectuals – G.T.] (...) refrain from admitting the true nature of their accomplishment: by defining two social spaces they assume they have the right to draw the boundary. Instead, they focus ostensibly on only one side of the boundary; they pretend to confine themselves to the articulation of the attributes uniquely present on one side; and they are silent about the necessarily divisive effects of the operation. What most definitions refuse to admit is that the separation of the two spaces (and the legislating of a specific relationship between them) is the purpose and the *raison d'être* of the definitional exercise, not its side-effect.” (*Ibid.*: 8.)

Bauman's provocative thesis can be reformulated by saying that inquiries about intellectuals – which tend to cluster in the field known as the sociology of intellectuals – typically have a *manifest* and a *latent* side, and *the latter is what determines what becomes manifest in a theoretical guise*. Akin to their object of study, sociologies of intellectuals are discourses of power. These discourses, however, mostly ignore themselves as such. The latter assertion might seem surprising at first sight: isn't the Foucauldian formula of “speaking truth to power” the most strongly associated with the posture of an intellectual? Isn't the Dreyfus Affair, the very origin of the signifier “intellectual”, the explicit affirmation and vindication of the specifically intellectual power to speak truth to power? All this is true, and it is not Bauman's point to deny it. His point is rather that this very capacity (and the corresponding self-given mandate) to speak truth to power is predicated upon *another, more fundamental, even constitutive, political gesture* – one that remains mostly unconscious: intellectuals can speak truth to power only once they have separated themselves from “non-intellectuals”. As Bauman writes, “[b]eing intellectuals, they subsequently seek to reforge their separatedness into a self-identity. The specifically intellectual form of the operation – self-definition – masks its universal content, which is the reproduction and reinforcement of a given social configuration, and – within it – a given (or claimed) status for the group.” (*Ibid.*: 8-9.)

As I will now set on to show, this latent side of the self-definition accounts for certain inconsistencies in some of the most influent, standard sociological approaches to intellectuals. This is true also for those attempts to theorize the difference between intellectuals and non-intellectuals which recognize that these kinds of theories are based on power relations. An instructive example for this is an article by Bill Martin and Iván Szelényi (to which I have

briefly referred above). Working in the paradigm of the sociology of domination, Martin and Szelényi are interested in developing a theory of the nature of *intellectual power*, which they grasp with the term “symbolic domination” (Martin–Szelényi 1987: 16). Their question is: what distinguishes intellectuals within the strata of the highly educated in general? They present their answer as a synthesis of Alvin W. Gouldner’s and Pierre Bourdieu’s answers to the same question. This answer involves the elaboration and combination of three dichotomies, the first two drawing on Bourdieu, the third on Gouldner: 1) human capital vs. cultural capital; 2) practical mastery vs. symbolic mastery; 3) culture of critical discourse vs. ordinary speech.

According to Martin and Szelényi, “the knowledge of the highly educated may simultaneously have two different aspects or faces: one can be described as *human capital*, the other as *cultural capital*.” (*Ibid.*: 19, italics added.) *Human capital* is a set of “scarce and economically useful skills”, which are typically (though not exclusively) appropriated in institutions of higher education (*ibid.*). Because of its scarcity and the investments needed for its production, owners of human capital gain privileges that non-owners of such skills typically do not have. Ownership of human capital is considered synonymous with *practical mastery*, which is opposed by Martin and Szelényi to *symbolic mastery*, a capacity corresponding to the ownership of another kind of capital, *cultural capital* (sometimes the authors speak of “symbolic capital”).

Whereas human capital denotes the “capacity to achieve ends set by others, particularly by employers or clients (...), the cultural-capital aspect of the knowledge of the highly educated is the capacity to describe the principles by which those with merely technical knowledge manipulate their worlds. It is the capacity to gain symbolic mastery of practices.” (*Ibid.*: 43–44.) Through the ownership of cultural capital and the exercise of symbolic mastery, one gains entry into the “culture of critical discourse” (CCD). The superiority of those engaging in the CCD over those who can pretend only to practical and technical mastery, stems from the capacity to interpret, evaluate, theorize and prescribe the *principles* of practical and technical mastery (i.e., the “right use” of human capital), without reference to any authority external to the CCD itself.

Accordingly,

“the difference between those who exercise symbolic mastery and those who are limited to practical mastery, between those who enter the culture of critical discourse and those who only speak regular speech, is not quantitative but *qualitative*. Symbolic capital does not require more human capital (or skill) than practical mastery but instead requires something *else*, a different

type of knowledge or skill. Furthermore, symbolic mastery, or the culture of critical discourse, offers authority without reference to any agency outside the process of cultural production. (...) [C]ultural-capital owners ground their authority in the claim that they know about important matters in superior ways to ordinary people and that anyone who understands what they know can see that it conforms to rational rules for truthful discourse (the culture of critical discourse).” (*Ibid.*: 18-19.)

From the point of view of my inquiry aiming at a thematic concept of intellectual knowledge, Martin and Szelényi’s definition of intellectuals has the interest of setting off from the idea of a *qualitatively specific knowledge* pertaining to intellectuals, and only to intellectuals. They also offer an insightful combination of Gouldner’s and Bourdieu’s dichotomies (human vs. cultural capital; practical vs. symbolic mastery; CCD vs. ordinary speech), partly covering Mannheim’s distinctions between cultivational vs. specialized knowledge and substantially vs. functionally rational behavior, expounded in the previous chapter.

On the other hand, however, the very way in which the authors distinguish between intellectuals and non-intellectuals is based on a *non-thematized distinction* having a decisive impact on the whole formulation of the problem of intelligence. From the outset and without justification, the disjunction between intellectuals and non-intellectuals is made *within* an educated elite. To say it differently, the pool of potential candidates to the title of “intellectual” is predefined in such a way that only the highly educated can pretend to be its wielders. Considering the partaking in the CCD (the discourse of the mostly college-bred elites) as a requisite of being an intellectual is only a consequence of this latent act of distinction. The non-thematized presupposition of this theory is the exclusion of the very *possibility* that intellectuals may be found outside of the learned elites. This latent gesture amounts to identify a *specific intellectual group* with *intelligence* as such. The authors conflate a *generic* notion of intellectuals with the *particular* group of intellectuals arising from the stratum of the highly educated, to which the authors themselves belong. Since the operation is latent, it becomes difficult to recognize the fallacy on which it rests and the partiality in which it results. Bauman’s words thus apply well to this case:

“the authors of most known definitions attempt to list the properties of the intellectuals before any reference is made to the extant or postulated social relationship which sets off the defined group from the rest of society. What is overlooked in the process is that this relationship itself,

rather than any special qualities and possessions of the intellectuals as a group, constitutes them as a separate entity.” (Bauman 1987: 8-9.)

The latent aspiration to a privileged status for intellectuals as a group is often manifested in the sociology of intellectuals as an unquestioned, exclusive focus on certain social categories (especially certain professions) and social types (the highly learned and educated) seen as the sole possible repositories of intelligence. This tendency is also palpable in Pierre Bourdieu’s influential conception of intellectuals. In the “Post-scriptum” to his *Rules of Art*, the French sociologist describes intellectuals as an “unstable combination” of the opposite notions of “pure culture” and “politics”. According to him,

“writers, artists and scholars asserted themselves for the first time as intellectuals, at the time of the Dreyfus Affair, when they intervened in political life *as intellectuals*, meaning with specific authority founded on their belonging to the relatively autonomous world of art, science and literature, and all the values associated with that autonomy – disinterestedness, expertise, etc. Intellectuals are two-dimensional figures who do not exist and subsist as such unless (and only unless) they are invested with a specific authority, conferred by the autonomous intellectual world (meaning independent from religious, political or economic power) (...), and unless (and only unless) they engage this specific authority in political struggles. (...) [I]t is by increasing their autonomy (and thereby, among other things, their freedom to criticize the prevailing powers) that intellectuals can increase the effectiveness of a political action whose ends and means have their origin in the specific logic of the fields of cultural production.” (Bourdieu [1992] 1996: 343.)

In Chapter 4 (§ 29), I have hinted that Bourdieu’s definition is circular. It is also built on the conflation of *certain* intellectual *roles* (writer, artist, scholar) with the intellectual *function* as such. His definition assumes that intellectuals are normally dwellers of the realm of “pure culture”, and that from there, they *may* “progress” toward political roles, or “regress” back from these to their initial identity of actors in the “relatively autonomous fields of cultural production”. In this conception, “intervention” as the characteristic “movement” of intellectuals *always* happens *from* the “fields of cultural production” *toward* that of “politics” – in contrast to the more democratic conception laid out in Mannheim’s 1932 Prospectus (see here Chapter 6, § 43), which allows for actors initially engaged in political or other non-academic activities *therethrough* to gain an intellectual status. I believe this unidirectionality stems from the fact that Bourdieu considers intellectuals as a *specific subset* of the “relatively autonomous cultural

producers”. Their distinctiveness resides in that *they actualize a potentiality inherent in – and only in – the “autonomous realm of cultural production”*: that of influencing a public through actions based on a self-grounded claim to epistemic authority in matters of general interest (cp. the concept of CCD above).

This assumption is what makes Bourdieu’s definition circular: as he writes, “intellectuals (...) do not exist as such unless (and only unless) they are invested with a specific authority, *conferred by the autonomous intellectual world (...)*.” (*Ibid.*: 340, italics added.) If it is correct to suppose – as I think it is – that “intellectual world” is used synonymously here with the “relatively autonomous fields of cultural production”, the circularity becomes manifest. What makes “cultural producers” intellectuals is public intervention. What makes public intervention possible is ownership of cultural capital. Cultural capital is charismatic authority over a public. And this authority is granted by and only by virtue of partaking in the “autonomous fields of cultural production”. Therefore, in this conception, only cultural producers – individuals exercising certain cultural professions – *can* be intellectuals, because only the belonging to the field of cultural production confers intellectual authority over publics.

It must be underlined that for Bourdieu intellectuals are nevertheless *specific* actors in the cultural fields: they are indeed those who do *actualize* a key potentiality inherent in the fields of cultural production, by contrast with other cultural actors who leave this potentiality unrealized. It thus seems that the term “intellectual” is used in a stronger and a weaker sense by Bourdieu. In the strong sense of the term, *intellectuals* are those cultivated persons who intervene in politically relevant matters. In the weaker sense, “intellectual” is a qualification that refers to those who *could* intervene if they wanted, but do not necessarily do so. The difference between the stronger and weaker senses can thus be formulated in terms of “potentiality” and “actuality”. However, the essential thing is that the *possibility* of the passage from one to the other is given *only* to the actors participating in the “relatively autonomous fields of cultural production”.

This reading is corroborated by Bourdieu’s sketch of what he calls the “extraordinarily repetitive history” of intellectuals. According to Bourdieu, this history exhibits a “pendulum swing between two possible attitudes towards politics, either commitment or retreat” (*Ibid.*: 341). Whereas the activism of French Enlightenment thinkers such as Voltaire and the Encyclopedists, alongside the “men of letters” engaged in the French revolution, exemplifies commitment, the “extraordinary disenchantment” and the subsequent turning inward of populist Romanticism after the defeat of the 1848 revolution

“provides a favourable terrain for a new assertion of intellectuals’ autonomy, this time radically elitist. (...) Not admitting any other judgment than that of their peers, they assert the closing in on itself of the literary field, but also the writer’s renunciation of leaving his ivory tower to exercise any form of power whatsoever (...).” (*Ibid.*: 341-342.)

Symptomatically, for Bourdieu, such episodes of “radical elitism” and “closing on itself of the literary field” – that is to say, a complete lack of political engagement – are *not* a reason to exclude these groups of cultural producers from the history of *intellectuals*, even though intervention was previously said to be a *necessary* condition of being an intellectual. The inconsistency vanishes, however, when considering that for Bourdieu intervention is necessary only for being an intellectual in the strong sense of the term, not the weaker one.

Bourdieu’s notion of “intellectual autonomy” is similarly ambivalent. On the one hand, the vindication of autonomy expresses the aspiration of intellectual groups to freedom from the external constraints imposed by economic, religious and political powers (what Bauman called the “manifest aspect” of intellectual self-identity). On the other hand, however, the vindication of autonomy expresses the aspiration of the same group to maintain their privileged position, by so forging the image of the intellectual as to exclude potentially competitive subaltern “cultural producers” from the possible pool of candidates to the title (what Bauman called the “latent aspect” of intellectual self-identity). Therefore, the “program” of reinforcing the autonomy of intellectuals in this second sense is part of a constant effort (rhetorical as well as practical) of separation and distancing from “non-intellectuals”. Based on Bauman, one could see this second movement of separation and distancing as the unavowed but nevertheless constitutive common interest of the intellectual strata to whom Bourdieu appeals in his post-scriptum. The consequence (theoretical as much as practical) of this procedure is the same as what I pointed out in the case of Martin and Szelényi’s article: it becomes very difficult to perceive intellectual interventions as intellectual interventions that are performed by elite cultural actors other than writers, artists, scholars, experts, etc.

These issues with Bourdieu’s definition of intellectuals are reverberated in an interesting way in an article on the different models of intervention of 20th century French intellectuals by Gisèle Sapiro, a leading French sociologist of intellectuals working in Bourdieu’s paradigm. Sapiro’s article begins with the following statement: “If we find in most societies a group or a category of individuals exercising an *intellectual function*, such as the clergy, it is only from the 18th century that a relatively autonomous *intellectual field* emerges in Europe.” (Sapiro 2009: 9, italics added.) Remarkably, Sapiro constructs her definition of the intellectual by

opposing *intellectual function* and *intellectual field*. Her point is that the latter – and only the latter – is the *par excellence* object of the sociology of intellectuals. Thus, despite seeing the “theoretical anomaly” of the existence of *other types* of bearers of intelligence (“anomaly” signaled by the undefined concept of “intellectual function”), Sapiro, like the other authors I have analyzed so far in this paragraph, defines the generic concept of intellectuals based on a restricted pool of intellectual actors and their prestigious tradition, who thereby become the *synecdoche* of the phenomenon of intelligence as such.

The concept of “intellectual field” is nevertheless interesting because it does not exactly coincide with the previously mentioned Bourdieusian notion of “fields of cultural production”. Drawing on other texts of Bourdieu, Sapiro gives the following definition of the concept of “intellectual field”.

“Located at the intersection of the political field and the specific fields of cultural production, the intellectual field participates in the field of ideological production, ‘a relatively autonomous universe in which amidst competition and conflict, the instruments for thinking the social world are created and where, through this process, the field of the politically thinkable, or, to put it another way, the legitimate problematic, is defined’,¹⁰⁶ as Pierre Bourdieu defines it. In this universe, individuals and groups from different fields, political, labor-unionist, media, academic, literary, etc. clash in a struggle for the imposition of the legitimate view of the social world. The specificity of the mode of intervention of intellectuals as such stems from the constraint to refer to debates specific to the intellectual field (...).” (*Ibid.*)

To go into the analysis of this definition, I would propose to focus first on an odd occurrence of overlooked cross-reference in this excerpt. Bourdieu’s definition, taken from his book *La distinction* (1979), draws heavily and apparently inadvertently on some key ideas of Mannheim. The Mannheimian origin of Bourdieu’s idea can be traced if one turns to a critical tribute Bourdieu wrote to Robert K. Merton a few years after he published *La distinction*, where he restated the same idea contained in the above passage quoted by Sapiro. In that passage, Bourdieu cited and embraced a formula he read in a book of Merton. The formula says: “In the cognitive domain as in others, there is competition among groups of collectivities to capture what Heidegger called the ‘public interpretation of reality.’ With varying degrees of intent, groups in conflict want to make their interpretation the prevailing one of how things were and

¹⁰⁶ The translation of the passage from Bourdieu’s *La distinction* is Richard Nice’s (Bourdieu 1984: 399).

are and will be.”¹⁰⁷ (Bourdieu 1990: 297-98.) As Dick Pels has pointed out, Bourdieu somehow glossed over the fact that this “Mertonian piece of wisdom”, which is the source of inspiration for Bourdieu’s concept of intellectual field, is a rewording of a crucial and well-known passage from Mannheim’s 1928 essay on “Competition as Cultural Phenomenon” (which Merton himself cited, albeit he too did it in an awkward way, see Pels 1996: 36.)

“It appears that the different parties are all competing for the possession of the correct social vision, or at least for the prestige which goes with the possession of this correct vision. To express this identical goal in an even more tangible way, I will use the following formulation: the competing parties are always struggling to influence what the phenomenologist Heidegger calls the ‘public interpretation of Being’ (...).” (Mannheim 1971c: 228, translation modified.)

The reason for discussing this strange *lapsus* of the French sociologist is not to give credit to Mannheim for Bourdieu’s idea but to shed light on a theoretical difficulty with Bourdieu’s notion of “intellectual field” as the proper turf of intellectual life. Indeed, while Bourdieu draws on Mannheim’s premises in forging his definition, there is no indication in Mannheim’s work that intelligence is structured as a *field*. The problem is of course not that Bourdieu arrives at a different conclusion than Mannheim, but that his conclusion is inconsistent with his unknowingly Mannheimian premises. Indeed, based on Mannheim, it is problematic to consider that intelligence is restricted to *one* particular *field*, by analogy with art, science, literature, etc. Certainly, intellectual life does exhibit field-like features in that its actors occupy *agonistic positions* and compete for a *common goal*. However, it must be remarked that the imposition of the “correct social vision” as the goal of intellectual activity decisively sets it apart from any other field-specific practice insofar as this striving is *not immanent* to the “intellectual field”. Indeed, intellectuals do not aim to impose their vision only to other intellectuals supposedly clustering in the so-called intellectual field, but potentially to *all actors* active in *all other* existing *social sectors* (economy, politics, culture, etc.).

The fact that the exercise of intelligence essentially sets the “legitimate problematic” not only for itself, but also for all other sectors of social life (cultural, political, economic, etc.), is linked to another distinctive feature of intellectual life theorized by Mannheim in *Ideology*

¹⁰⁷ Merton’s original reads: “Polarization in the social structure becomes reflected in the polarization of claims in the cognitive and ideological domain, as groups or collectivities seek to capture what Heidegger called the ‘public interpretation of reality.’ With varying degrees of intent, groups in conflict want to make their interpretation the prevailing one of how things were and are and will be.” (Merton 1973: 110-111.)

and Utopia, one that Sapiro also discerns. This feature is that the actors of this very special “field” are recruited (at least potentially) from *all* fields of social action, “political, labor-unionist, media, academic, literary, etc.” (Sapiro 2009: 9.) In other terms, unlike the actors of the other fields, intellectuals do not cluster in one single field functioning as a “world apart”, because anybody from any social field can participate in intellectual life. Far from being localizable in a field-type structure, intelligence cuts across such boundaries. It is a decidedly *socially diffuse activity*, a point made by Mannheim in his 1928 conference on “Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon” when he insists that intellectual positions are constantly being worked out in all fields and levels of social action, from “everyday togetherness” to the practices showing the highest levels of spiritual refinement (Mannheim 1971c: 230). Intelligence therefore must be figured as emerging not in the form of a separate field (or, for that matter, as an interstitial space between different social fields) but rather as a *function* exercised *within* each of these different fields.

I wrote above that the interest of this concept of “intellectual field” resided in the fact that it did not treat intelligence in exclusive association with the participation in the cultural professions, as suggested by Bourdieu’s definition of intellectuals in his post-scriptum to *The Rules of Art*, but as recruited also from the fields of politics, labor-unions, media, etc. This is an idea that could considerably expand and democratize the conception of intellectuals. However, not very consistently, Sapiro suddenly turns in the opposite direction by quite arbitrarily reiterating that only the actors belonging to the elite cultural professions (scientists, scholars, writers, artists) are worthy of the title “intellectual”.

“Based on the French case, we propose to analyze the models of political intervention of intellectuals and their evolution in the twentieth century, by first inquiring into the factors that differentiate them in an ideal-typical way. *We will stick to specifically intellectual commitments, to the exclusion of other forms of militant action, demonstrations, trade union activity*, in which intellectuals, like everyone else, can obviously take part, but which, not based on valuing of their specific symbolic capital, do not justify a separate treatment of other social categories, except to revisit the theme of the tension between thought and action which runs through all the debates on the engagement of intellectuals.” (Sapiro 2009.: 10, italics added.)

In this passage, Sapiro reiterates the previously discussed Bourdieusian position according to which although militant interventions (such as labor union activism, grassroots political movements, community organizing, etc.) do have an intellectual dimension, the actors

taking part in them should actually not be considered intellectuals, because this would violate the (unjustified) presumption that only actors in the cultural fields can be intellectuals. As in the previous cases, this petition of principle makes it literally unthinkable that individuals or groups of individuals not endowed with high volumes of human capital but nevertheless exercising intellectual functions in the frame of political and social struggle, or any other form of collective action that contributes to defining the “legitimate problematic”, be recognized as intellectuals.

Another similar case where the attempt at a definition of intellectuals is torn between the recognition of the centrality of the idea of *intellectual function* and the opposite tendency to restrict the definition to a specific social category, closer to the heart of the theoretician and easier to circumscribe sociologically, can be found in the essays of Tibor Huszár, a recently deceased leading sociologist of intellectuals in Hungary. Huszár’s contributions are remarkable for the simultaneous presence in them of very clear-sighted theoretical insights alongside conceptual inconsistencies like those pointed out in Bourdieu’s and Sapiro’s case. In the opening section (“The concept of intellectual and its function”) of a chapter titled “Intellectual training and advanced professional training”¹⁰⁸, Huszár gives the following definition of intellectuals:

“In our opinion, are to be counted as intellectuals all those who create a new spiritual value as part of their professional activity, ensure the systematic application of this knowledge, participate in the transmission of cultural values, public and professional knowledge, are participants – as executives or experts – in decision-making processes needing a higher-level training, both in the phase of preparation and execution. (...) Intellectuals are carriers of a special *social relationship*. They have a role in the production, distribution and redistribution of new knowledge, symbolic goods of spiritual value, and in the control of social and economic processes.” (Huszár 1984: 539-540.)

Huszár’s approach parallels the definitions of Martin and Szelényi, and Bourdieu and Sapiro in that it poses that the phenomenon of intelligence pertains to an elite section within the highly educated strata of society, or, to use Bourdieu’s words, within the group of owners of high volumes of human capital. In Huszár’s view, the specificity of intellectuals proper resides in their capacity to complement the excessive specialism of most categories of professionals

¹⁰⁸ The Hungarian title is “Értelmiségképzés és felsőfokú szakemberképzés”.

with a synthetic habitus that fructifies in *executive* and *expert* positions. As he writes, “[t]he remit of our higher education should not be limited to the training of professionals in the narrow sense: *colleges and universities are intellectual training institutions*; they must prepare their students to perform other intellectual functions in addition to certain professional functions.” (*Ibid.*: 544-545.) Huszár’s definition of intellectuals appears particularly narrow (in any case narrower than Bourdieu’s), since it excludes from the intelligentsia those who don’t have a higher-level degree or who do not work as professionals, and even among the latter, it retains only those who are in executive or expert positions. Huszár’s definition is also blurry in that it does not clarify the meaning of the important notions of “spiritual value” and “knowledge”: he does not indicate *what kind* of value he means, nor what this value performs, nor if it is synonymous with “knowledge”, and whether it is unique to intellectual activity.

In parallel with these problematic aspects, Huszár’s approach is distinctive in its stress on the concept of *intellectual function*. As I have shown above, while this notion appears in Sapiro’s article, she is quick to discard it in favor of the concept of intellectual field. In Huszár’s conception, by contrast, the idea of intellectual function plays an important role. As is exemplified by a significant emendation Huszár adds to his definition, he is also more aware of the particularism of the intellectual elite groups (the technocratic elite of a socialist state) he chose as the paradigm for his generic definition intellectual. As he writes: “The claim for public presence, critical vision and self-knowledge is by no means the exclusive property of the intelligentsia. Under the conditions of socialist democratism, these personality traits must develop in all strata of society.” (*Ibid.*: 544.)

If my above analysis of Huszár’s definition is correct, this assertion amounts to saying that the intellectual functions are in fact not the exclusive property of an elite group of professionals (owners of high levels of human capital) but are exercised in society at large by other actors as well. Despite this observation, and similarly to Sapiro, Huszár persists in applying the title “intellectual” *only* to the elite category of professionals he mentions in his definition, while eventually denying it from the other bearers of intellectual functions. The obvious objection – to be expounded in more detail in § 50 below – that Huszár’s palinody raises is that it would be more consistent to say that the exercise of “public presence, critical vision, self-knowledge”, as well as of the other intellectual functions previously mentioned by Huszár, *are* exactly what makes one become an intellectual, *whether or not* one owns high volumes of human capital, and *whether or not* one exercises these functions in a professional context. In other terms, the inconsistency could be eliminated if “intellectual” was defined by (and only by) the fact of being the bearer of intellectual functions.

Interestingly, in a later text – his inaugural speech to his election as a member of the Hungarian Academy of the Sciences in 1983 –, Huszár seems to have made steps in the direction I have just suggested. A possible reason for this shift is that in the time between the two essays (the previous one was written in the early 1970s), Huszár had read György Konrád and Iván Szelényi's provocative classic, *The Intelligentsia on the Road to Class Power* (on whose definition of intellectuals I will draw below in § 50). As a debunking of the class structure and functioning of East European socialist regimes, Konrád and Szelényi's book was seen by the authorities as an act of hostility toward the regime. Abroad, however, it quickly became an essential reference in research on East-European Soviet-type regimes in non-Socialist countries.¹⁰⁹ Huszár's inaugural speech was to a large extent a response to his two former colleagues' challenge to the political and academic establishment, of which Huszár was about to become an eminent member (Huszár 1984: 625-630).¹¹⁰

From a theoretical point of view, I see Huszár's essay – significantly titled “New Questions, Unanswered Dilemmas in the Research on Intellectuals” (1983) – as an interesting negotiation with Konrád and Szelényi's position, which lead Huszár toward a clearer and more open definition of intellectuals, without completely liquidating the confusions stemming from the unresolved tension between the idea of intellectual function and the propensity to identify the technocratic intelligentsia as its paradigmatic (and tendentially unique) holder.

Three major shifts in Huszár's position can be noted. First, recognizing that “different types of knowledge exist”, he self-critically declares: “it is a hiatus in our intellectual research that we did not examine these types of knowledge in the context of intellectual activity, just as we did not analyze the sociological aspects of the internal stratification of the intelligentsia in sufficient depth.” (*Ibid.*: 647-648.) Second, Huszár insists that intellectual role and habitus must be linked to “value criteria” (*ibid.*: 652.) It is likely that by this he understands that the “technical” or “human-capital” aspect of intellectual knowledge is always subordinate to the teleological or “cultural-capital” aspect of the same knowledge (in simpler terms: to be an

¹⁰⁹ Konrád and Szelényi had to pay a high price for their achievement. Both were quickly pushed out of their jobs and were incited to leave the country. Szelényi did emigrate and was stripped off his Hungarian citizenship. He then worked as professor of sociology in England, Australia and the U.S.A. As to Konrád, he chose to remain in Hungary in “inner emigration”. Barred from regular employment for several years, he earned income mainly from translations and honoraria for his novels published abroad.

¹¹⁰ Probably because of their status of *personae non grata* in Hungary, Huszár's speech does not explicitly refer to Konrád and Szelényi.

expert or an executive does not amount to be an intellectual). However, insofar as it concerns the primacy of the function-category and the corresponding rejection of the idea that higher-level professional training or ownership of human capital are necessary conditions for being an intellectual, it is the third shift in his approach that is the most remarkable.

This shift occurs in a passage where Huszár notes that many of the most noted Hungarian intellectuals (writers, artists, filmmakers...) did never receive an academic training (i.e., they were not professionals in any sense). Interestingly, in the earlier essay Huszár had discarded the *same* argument by saying that these cases were exceptional... In this later text, he draws a different conclusion.

“Therefore, I consider the definition of an intelligentsia that delimits the *social group* of intellectuals according to a degree or a job requiring a higher education degree to be acceptable only in a specific context. In socio-statistical and macro-sociological studies, for methodological reasons, these indicators can certainly not be substituted for a long time. At the same time, we cannot abandon the development of a research hypothesis that considers not only the qualification but also the *complexity* of the knowledge required for the work activity, the *qualitative characteristics* of the activity, including its product. I am aware that these characteristics are difficult to measure, but I believe that, if several disciplines are brought together, at least such research can be started.” (*Ibid.*: 653.)

As I have suggested, Huszár’s revision of his former position comes about in the context of his negotiation with Konrád and Szelényi’s book. It seems likely to me that Huszár accepted their proposition of the centrality of the notions of *intellectual knowledge* and *intellectual function* for the definition of intellectuals. This gesture made him possible to argue for the necessity to further historicize and pluralize the notion of the intellectual, to avoid what he sees to be the pitfall of a politically motivated oversimplification of the problem (referring to Konrád and Szelényi’s perceived stance). His argument is that any claim made on behalf of intellectuals by the proponents of the “New Class hypothesis”, and in general by authors drawing on the sociology of domination, must account for the *constitutive internal pluralism of intellectual culture* in the form of concrete empirical studies about the types of knowledge involved in intellectual activities. Whether and what kind of power-aspirations can be ascribed to the intellectuals can be decided only based on such empirical studies.

Whether or not this suffices to discard Konrád and Szelényi’s provocative theses laid out in their book, the idea of coupling the study of the operations of intellectual knowledge with

“the systematic study of the cultural stratification of society” is an interesting theoretical perspective. The goal of such inquiry would be “to distinguish, *within* the very social classes, strata, and thus *within* the intelligentsia itself, those probably rather heterogeneous groups of cultivated who are capable of reflexivity and autonomous judgment.” (*Ibid.*: 654.) Despite the still persisting semantic incongruity of distinguishing the intellectuals *within* the intelligentsia itself, Huszár’s proposition *to understand intelligence as a socially diffuse function that cuts across classes, strata, and other sociological categories*, and in particular the idea that what makes persons become intellectuals is “the extent to which they are capable of sensing and bringing to consciousness their place in life, that is, to the degree to which they experience the perspectives of their society as a whole and can actively attribute meaning to these aspirations”, is of considerable importance in that it opens the road for “the empirical study of intellectual subcultures as they are organized according to different cultural patterns.” (*Ibid.*: 654-655.)

While the originality of Huszár’s sketch of a research program rests on his use of the concepts of intellectual function and intellectual knowledge, the last attempt at a definition of what it means to be an intellectual I will analyze in this paragraph – Gil Eyal and Larissa Buchholz’s important article “From the Sociology of Intellectuals to the Sociology of Interventions” (2010) –, owes its interest to a *pragmatist focus* on the *act of intervention* itself, instead of the “preconditions” that candidates pretending to the title “intellectual” must fulfill, or the factors separating intellectuals from non-intellectuals. As the title of the article suggests, the main point of the paper is to describe and foster the transition from a sociology of *intellectuals* to a sociology of *interventions*. Although the authors do not make this explicit, the expression “sociology of interventions” is an *ellipse*: the complete form would be “sociology of *intellectual* interventions”. The key idea of the proposition is that the “classical sociology of intellectuals” was focused too much on a certain “social type” (a public character) and its political allegiances (or the lack thereof), whereas the “new” (or “21st century”) sociology of intellectuals is interested in the “movement by which knowledge and expertise are mobilized to inform a value-laden intervention in the public sphere.” (Eyal–Buchholz 2010: 117, 119-210.)

In my examination of Eyal and Buchholz’s article, my interest centers on their key claim that the sociology of intellectuals should radically reconsider its very *object* of analysis: instead of a certain social group (the highly educated, the professionals, etc.), typical social roles or characters (writers, scientists, teachers, ideologues, etc.), with their dilemmas and problems (allegiances, heteronomy, etc.), the term “intellectual” should rather stand “for the *capacity to make a public intervention*, a capacity to which many different actors lay claim.” (*Ibid.*: 120,

italics added.) The most valuable features of this proposition by Eyal and Buchholz are its reformulation of the problem of intelligence in the frame of the *sociology of action*, and a corresponding, implicitly *pragmatist understanding of intellectual knowledge as “capacity for action”*. Therefore, Eyal and Buchholz’s proposition entails that the adjective “intellectual” should pertain in the first place to *knowledge*, and only secondarily, and *by derivation*, to certain social categories, types, roles, or characters who are the “carriers” of such knowledge. *Intelligence* is thereby redefined as *a kind of knowledge making possible a qualitatively specific act called “intervention”*.

Before going deeper into the analysis of Eyal and Buchholz’s proposals, I would like first to elaborate the pragmatist concept of knowledge involved here. Going back to Bacon’s widely cited formula, “*Scientia est potentia*”, the sociologists Marian T. Adolf and Nico Stehr define knowledge as “*capacity to act and as model for reality*”, making possible for humans to “‘set something in motion’ or prevent something from occurring”, thereby “creat[ing], sustain[ing] and chang[ing] existential conditions” (Adolf–Stehr 2017: 18). According to Adolf and Stehr, the idea of “knowledge as a capacity to act does not imply that knowledge is immediately performative” since the “actors independently need power to convert a capacity *for* into a practice of social action.” (*Ibid.*: 20.) In other terms, *knowledge* is not actual but *potential power*, needing a corresponding “ability to exercise or implement power.” (*Ibid.*: 21.)

The idea that “[k]nowledge enables an actor, in conjunction with control over the contingent circumstances of action, to set something in motion and to (re-)structure reality” (*ibid.*: 28) entails the presence of a *historically, socially, and politically situated actor-knower*. For this reason, “[k]nowledge involves appropriation and transaction rather than mere consumption or assimilation. It demands that something be done within a context that is relevant beyond being the situation within which the activity happens to take place.” (*Ibid.*: 29.) In other terms, the appropriation of knowledge necessarily involves *transcontextuality*. Furthermore, drawing on Mannheim’s notion of *conduct* introduced in *Ideology and Utopia* (Mannheim 1963: 112-117; see also Walsh 2017), Adolf and Stehr consider “the contexts in which knowledge plays a role, as restricted to spheres of social life that have not been completely routinized and regulated”, that is to say, to circumstances under which action based on knowledge “does not follow purely stereotypical patterns or is strictly regulated in some other fashion.” (Adolf–Stehr 2017: 32.) To refer to the Mannheimian notions introduced in the previous chapter, patterns of action characterized by *functional rationality* do not necessitate mobilization of knowledge in the sense employed here: it merely demands self-adjustment and

coordination (the capacity to follow and adapt to a rule). *Substantial rationality*, by contrast, is coterminous with knowledge appropriation and generation.

It is worth to be added that Adolf and Stehr distinguish from this notion of knowledge that of *information*. The latter differs from the former in that information is thoroughly *separable from any particular context*, and that it is thereby apt to orient functionally rational action. “Information is often immediately productive (...) and contrary to knowledge as a capacity for action, there is no need to be the master over the conditions of its implementation. (...) Information travels and is transmitted with fewer context-sensitive restrictions. Information is detachable; it can be detached from meaning. (...) Information is not as situated as knowledge.” (*Ibid.*: 29.) Although this is not explicitly stated by Adolf and Stehr, it seems clear that this idea of information is close to Mannheim’s ideal-type of “communicative knowledge”, in that it is easily universalizable, is independent of the context and the personal qualities of the actors who perform it and is correspondingly easy to disseminate – contrary to “conjunctive knowledge”, which, as stated above, requires a more fastidious process of transmission, reception and integration within and across contextual frontiers – that is to say, a process of *situated learning*.

One reason for which these specifications needed to be made is that Eyal and Buchholz do not themselves make explicit the connection between their definition of intellectuals and the pragmatist view of the relationship between thought and action. In other terms, they define “intelligence” as capacity for action *without noticing that this theoretical gesture amounts to defining intelligence in terms of knowledge* (understood in a pragmatist key). This is unfortunate – and somewhat paradoxical – because their gesture thereby instantly obliterates what it brings to light: the notion of intellectual knowledge and its centrality for the sociology of the intellectuals. A similar problem arises because Eyal and Buchholz do not define “intervention” either, despite the importance of this notion for their conception. This contributes to them missing the *diversity* of the idea of “knowledge”. Indeed, although from a pragmatist point of view *all* knowledge is capacity for action, as Adolf and Stehr remind, sociology of action considers *several types of action*, to which accordingly *several types of “knowledge”* may be correlated. Thereby, and more pointedly, what Eyal and Buchholz miss is that “intellectual intervention” is a *specific kind of action* that presumably presupposes a *specific form of knowledge* corresponding to it.

To proceed further, it is thus necessary to remedy this shortfall and give a working definition of the ideas of “intervention” and “intellectual intervention”. In the most general sense, I will understand by “intervention” any action taken to bring about a change in a given

context. However, presuming that there exist different types of action-contexts, it is legitimate to postulate different kinds of intervention corresponding to them. Two kinds of intervention I wish to consider here are “political” and “intellectual” intervention. Their significant common point is that they both aim at bringing about a change in the *behavior, the attitude, or the conceptions* actors have in a given context. In this respect, both types of intervention involve the *exercise of authority* and the establishment of *power relations*: their purpose is to *make other actors act in ways required by the intervener* (the holder of authority). Thus, intervention is, in the most general sense, an action that bears on a given situation by occasioning a *change in attitude to and understanding of* that situation by the actors involved in it, ideally leading them to *act according to* the dispositionally integrated *normative content* of the intervention.

What distinguishes the two kinds of intervention is that whereas political intervention provides *rules* and targets directly the *assent or dissent* given by intended actors in a given context (a sociopolitical order and its institutions: the State, markets, political parties, churches, schools, associations, etc.), intellectual intervention aims more at creating a *disposition to act* in a *certain way* in the face of these same realities by providing *models* and *reasons* for action. In the first case, the stake is *functional conformity* of an actor’s acts with the normative structure of a given order; in the second, the emphasis lays on arousing and exercising an actor’s *capacity to autonomously determine the right understanding of an action-context and the attitude to adopt toward its normative structures* (which does not exclude that a specific understanding and attitude be suggested or promoted by the intervention). Taking up Mannheim’s concept introduced in the previous chapter, I submit that *the goal of intellectual intervention is to make people act in a substantially rational way*. To be more precise, intellectual intervention is *capacitation* to act in a substantially rational way. Indeed, that intellectual intervention implies the capacity to act in a substantially rational way means that the actors addressed in and by the intervention do not only *realize* concrete actions required by the intervener but do so by *themselves becoming autonomous sources of intelligent action*, thereby not only enacting but also assimilating, reproducing, and spreading further its principles.

Since intellectual intervention can be defined as the capacitation to act in a substantially rational way, the adjective “intellectual” must itself denote the *type of knowledge capable of bringing about such substantially rational acts*. To define who and what intellectuals are, it is therefore necessary to further articulate the concept of intellectual knowledge. As I hinted at it above, this is the step that Eyal and Buchholz fail to take, making their theoretical model ambiguous to some extent. First, Eyal and Buchholz tend to conflate the idea of intellectual intervention with that of *expertise*, leading them to promote an idea of intellectual knowledge

as *instrumental* or *communicative* knowledge (or, using Adolf and Stehr's term, as an "information base"). Second, consistent with the prior observation, Eyal and Buchholz seem to consider that the knowledge materializing in intellectual interventions *preexists* the act of intervention, in a place *outside the public sphere*, which means also: *detached from the context of intervention*.¹¹¹ Third, this prior feature of their approach in turn pushes Eyal and Buchholz toward a conception of intervention that I call "transubstantiation", or the mysterious *conversion* of technical-instrumental (functionally rational) knowledge (an "information base"), by definition unfit to provide broader orientation for autonomous collective action, into a kind of knowledge fostering substantial rationality.

To unpack these objections, I will start by elaborating what the problem with the identification of expertise with intellectual knowledge is. In general, an "expert" can be defined as a person (or a community) recognized by a certain public to have achieved an advanced skill, technique, or knowledge in a particular field of activity, and who, for this reason, is credited with the capacity to give good advice regarding decisions that involve their specific domain. The *particularity* or *specialism* of expert knowledge is one of its main legitimizing factors in the eyes of the public who appeals to them. The expert is the one who excels in *one* definite domain – and their pledge of reliability in the eyes of the public is predicated precisely on the assumption that they don't claim expertise in other domains (that is to say, they are not "generalists"). Concomitantly, the notion of expertise carries with it the connotation of *neutrality*, often associated with the idea of "scientific ethos" understood as value-neutral and objective research conducted for its own sake with empirically testable methods. As Sapiro puts it, expertise often displays neutrality "as a sign of scientificity, contrary to ideology, suspected of subjugating knowledge to political ends." (Sapiro 2009: 27.) Now, if it is true that, according to Eyal and Buchholz's own definition, "intellectual" should be understood as the adjective denoting "the movement by which knowledge and expertise are mobilized to inform a *value-laden* intervention in the public sphere" (Eyal–Buchholz 2010: 117, italics added), and insofar as the experts' credibility depends on their specialism and neutrality, it is hard to see how they can conduct a *value-laden* intervention in the public sphere and legitimately judge broader societal questions which fall outside their respective spheres of jurisdiction, and often cut across several disciplines and specialties.

¹¹¹ For example: "Here the focus is directed at the different ways in which knowledge and expertise can be *inserted* into the public sphere and with what sorts of effects." (Eyal–Buchholz 2010: 120, italics added.) "How is knowledge *inserted* in the public sphere and with what effects?" (*Ibid.*: 129-130, italics added.)

These issues are reverberated in an interesting fashion in Eyal and Buchholz's discussion of two tendencies which complement the studies on expertise: governmentality studies and the literature on epistemic communities. Governmentality studies are described as the "mirror image" of the studies of expertise, since both focus on "public authorities seeking to equip themselves with a truthproducing practice"; the two also show a "common interest in the role that knowledge plays in public affairs." (*Ibid.*: 128.) As to the literature on epistemic communities, it "highlight[s] multiplicity within the intervening actor itself, which is conceptualized as an agency constituted, constructed, and assembled in and through the very movement of intervention." An "epistemic community" embodies such an agency. It is defined as a

"(...) network of *professionals* with recognized *expertise* and competence in a *particular domain* and an authoritative claim to *policy-relevant knowledge* within that domain or issue area. It is distinct, however, from disciplines and professions because it is relatively small and because its members share principled beliefs and values. Substantively, this literature can be seen as a successor to the classical sociology of intellectuals because, like classical intellectuals, epistemic communities are defined by the combination of truth claims with a public moral stance and because the concept is meant to show how the movement from ideas to public intervention may be accomplished (...)." (*Ibid.*: 128, italics added.)

Eyal and Buchholz's proposition that *the intellectual* as the intervening actor *does not preexist to the intervention but emerges only in and through it* is very innovative and fruitful. It makes possible to understand intellectual intervention as a *process of subjectivation* occurring through a cooperation of socially heterogeneous actors within a given action-context. The question remains, however, why Eyal and Buchholz give such a restrictive idea of epistemic communities as they do in the above excerpt. Why can only "professionals" with "recognized expertise", "in a particular domain", and with "policy-relevant knowledge", be part of them? Why is the point of view adopted necessarily that of "public authorities" and why should epistemic communities restrict their action to "technical matters" (*ibid.*: 129, 131)? Why, for instance, is the notion of epistemic communities not applied to non-expert human groups subjected to forms of oppression trying to produce context-congruent, value-laden, synthetic diagnoses of their situation in view of emancipatory activism, like in the case of different forms of participatory action research or community-based research (PAR and CBR)?

Another objection I would make is that while this conception of epistemic communities makes it possible to think the *agent* (as a “collective intellectual”) as an emergent phenomenon whose agency is constituted in and through the movement of intervention itself, the same hypothesis is not formulated for the *knowledge* actualized in the intervention. This seems congruent with Eyal and Buchholz’s previously noted propensity to conceive “intellectual knowledge” as not related in an organic way to the context of intervention, on the model of *technical-instrumental* or *communicative* knowledge produced *outside the public sphere* (presumably in elite institutions of research and higher learning), *preexisting* the process of subjectivation taking place in and through the intervention, and waiting to be *transubstantiated* into a politically relevant public act through the rather mysterious activity of the intellectual-become expert. Because of this theoretical limitation, and despite the relative “pluralization” and “democratization” of the potential candidates to the title of the intellectual that Eyal and Buchholz take from Bourdieu’s and Foucault’s respective theorizations,¹¹² the capacity for intellectual intervention remains assigned to those only who can claim ownership of high volumes of human capital. The monopoly of these social actors over intellectual knowledge thus remains an unquestioned assumption of the “21st century sociology of interventions”, as much as it has been of the other authors surveyed in this paragraph.

§ 50. Intellectual knowledge and the premises of a democratic sociology of intelligence

After completing this (non-exhaustive) critical panorama of some influential definitions of intellectuals and their problems, it is now time to move on to the task of formulating an alternative proposal. I wish to underline that although I found criticable aspects in the

¹¹² Eyal and Buchholz are explicit that their proposition is based on a reading of Bourdieu’s (and Foucault’s) conception of intellectuals, seen as the result of the *generalization* of the archetypal model of the “universalist critical intellectual” as it rose to self-consciousness during the Dreyfus Affair. According to their account, it was through to the *multiplication* and *depersonalization* of the relevant intellectual actors carried out by field-theory that it became possible to convert the “classical prototype of the intellectual”, which “referred to a specific formatting of political agency: the capacity to use abstract knowledge for a critical universalistic mode of public engagement and intervention”, into Foucault’s famous formula according to which “the intellectual is simply the person who uses his knowledge, his competence and his relation to truth in the field of political struggles.” (Eyal–Buchholz 2010: 120, 119.)

previously surveyed definitions of intellectuals, they contain a great deal of creative and impactful ideas which I wish to integrate in my own proposal. My scheme aims at a synthesis of these positive elements, while going against the tendentially elitist understanding of intellectual life I have identified as the common denominator of the above-surveyed approaches to the sociology of intellectuals. In a recent article, Lambros Fatsis formulated this problem in a very apt way:

“the current interpretive framework, with which social theorists approach intellectual life, reads like a rule book of exclusions which treats the life of the mind as an elite endeavour with prohibitive requirements for entry. For all its virtues and good intentions, such an understanding of intellectual life as beholden to a specific type of activity (thinking), an extraordinary kind of person (the intellectual), and a particular habitat (the world of letters), reflects a strikingly limited conception of what intellectual life is, may, or can be, a restricted sense of where intellectual life can be found, or made, and a puzzlingly stereotyped shortlist of potential candidates for the role.” (Fatsis 2016: 2.)

Quite in keeping with Bauman’s spirit, Fatsis points out that a description of intellectuals as specialists and lovers of contemplative abstract thought, as *virtuosi* of cultivated language inhabiting the “world apart” of letters (to use Bourdieu’s expression), institutionally anchored in the acropolises of higher knowledge and education – universities and research centers –, and identifiable by their specific roles – teacher, writer, media figure, artist, etc. –, is in large part a self-description of the definers themselves. Concomittantly, Fatsis suggests that, as a rule, the standard definitions of intelligence provide a fairly narrow conceptual mesh woven in a way to exclude those undesirable actors who are unassimilable to a certain type of man of letters and culture (to which the definers themselves belong).

As I have shown above, putting forward the model of the “committed intellectual”, conceived on the example of the *Dreyfussard* intellectuals, cushions the elitist edge of this tendency, but does not actually displace it. Indeed, in the *Dreyfussard* model, the intellectual is still apprehended as “a species apart, rising above ordinary citizens who ostensibly lack the ability, capacity, skills, and wherewithal to think, act, or debate as intellectuals (...)” (*ibid.*: 11). The reason is that in this approach commitment itself is conceived as the actualization of a potentiality inherent in the intellectual defined essentially by the fact of occupying certain roles, certain positions, for which the mastery of a type and a certain level of knowledge, skills, etc., is necessary. The “committed intellectual” turns out to be a subtype of the “intellectual-in-itself”

and therefore does not counteract an elitist vision of intelligence offering the “archetypal image of the intellectual as a figure whose identity, role, place, mode, and manner of speaking are by definition at a certain social distance from the public sphere she is called upon to address.” (*Ibid.*: 9.)

To this elitist approach, Fatsis counterposes an alternative view, to which my own proposal can be seen as a contribution. This alternative view “looks for the intellectual within us all by interpreting intellectual life as a process which is not the exclusive domain of a few, but a common attribute of the many, which engages not just the brain but the whole human mind.” (*Ibid.*: 10.) Conversely, this model “urges an understanding of intellectual life primarily as a matter of public participation, rather than intellectual pedigree”, making possible to appreciate “types of intellectuals who are not recognized as such”, as well as “forms of intellectual expression and creativity that are not afforded serious, scholarly attention due to deep-seated intellectual and cultural biases of who can be an intellectual, what constitutes intellectual life, and where such activity might take place.” (*Ibid.*)

Although I agree with Fatsis’ criticism of the standard conceptions of intelligence, the *democratization of the concept* of intellectual and the program of *broadening the pool* of potential candidates to the title he suggests are insufficient if they are not coupled with a *radical redefinition of intelligence*. Although very welcome in itself, the inclusion among the candidates for the title of intellectual of “West African griots (singer-storytellers), West Indian calypsonians, dancehall artists, sound system operators, DJs, and rasta revolutionaries, (...) not to mention rappers, jazz musicians, dancers, artists, photographers, as well as community organizers, craftsmen, or even perhaps programmers as politicians of the online commons, urban planners, flâneurs, pedagogues or inventors and industrial scientists” (*ibid.*: 11), does not yet call into question the *conceptual framework* that underlies the elitism and one-sidedness of the standard definitions of intellectuals.

To clarify my point, I shall evoke the distinction, widely in use in debates over cultural policy in Belgium, between *democratization of culture* and *cultural democracy* (see Romainville 2014). While the first aims at the organization of a more equal access to the reception of high culture, understood as a common good unequally distributed in society, the second claims access to the *production processes* of culture by subordinate groups, as well as a requirement for recognition of their productions *as* culture. In other words, where the movement for the *democratization of culture* operates – despite its good intentions and its historical successes which it is important to recognize – with the elitist conception of “high culture” conceived as universal (glossing over its ties with the oppression of subordinate groups

by the dominant classes), and with the presupposition of the fundamental passivity and inability of the subordinate classes to become producer of universally valid cultural achievements themselves, *cultural democracy* intends to redefine the very concept of culture of which “high culture” is only one particular manifestation. Claiming a cultural democracy is not limited to demanding the possibility of becoming the passive receptacle of the dominant culture, or to vindicating a modest place on the periphery of the elite (which is a risk inherent in Fatsis’ proposition) but amounts to questioning the very foundations of the hierarchy of cultural production. The position I wish to develop here is to be situated in the wake of this second conception of cultural democracy. To carry out such a project, it is indeed necessary to include subordinate cultural producers, as Fatsis suggests, however not without radically redefining the concept of intellectual itself by taking a different path from that taken by standard definitions (which Fatsis fails to do). Therefore, the thesis that I wish to put forth is that the critique of the elitism inherent in the mainstream approaches to the sociology of intellectuals can be successful only if it is coupled with the reconstruction of the very procedure through which this field gains its fundamental concepts.

To carry this through, I suggest starting from a suggestion of John Peter Nettl according to which the positivistically inclined sociology of intellectuals hinders a truly scientific treatment of the intellectual question by focusing from the outset on what seems “observable” in this domain: the roles and institutional ties of intellectuals, their situation in the social structure, the types of attitudes they have toward social and political life, the types of intellectual personality, etc. (Nettl 1969: 55, 62.) Nettl’s criticism is based on the insight that, in taking these “data” as a point of departure, the sociological theories of intelligence are based, in fact, on prescientific, ideological and mostly implicit conceptions of intelligence. These theories thus *hypostatize a factual state* reflecting *current* social arrangements and power relationships, as well as unquestioned prejudices which are relative to the latter, and which, moreover, are put into circulation by those – the academic intellectuals, especially the sociologists of intellectuals – who have a primary, non-scientific interest in their acceptance and diffusion (this of course echoes Bauman’s above-discussed criticisms of the strangely irreflexive character of intellectual self-definitions). In this context, a given role, type of personality, etc., will be recognized by the sociologist as being “intellectual” simply because it is generally recognized as such. The risk incurred by a sociology of intellectuals starting from roles and other seemingly “positive data” concerning the intelligentsia is to limit itself to operating the articulation in a sociological language – that is to say: legitimized by a supposed expertise and social prestige – of a certain number of sociopolitical prejudices corresponding to the image that the monopoly

holders of the legitimate definition of what it means to be an intellectual want society to have of intellectuals.

The significance of Nettl's counterproposal lies in suggesting to replace this approach based on types of men, roles, and institutions with one established on the postulate of the existence of a *specifically intellectual type of ideas*.

"The problem of definition cannot in my view begin with roles or social structure or even, for that matter, with men at all, but can get off the ground only by looking first at ideas as such. It must be defined from inside out, *from* certain types of ideas *toward* certain categories of idea-articulators; only then can the related variable of institutionalization be added. Thus the problem of institutional location and significance depends, it seems to me, primarily on types of ideas rather than types of people. (...). The usual order of priorities is thus reversed; instead of starting with certain types of men and differentiating them according to social role and context, I start with the assumption that types of ideas can be differentially classified and that it is this differentiation that ultimately governs roles and social contexts." (*Ibid.*: 55, 62.)

Nettl's gesture implies that the theory of intellectuals cannot start at the level of the public and private life of "men of letters", but at the more subterranean level of the *social function* of intelligence, a function which condenses in the first place not in roles, professions, institutions, types of personality, etc., but in *a specific kind of ideas*: what I have called intellectual knowledge. The key to the problem of the intelligentsia is thus to be found in the specifically intellectual ideas and operations of which intellectuals are only the "carriers" or the "functionaries". The point of departure of theory must be the *correlation between intellectual knowledge and intellectual function*, in relation to which alone the empirical questions of roles, types, institutions, networks, and intellectual history can be meaningfully formulated.

I have previously provided elements to distinguish intellectual knowledge from other forms of knowledge. However, I have not yet offered a thematic analysis of this notion, nor specified its links to the concept of intellectual function as the other fundamental category of the sociology of intellectuals. To perform this task, I will now draw on Konrád and Szelényi's classic *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power* (1979), the book I referred to when examining Tibor Huszár's definition of intellectuals in the previous paragraph. In the present context, the chief interest of Konrád and Szelényi's work is that it is among the rare attempts that are in keeping with Nettl's principle that the definition of intellectuals must start from

specifically intellectual ideas, and from there progress toward more concrete, empirically specifiable problematics.

Having rejected the „descriptive, statistical concept of the intelligentsia, which treats as an intellectual anyone having a defined level of knowledge and engaged in one of a number of defined occupations” (Konrád–Szelényi 1979: 24), Konrád and Szelényi set off their attempt at an alternative definition by submitting that

“[i]ntellectual knowledge does not (...) differ from the knowledge used in other skilled activities in its quantity or complexity so much as in its *character* or *quality* (by which we do not mean to imply any superior valuation). Thus intellectual knowledge is not knowledge of a higher order; its qualitative distinctiveness consists only in the fact that it is *concerned with the values* which a society accepts as part of its culture. That in turn means that society deems those *values* pertinent for *orienting and regulating the behavior of its members*. Orientation: The intellectual works with alternative values while only referring to them in passing, thus working out the techniques for choosing among different values. Regulation: In working with nonalternative values the intellectual prescribes them, thus laying down a given technique for a given value. Thus the element of *telos* is still present in the activity of intellectuals even if we still regard *techné* as the most valuable element in intellectual knowledge. (...) Society – or at least the common consensus of intellectuals – declares only those forms of knowledge to be valuable which bear some relevance to the *concepts that regulate the spontaneous teleology of society*. Such forms of knowledge must at the very least be capable of being brought into relationship with such questions as: What is good? What is bad? How are we to act? (...) [However,] [k]nowledge which is not objectified in material goods and services but is meant solely to influence others is still not, in itself, intellectual knowledge; it becomes so only when it acquires *cross-contextual significance*. By cross-contextual significance we mean that intellectual knowledge offers *models* which are applicable in different contexts; their validity transcends the individual situation. (...) Intellectuals, then, are the *monopolistic proprietors* of knowledge which society accepts as having cross-contextual validity and which it uses to orient its members.” (*Ibid.*: 30-32, italics added.)

Although they do not make it entirely explicit, in a way similar to Nettl, Konrád and Szelényi’s distinguish intellectual knowledge from practical or technical knowledge based on whether it is the technical know-how aspect (*techné*) prevails over the teleological or axiological dimension of a given body of knowledge or the other way around (*telos*) (this is also the meaning of the dichotomies of practical vs. symbolic mastery and human vs. cultural capital in Martin and Szelényi’s article analyzed in the previous paragraph). According to

Konrád and Szelényi, intellectual knowledge shows a *predominance of the teleological or axiological dimension*: it is decisively linked to processes of *valuation*. From a sociological perspective, “values” can be seen as the fulfilment of an *objective social function*: that of “regulat[ing] the spontaneous teleology of society”, mainly through two kinds of activities, that of “orientation” (Bauman would say “interpretation”) and “regulation” understood in a stricter sense (Bauman would say “legislation”). This can be explained further by referring to what Mannheim writes about the same issue in *Diagnosis of our Time* (Mannheim 1943: 16), where he characterizes “values” as objective norms conveying a “do this rather than that” type of missive that society sets up “to serve as traffic lights in the regulation of human behavior and conduct. The main function of these objective norms is to make members of a society act and behave in a way which somehow fit into the pattern of an existing order.” (Mannheim 1943: 16.¹¹³)

However, intellectual knowledge can fulfill this teleological/orientative/regulatory function only based on its *transcontextual* or *cross-contextual* character. This is an aspect that Mannheim too emphasizes in his long essay on “The Problem of the Intelligentsia”, where he starts his “quest for an appropriate concept of the intellectual” by stating that what distinguishes intellectuals from non-intellectuals is the former’s “involvement in a situation which concerns us all without noticeably affecting everyone”, an involvement predicated upon the access to a specific form of knowledge (Mannheim 2003b: 115). As he writes:

“[e]very person’s cognitive horizon covers at least the area within which he must act and acquire a body of operational knowledge. His grasp of the human world may well extend beyond this radius of action, but no vocation and no position in society requires an awareness of the concerns of all men. It is the educated who keep *en rapport* with the state of our affairs, and not only theirs, and it is in this sense that they are involved in a situation which concerns us all.” (*Ibid.*: 115-116.)

The last feature of Konrád and Szelényi’s definition of intellectuals I wish to discuss is the idea that the intellectuals are the “monopolistic proprietors” of intellectual knowledge. To be more precise, what I would like to investigate is whether specialization in and monopolization of intellectual knowledge are an *integral part of the definition* of intellectuals

¹¹³ Or, for that matter, which transcends said order, for instance in reform-oriented or outright revolutionary intellectual activity (see Mannheim’s essay on “Utopian consciousness” in *Ideology and Utopia*).

or if these are *secondary specifications* that should not unduly restrict the primary definition of intellectuals. The first thing to note is that this is the point in Konrád and Szelényi's definition where the crucial issue of the relationship between *intellectual knowledge* and *political power* appears. This topic has a particular importance for the authors insofar as the thesis put forth in their book is that, in the Soviet-type regimes of Eastern Europe in the second part of the 20th century, the intellectuals were on the verge of constituting themselves as the *dominant class*. Although the thesis itself has been confuted by subsequent historical events, the question of the position of intellectual groups within the social and political order and their aspirations to power and domination has justifiably remained a constant point of interrogation in the sociology of intellectuals since that time. I also believe that, regardless of the historical accuracy of their claims, Konrád and Szelényi have good reasons for articulating the question of intellectual power around the issue of monopolization of intellectual knowledge. Their thesis regarding the matter is the following.

“The essence of the intelligentsia's social function does not lie in the fact that knowledge of a certain complexity guarantees power and reward in certain positions; rather, the intelligentsia seeks to obtain power and reward for itself by exploiting its relative monopoly of complex knowledge as means of achieving those goals. (...) Thus it is not merely knowledge which makes someone an intellectual, but the fact that he has no other title to his status except for his knowledge. And the range of positions which can be held on the basis of knowledge alone varies from society to society and from age to age. (...) If then we want to know what intellectual status is in a given society we must look for that point in its structure at which society accords material rewards and authority over others solely on the grounds that those having such status are monopolistic proprietors of the kind of knowledge described above.” (*Ibid.*: 28-29, 32.)

Konrád and Szelényi's point is that in all known societies of a certain complexity, there exist groups of privileged social standing who owe their social status and power to a social consensus recognizing them as being preeminent holders of intellectual knowledge (in the sense defined above). The socially outstanding position and the outlook of these groups (and the individuals belonging to them) show a great degree of variability according to historical circumstances and social structure. Following a commonly accepted historical typology, Konrád and Szelényi submit that the dominant group of intellectuals in the European Middle Ages was the catholic clergy, organized as a compact *caste* or *estate*. The advent of Modern times, and especially the rise of capitalism and market society, saw the ascent of a *stratum* of

free intellectuals, selling their skills to the highest bidder, or acting as the “organic intellectuals” of different classes. Finally, according to Konrád and Szelényi’s version of the “New Class hypothesis”, under the conditions of “rational redistribution” (Soviet-type regimes), the intellectuals constitute themselves as a dominant *class* (Konrád–Szelényi 1979: 63-66; see also Mannheim 2003b: 123-142). This typology is both diachronic and synchronic: “in every age the intelligentsia is differentiated relative to these three structural positions, even though the character of differentiation is determined by the intelligentsia’s basic situation in each age.” (Konrád–Szelényi 1979: 65.)

From the point of view of the problem discussed here, the most decisive insight of these developments of Konrád and Szelényi is the idea that “[i]ntellectuals are defined as such by the social structure.” (*Ibid.*: 33.) The authors acknowledge that the wielders of political power play a non-negligible role in providing material rewards and authority to monopolistic proprietors of intellectual knowledge, but their point is that the *emergence* of intellectual groups at certain nodes of social life is nevertheless a *sui generis* phenomenon obeying to an objective logic that is distinct and separate from that presiding over political intervention into cultural life. As they put it,

“whether the powers that be in society like it or not *there objectively exist in the social structure functions whose executants are objectively intellectuals*, and if they cannot be rewarded for their activities then they have to be punished for them. A court which sentenced a writer to prison because of the contents of his manuscript would seek in vain to deprive him of the name of writer as well, for the sentence itself defines him as a writer. If his work had not been an intellectual product – cross-contextual, having general reference, possessing an orientational value – he would not have been convicted for it in the first place.” (*Ibid.*, italics added.)

While I concur with Konrád and Szelényi’s main point that it is the social structure that defines intellectuals, I believe something is missing from their account. Indeed, they seem to calculate only with the existence of intellectuals *already recognized as such* by the powers-to-be and society at large and do not perceive the phenomenon of the *invisibilization of minority groups*, and more importantly, the *depotentialization of intellectual potentialities* present in society. To be more precise, what Konrád and Szelényi do not take into account is that a system of cultural oppression can operate otherwise than by sanctioning dissidents and rewarding the “faithful” (or the conformists and the opportunists) – namely by making minority intellectual initiatives invisible and more generally by hindering forms of cultural production that can put

the oppressed on the path of emancipation through the exercise of the intellectual function (cp. the notion of cultural democracy expounded above). Thereby, Konrád and Szelényi overlook that the dominant conceptions of intelligence are themselves the products of dominant intellectual groups, which tend to ignore the existence and output of subaltern groups and forget that the evidence and the content of their own conceptions can be contested from currently minority or subordinate points of view (cp. Rancière 1998: 84-95).

Nevertheless, the joint observations of the two sociologists that the monopoly on intellectual function is historically relative and that it is the social structure which situates and defines intellectuals as intellectuals *do expressly allow* for the idea of an existing yet unrecognized intellectual activity, an *unrealized intellectual potentiality*, repressed or prevented in its development by the power-relations in place. Indeed, despite its generic character, the term “intellectual function” does not refer to a homogeneous set of operations which would provide a univocal orientation to the destiny of society as a whole. On the contrary, its exercise is one of the privileged areas where divisions and social hierarchies operate and consolidate, where the various antagonistic groups try to impose their values, their peculiar ways of experiencing socio-historical life, as legitimate and potentially hegemonic forms of being-in-the-world (cp. Mannheim 1971c: 228-229). In light of these considerations, the theses of Konrád and Szelényi must be modified on two points.

First point: the *de facto* exercise of the intellectual function is not only a necessary, but also a *sufficient* criterion for obtaining the status of intellectual, whereas the criterion of monopoly describes only a historical situation concerning specific groups of intellectuals, not the essence of intellectual activity as such. This is not to deny the fact and the importance of situations of monopolization of the intellectual function. I only wish to say that as much as there have always been dominant intellectual groups, there have also always been groups of intellectuals who did not belong to them, and yet who were intellectuals in the fullest sense of the term (insofar as they were bearers of intellectual functions and producers of intellectual knowledge). The logical consequence is that *it is the exercise of the intellectual function, and that alone, that should serve as the criterion of distinction between intellectuals and non-intellectuals*. More pointedly: any individual, collective, practice, collaborative process, etc. – be they borne by writers, artists, philosophers, or by activists of social or political causes, executives of trade unions or associations, by social movements understood as collective intellectuals, etc. – exercising an intellectual function deserves the adjective “intellectual”. Like achieving and retaining a monopolistic position, getting recognition as intellectuals is also a contingent fact which depends on the success or failure of a given group to impose on society,

through the very exercise of the intellectual function, the recognition that it indeed performs such a function (cp. again Rancière 1998: 84-95).

Second point: what the social structure locates and defines above all is not so much *who* is recognized as intellectual, but rather *where the potential intellectuals are located* – in other terms: *the areas or sites of emergence of intelligence*, understood as *capacity for intellectual intervention*. Drawing on Tibor Huszár's proposition mentioned above, the sociology of intellectuals' most general purpose should thus be *to identify and empirically study the ways in which heterogeneous groups of intellectual subcultures and patterns emerge and develop within distinct social groups in concrete historical conjunctures*, whether these groups belong to established elites or arise from subaltern strata and classes.

I believe that these emendations redirect the attention to the essential feature of the intellectual phenomenon: the exercise of the intellectual function *through the enactment of intellectual knowledge*. For a research-program grounded on these premises, the prime tasks are *to determine whether intellectual knowledge is present in a given conjuncture*, and if this is the case, *to analyze the forms and ways in which it arises and manifests itself*. Although the different intellectual groups can be expected to have widely different ways to develop their own forms of intellectual knowledge, I submit that, besides the more general aspects already identified above while discussing Konrád and Szelényi's definition, this knowledge has further *invariable structural features* that a research-program of the kind envisioned here must take into account. In the remaining paragraphs of this chapter, I would like to enrich the concept of intellectual knowledge by circumscribing some of these features.

§ 51. Intellectual knowledge: propositions for new directions in research

To further explore and elaborate the notion of intellectual knowledge, I will draw again on Mannheim's fundamental conceptual dichotomy of conjunctive and communicative knowledge, to which I have dedicated paragraphs in Chapter 3 and which I have since used to explore different facets of the phenomenon of intelligence. However, I have not yet made explicit the connection between these notions and the concept of intellectual knowledge. This connection can be stated by saying that the concept of intellectual knowledge as the basic category of the sociology of intelligence can be derived from Mannheim's concept of conjunctive knowledge. To be more precise, my claim is that *intellectual knowledge is a specific form of conjunctive knowledge*.

In support of this proposition, I will first recall some results of my analyses in Chapter 3. Mannheim's essay "A sociological theory of culture and its knowability" is an elaboration of the notion of "existentially connected thinking" ("*mit der Existenz verbundenes Denken*", later termed "*seinsverbundenes Denken*"), employed synonymously with the concept of conjunctive knowledge. The latter is seen as a fundamental type of knowledge and stands in a dichotomous relationship with another type: communicative knowledge. Mannheim sees conjunctive knowledge as fundamental for the human and social sciences ("*Geisteswissenschaften*"), whereas communicative knowledge, although also present in the human sciences, is constitutive especially of the natural (as well as the formal) sciences. The first part of Mannheim's essay is a historical and sociological interpretation of the genesis of the division of the modern sciences in these two fundamental categories. In contrast, the second part is a systematic *conceptual genesis* (a "genealogy of meaning") – implicitly complemented, however, at a decisive point, with historical considerations – of the dichotomous notions of conjunctive and communicative thinking, with a special attention given to the first term.

A major point of contrast between conjunctive and communicative knowledge is that the latter – provided that the material and institutional conditions are given – develops in an entirely *immanent* fashion (according to its own inner logic), while the development of conjunctive knowledge, as the fruit of existentially connected thinking, is *inseparable from the development of the community in which it arises* in the first place. The history of conjunctive thought is thus always at the same time social history, i.e., the history of the human community to which this knowledge is correlated in an essential fashion. The second, systematic part of Mannheim's essay provides a conceptual genesis of this correlation and elaborates what I would call – using a term of W. Dilthey, on whose late work Mannheim draws heavily in this text – the *edification* ("*Aufbau*") of conjunctive knowledge, from its elementary states to the most complex, developed and sophisticated ones. Chapter 3 of this dissertation has shown the different steps of this process of edification, which culminates in the last section of Mannheim's essay in the conceptual genealogy of the "cultivated culture" ("*Bildungskultur*") characteristic of the era of liberal market capitalism, and of the "freely bound intellectual" as the bearer of this culture. This is the point in the text where the conceptual genealogy is infused with concrete historical elements, and where conjunctive knowledge as such is explicitly associated with the

problem of intellectuals, justifying my contention that *intellectual knowledge* (the knowledge of intellectuals in “*Bildungskultur*”) is a peculiar form of conjunctive knowledge.¹¹⁴

Three consequences can be drawn from this thesis.

First, given that, in accordance with the organicist idea of “edification”, the highest forms of conjunctive knowledge build on and integrate the intermediary levels, which themselves build on and integrate the most elementary forms, *everything that holds true for the elementary and intermediary forms of conjunctive knowledge also holds true for its highest configurations*. The opposite, however, is not true: *each new, more complex, higher-level stage features something distinctly new*, something irreducible to what one finds at the lower levels (which nevertheless make possible the emergence of the novelty).

Second, the introduction of *historical* elements by Mannheim into the conceptual genesis of conjunctive knowledge at its highest stage allows for the supposition that *cultivated culture is a historically specific form of intellectual knowledge*, not its generic form. In other terms, the process of edification described by Mannheim can lead to forms of intellectual knowledge which are different from the one characteristic of cultivated culture. If cultivated culture is a specific, historical concretion of intellectual knowledge, the two must be rigorously distinguished from each other. Thus, the second consequence is that it does make sense to speak about a generic concept of intellectual knowledge as a form of conjunctive knowledge, which does not coincide with the historically specific form Mannheim calls cultivated culture.

Third, this discussion makes possible to reformulate the idea enunciated at the end of the previous paragraph according to which the prime tasks of the sociology of intelligence are to determine whether intellectual knowledge is present in a given conjuncture, and if this is the case, to analyze the forms and ways in which it arises and manifests itself, in the following way: *the prime aim of the sociology of intelligence is to describe and theorize the always context-specific emergence of intellectual knowledge as a specific form of conjunctive knowledge*.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Of course, cultivated culture is also the condition of possibility for the kind of endeavor Mannheim is conducting in his essay, viz. the doubly reflexive scientific discourse on the structure of historical and philosophy-of-history knowledge as it becomes its own object in the methodology of the human and social science – i.e., the sociology of culture – in the guise of sociological interpretation.

¹¹⁵ This idea also gives ground for a further hypothesis, which for the time being I consider incidental and tentative, namely that the distinctive orientation toward intellectual knowledge as a specific form of conjunctive knowledge is what distinguishes the *sociology of intelligence* from the *sociology of knowledge* (or the sociology of the mind) broadly construed, which would be a more comprehensive undertaking in that it would study the emergence also

To fill up these hypotheses and propositions with content, it is now time to give a closer look at those elements in Mannheim's theorization of conjunctive knowledge that are relevant for the sociology of intelligence as I understand it.

The first thing to note is that, from the outset and in keeping with a central feature of intellectual knowledge (as defined by Konrád and Szelényi), Mannheim characterizes *conjunctive knowledge as essentially action-orienting knowledge* that is "inherently qualitative, judgmental, situational" (Kettler–Meja–Stehr 1980: 21), making possible to "react adequately" to events, realities and encounters with other humans in a social environment (Mannheim 1982b: 191).

Second, throughout his text, a good deal of Mannheim's efforts goes into establishing that despite being always given *in perspective*, and despite its *dynamic* character due to the shifting nature of the very object it knows about – a *unique, contingent* relationship between (at least) two *unique* beings –, conjunctive knowledge is *knowledge*, that is to say, an *objective* phenomenon liable to empirical testing, intersubjective controls and having its own specifiable structure. As knowledge, it has two essential features: *transferability* and *validity* (*ibid.*: 192–193). Both, however, are *restricted* by comparison with the universality of exact (or communicative) knowledge, the ideal of natural-scientific mode of knowing, applicable in any context and valid for all possible subjects. Thus, conjunctive knowledge is transferable and valid – but only to those who take part in a *specific existential relationship* – a community –, which either takes the form of a *living-together in a life-community* (friendship, family, tribe, clan, etc.) or of a common *sharing of structurally analogous stretches of lived experience*, as it occurs in what Mannheim calls cultural communities (as well as other situationally determined social categories such generations, gender groups, social classes, etc.), larger and looser in character than the close-knit life-communities.

However, the comparatively restricted communicability and validity of conjunctive experience and knowledge does not mean that conjunctive communities cannot *extend* to a very great degree and *unite* large domains both geographically, culturally, and historically. The possibility of such extension – whether large- or small-scale – rests entirely upon two decisive and interrelated phenomena: *language* and *conceptualization*. Indeed, as Mannheim writes, "without language and conceptualization, a lasting relationship between the individuals could hardly come into being. It would be conditioned upon an uninterrupted existential being-

of other, lesser forms of conjunctive knowledge, which do not feature all of the particularities of intellectual knowledge as I have hitherto defined it.

together and upon purely instinctual relationships (...)", which would make impossible *cross-contextual communication* proper (*ibid.*: 200, t. m.). The function of language is thus to bring "*articulation* and *fixation* into the conjunctive experiential stream" by "*extracting*" and "*captivating*" commonly experienced stretches of this stream, as well as *stereotyping* "that which has been learned in common" (*ibid.*, italics added).

Mannheim takes care to distinguish between a conjunctive and a communicative use of language and conceptualization. Although both have in common the will to master the transient, contingent, and flowing character of human experience, and to establish the conditions of cross-contextual understanding, they go about this in fundamentally different ways. While communicative conceptualization and stereotyping "extract that which is to be designated out of its specific experiential space (...) in the direction of an arrangement into *genus* and *species*", whose ideal of universality seeks to abstract from *any* particular experiential space, the conjunctive type seeks to extract only the "repeatable elements" (or "iterabilities") in collective experience, while it leaves "the relatedness to a specific experiential space and perspectivity untouched and strips from experience only the momentary and idiosyncratic." (*Ibid.*: 201.) This is why, "[w]hile a concept within the unhistorically generalizing type of concept formation is comprehended only when one determines its *genus proximum* and *differentia specifica*" – its meaning being in principle separable from any concretely situated experiential space –, the signification of conjunctive concepts is intelligible only if they can be reintegrated into their original context of emergence: they "are grasped with historical adequacy only through interpretation, which consists in working out the existential relationships intended by these concepts." (*Ibid.*: 202.)

This latter disparity is to be related to another, decisive difference between the two kinds of concepts, which pertains to their respective *functions*. According to Kettler, Meja and Stehr's very pertinent summary of Mannheim's views on this matter, communicative knowledge is based on "a language serving to connect participants in different conjunctive communities who do not have in common the experience requisite to mutual conjunctive understanding. Devised to secure and express the narrow shared understanding required for certain limited objectives, especially practical ones, such a language will be restricted to the narrowly material or utilitarian aspects of things" and will most typically be located "in physical science, technology, commerce, utilitarian calculation" (Kettler–Meja–Stehr 1980: 22-23.)

By contrast, the emergence of conjunctive knowledge is decisively tied to its function *in* and *for* a given *community*: it "pertains to communities, constitutes communities, is borne by communities." (Kettler–Meja–Stehr 1980: 21.) With Mannheim's words:

“concepts in conjunctive experiential space are not only functionally determined in their genesis, in that they manifest what they have taken up into themselves in the course of existence in order to fix the contents which thus arise upon a theoretical plane that is above life, but these concepts are also subsequently retrieved into life. They have a function as concepts for the furtherance of life, and this signifies not only an apprehension of reality but also its transformation.” (Mannheim 1982b: 199, t. m.)

In an interesting twist on Marx’s Thesis Eleven on Feuerbach, interpreting it not as a call for direct political action but rather for intellectual intervention, Mannheim further adds: “Marx formulated this antithesis in a magnificent way when he said, ‘Philosophers have only interpreted the world in different ways; the point is to change it’ (...). Every concept possesses this transformative impulse at all times in the conjunctive space of life and experience.” (*Ibid.*) Mannheim’s point seems to be that the reason why the conjunctive concept takes up in its meaning its own contingent, contextual determinations, is that its very reason to be is to serve the practical purpose of *orientation and understanding in view of an active transformation (or conservation) of the “world”* of a given community. In sum, while exact or communicative concepts emerge “on a level where the linkage with a particular community has been eradicated”, conjunctive concepts play a decisive role in the formation, continuity and furthering of communities: they are the “co-operative expressions of life-relationships” which they seek to fix, articulate, transmit across contexts and influence them in return (*ibid.*: 203, 206.)

An important matter Mannheim discusses at length in this treatise is the *mode of being* (the ontological status) of conjunctive knowledge. He considers this question from three distinct points of view. (1) First, he addresses the relation between the operations of the individual psyche and the conjunctive knowledge these operations actualize. He describes the latter as supra-individual, though decisively correlated to the psychic operations of the individual members of a given community. (2) Second, Mannheim further specifies the mode of being of conjunctive knowledge by comparing its form of objectivity with that of exact or communicative knowledge. (3) Third, Mannheim introduces a distinction between those actions, institutions, mediations, etc. that make up the community as a functional whole (the “grammar” of which is not necessarily known to the actors), from the conjunctive knowledge *about* these realities, as well as the different layers and types of this knowledge. I will now provide details regarding each of these three points.

(1) Mannheim discusses the first point by referring to Durkheim's notion of "collective representation", which (notwithstanding emendations) he uses in this context as a synonym for conjunctive concept. Mannheim defines collective representations as the "perspectivistic and stereotyped precipitates of conjunctive experiences", which are something more than purely individual psychic contents, yet not "things" as Durkheim had asserted (*ibid.*: 208). They are not things, for, a thing has a spatiotemporal existence which "does not change in its being-in-and-for-itself in the same way as do, for instance, the collective representations which refer to it" (*ibid.*). In Mannheim's example, the *same mountain* can bear entirely *different significations* for different generations of people living around it; it can pass from a religious meaning of "magical mountain" to the profane one of "landscape", while still being the same physical object. Hence Mannheim's formula: "the mountain exists, the collective representation refers to it." In a first approximation, "existence" would thus be the mode of being of physical things, while "reference to existing things" would be the mode of being of collective representations.

However, collective representations (conjunctive concepts) are not, for this reason, to be regarded as something merely psychological, real only in and for individual souls. Indeed, the representation of the mountain as a magical garden is shared by a multitude of individuals and exerts a "compelling force" over all of them: as socialized members of their community and partakers in its worldview, they cannot but perceive it as a magical garden and be guided by this representation in their conceptions and actions in relation to it. Thus, Mannheim concludes that "in giving effect to collective representations by thinking and experiencing, the individual psyches merely actualize something that was somehow there before this actualization and will still be there for a long time after it." (*Ibid.*: 208-209.) On the other hand, however, the collective representation in question would not be valid in a supra-individual way were it not constantly actualized and enacted in and by individual psychic acts. To make this more tangible, Mannheim uses the example of a cult or ceremony, which is an objective, supra-individual "contexture of meaning, a totality in which the individual has his function and role but where the whole is something which is dependent for its actualizability on a plurality of individuals and which in this sense reaches beyond the individual psyche." (*Ibid.*: 209.)

(2) At this point, Mannheim recalls that German neo-Idealist philosophy – specifically neo-Kantianism and phenomenology, as well as more difficultly classifiable authors like Frege or Meinong – has theorized and elaborated this basic insight of a supra-psychic, non-thing-like mode of existence in a precise and convincing manner. The example of mathematical and geometrical "idealities" – privileged objects of study of neo-Idealist philosophers – such as the Pythagorean theorem makes it plain that, besides spatiotemporal objects and psychic acts, it is

also necessary to postulate a third mode of existence that Mannheim calls “existing in the mode of significancies” (“*in der Weise der Bedeutsamkeiten existiert*”) (*ibid.*: 211). On the one hand, a mathematical or geometrical theorem, although applicable to existing objects, is not itself a *physical object* but a *mental construct*. On the other hand, however, a theorem is not a *psychic act* either. Indeed, “[i]f there are twenty people gathered in a room and all, simultaneously, while listening to a lecture, think the Pythagorean theorem, there is still only one *theorem* even though there are twenty *psychic acts*, which are not the theorem itself but merely actualize it.” (*Ibid.*: 210.)

As I hinted above, an important characteristic of such idealities (existing in the mode of significancies) is that by nature they contain a *claim to validity*: they possess “an injunctive character (...), they signify a norm.” (*Ibid.*: 211.) Not all idealities are injunctive in the same sense, however. Indeed, whereas mathematical and geometrical idealities contain a claim to universal and timeless validity, collective representations, albeit also existing in the mode of significancies, “are ‘valid’ only for the community that orients itself by reference to them. (...) Their obligatoriness and exemplariness are bound up with a concrete group existence and restricted to a certain period in historical time.” (*Ibid.*: 212.)

(3) Everything that has been said so far about conjunctive supra-individuality and mode of existence holds as much for conjunctive *formations* in general (cults, rites, institutions, communities, language, etc.) as for conjunctive *concepts* in specific. Mannheim now notes two major differences between formations and concepts, which defines their relationship. He uses the example of the Greek polis to this effect. The *polis* is an objective historical reality that arises from the continuous and repeated effectuation of a multitude of mental and material acts carried out mostly in an *unconscious* manner by the members of the historically unique community called *polis*. The first difference with the *concept* of the *polis* proceeds from the fact that although the concept partakes in the *same* communal spirit as the object it denotes, the conjunctive concept entails “*consciously* aiming at knowledge of these formations-in-being”. Therefore, “[t]he spirit of the community creates and forms its spiritual realities at a completely different level, so to speak, than that on which they can enter into its own reflections.” (*Ibid.*: 226-227.)

A second difference between spiritual realities and conjunctive concepts is that “[w]hile the *spiritual reality* is something *global*, and, like every reality, contains an unending *plenitude* within itself, knowledge of it is always only *cross-sectional*, *perspectivistic*, bound to a point of view and angle of vision.” (*Ibid.*: 227, italics added.) This relationship of part to whole entails that, although the *polis* as a spiritual reality and social structure has an objective existence which

is knowable to its members, it cannot be known as it is “in itself” but only as it is *for* specific knowing subject-members of that community who approach it based on their own social situation and aspirations. The conjunctive knowing subject necessarily draws on the “conjunctively determined accumulation of experiential knowledge of the community (...) to which he belongs”, but “the extent to which and the direction in which the objective formation, the spiritual reality of the *polis* can be known at all, is determined by the conceptual apparatus and the points of view within which knowledge of this sort has hitherto proceeded.” (*Ibid.*: 227.) To say it differently, *both* the *possibility* and the *limits* of the knowability of a given conjunctive contexture of meaning is conjunctively and historically determined. Furthermore, it follows that, within a given period (as well as over different epochs), there can exist several, potentially contradictory concepts and theories of the *polis*. Thus, while all of them “grow out of the existential needs of the community” (*ibid.*), they nevertheless reflect the peculiar needs of certain members of the community who engage in reflection about the *polis*.

When discussing the transformative function of conjunctive knowledge above, it has been said that such knowledge “is not only tied in its origins to the social experiential space (...), but it is also taken back into further life and changes the actualization and thereby the spiritual state of these realities.” (*Ibid.*: 227.) Referring to the example of the *polis*, Mannheim expands on this idea by observing that, while the reflexive knowledge taking shape in the *concept* of the *polis* does not properly speaking *constitute* the *polis*, the objective social processes that in effect account for such constitution do “proceed differently when the conceptions referring to them have changed.” (*Ibid.*) Mannheim thus portrays the relationship between the process of production and reproduction of spiritual realities and the conceptual reflection on them as one of *dialectical interaction*: “[t]he prospects for reflective penetration of the experiential space filled by spiritual realities and the perspectives possible at a given level of reflection both depend on the state of previously accomplished reflections on this matter; but this in turn is dependent on the state of the overall spiritual reality – and every new illumination growing out of this reality again changes the spiritual realities.” (*Ibid.*: 228.)

To summarize what has been said so far, intellectual knowledge *qua* conjunctive knowledge is best defined by its essentially practical functions: it is an action-orienting, qualitative, judgmental and situational knowledge that is borne by communities and contributes to their reproduction and transformation. It is dynamic, plastic, and active in character, meaning that it changes in accordance with the shifting nature of the situations it seeks to understand, bring under control, and transform. It is in principle transferable across contextual boundaries through the medium of conjunctive language and conceptualization whose function is to fix,

articulate and stereotype structurally analogous stretches of the communal flow of lived experiences. Its mode of existence is that of “significancies” characterized by conjunctive normativity, i.e., signifying a norm for a given community, whether small-scale life-community or large-scale cultural community. Intellectual knowledge *qua* conjunctive knowledge is in a dialectical relationship with the community in which it arises and whose life and destiny it seeks to foster through conscious, perspectivistic reflection on its realities.

From this it follows that intellectual knowledge emerges at a specific level of the edification of a community. Or, as I wrote above, although all intellectual knowledge is conjunctive in nature, not all conjunctive knowledge is intellectual knowledge *per se*. This is, in substance, also what Kettler, Meja and Stehr say in their commentary on Mannheim’s treatise.

“The structure of knowing (...) has at least three levels, according to Mannheim. The deepest is the primordial contagious encounter with some reality met as we act on the will we share with a community; the second is the structuring of an orienting response to that encounter, commonly by means of language and always with communal resources; and the third, conceptual and even theoretical in character, reflects on the direct knowingness of the second level, the knowingness which actually constitutes the various cultural formations and the stylistic systems which they in turn comprise.” (Kettler–Meja–Stehr 1982: 22.)

The question that still remains is: which one of these stages of the edification of conjunctive knowledge sees the emergence of intellectual knowledge? My hypothesis is that one can speak of intellectual knowledge proper only at the third, conceptual and theoretical level, characterized by three key features: *reflexivity*, *consciousness*, and *transcontextuality*. As a distinct form of conjunctive knowledge, intellectual knowledge is reflexive in that it explicitly situates itself vis-à-vis its context of emergence; it is self-conscious in that it is explicit regarding its aims, its *telos*; finally, it is transcontextual in that it provides orientation and transformative potential beyond its initial context of reference.

To sum up, in contrast to the de-contextualized and neutral character of communicative knowledge, intellectual knowledge is always context-related, perspectivistic and engaged (or, it rests on commitments to world-aspirations, see here Chapter 3). It does not preexist intellectual intervention and does not need to be transubstantiated to become effective. Intellectual knowledge always emerges *in situ*, because it is always an answer to a given need of a given community. It is thus as much an emergent phenomenon as the intellectual

subjectivity which Eyal and Buchholz describe as coming to be in and through the intervention itself. This also means that intellectual knowledge does not need to be “inserted” in the public sphere, because it is always-already public. Yet, if intellectual knowledge is not prior to intervention in a chronological sense because they are the two sides of the same coin, it nevertheless has a *logical* priority over the latter. This is so simply because *action* (intervention) supposes the *capacity* for action (intellectual knowledge). To recall Adolf and Stehr’s useful interpretation of the Baconian formula “*Scientia est potentia*”, knowledge as capacity to act is not immediately performative; it exists as virtuality actualizable under certain empirical conditions. Both subjective ability to implement knowledge and objective circumstances must be met if intellectual intervention is to take place (cp. Marian–Stehr 2017: 18-28). Insisting on the virtual dimension of the capacity for intellectual intervention does not necessarily reify intellectual knowledge. The latter remains essentially activity, a constant search for orientation in, adaptation to and transformation of life-circumstances; it entails exchanges, experimentations and insights happening constantly in conjunctive life-spaces, creating and accumulating stocks of implicit, context-bound but already action-orienting knowledge, which *may*, under contingent though specific conditions, be actualized in the form of an intellectual intervention, rendering the accumulated and always-already dynamic, lower-level conjunctive knowledge in question explicit, conscious, reflexive and transcontextual, that is to say, intellectual in nature.

§ 52. Transdisciplinarity and the two paths of the sociology of intelligence

I would like to end this chapter with a reflection on the ways in which the above expounded hypotheses and propositions for the sociology of intelligence impact its methodology. The leading question here is *how* the sociologist of intellectuals gains access to the intellectual knowledge produced and utilized by various intellectual groups belonging to different subcultures exercising intellectual functions. The answer lies once again in the conjunctive nature of intellectual knowledge, which, accordingly, must be approached with methods suitable to it. However, before formulating my answer, I would like first to dissipate a potential misunderstanding. The problem to be discussed in this paragraph is not of having to choose between quantitative or qualitative methods, which distinction does not at all coincide with the conjunctive/communicative divide and is inapplicable in this case, for the following reasons.

First, although this should be entirely obvious, there is of course no reason for the sociology of intelligence for not using “orthodox” quantitative methods and research techniques (statistics, numerical analysis, polls, surveys, computational techniques, etc.) whenever this is necessary from the point of view of the research-questions it sets to itself. Second, a less obvious observation: although the sociology of intelligence is indeed inherently qualitative because of the qualitative nature of intellectual knowledge as its object of study, *not all the so-called “qualitative methods” give access to the conjunctive layer of social experience*. As Ralf Bohnsack has shown, mainstream qualitative methodologies such as Schütz’s social phenomenology, Berger and Luckmann’s social constructionist sociology of knowledge, contemporary German hermeneutical sociology of knowledge, and even Garfinkel’s Ethnomethodology, mainly target the communicative mode of sociality (Bohnsack 2007). Consequently, they are mostly attuned to standardized, institutionalized, role- and interest-following behavior interpreted (reconstructed) according to “utilitarian” common-sense theorizing, which “reconstructs the theories of the actors *about* their practice, without a reconstructive access to the *practice itself*”, that is, to the “primordial sociality” constitutive of habitualized practice in conjunctive experiential spaces (Bohnsack 2018: 201).

In contrast to this, Bohnsack claims, the central idea of Mannheim’s methodology was precisely to “find adequate access to an unknown and foreign milieu-specific (and biographical) reality (...), to unknown social worlds and milieus.” (*Ibid.*: 205.) In the case of Mannheim’s sociology of intelligence, “[t]he goal of research is to gain access to knowledge which is at the disposal of the actors and not knowledge to which only social scientific observers have privileged access, as is typical for objectivistic approaches”, and this despite them using qualitative methods. (*Ibid.*: 210-211.) Any “demand for privileged access in the sense of a higher rationality” is without any epistemological foundation and gives indications more about the ethnocentric bias of the social scientists than about the “dimension of practice, which operates beyond the disciplinary fields.” (*Ibid.*: 200; cp. also Bourdieu 1972: 166.¹¹⁶) Accordingly, in Mannheim’s methodology, “the social-scientific interpreters (...) do not presume or presuppose that they know *more* than the actors in the field, but rather that the actors themselves *do not really know exactly what they know all about*. The explication of the implicit

¹¹⁶ “If it has no other instruments of recognition at its disposal than, according to a term of Husserl, the ‘intentional empathy into the other’, even the most ‘comprehensive’ interpretation risks becoming not much more than a very perfect form of ethnocentrism.” (The English translation of the passage is Bohnsack’s.)

knowledge of those being observed is not the result of a higher rationality, but of *another* rationality (...).” (*Ibid.*: 210-211.)

Thus, the methodological question is how to access that knowledge which the actors do know about without necessarily being fully aware of it or being able to formulate it in an explicit and cross-contextually valid way, and what the role and status of this “other rationality” in this endeavor is. In accordance with the above-proposed idea that intellectual knowledge and intellectual intervention are two sides of the same coin, this question is the same as the one inquiring about how it is possible to gain praxeological access to the structure and meaning of the intellectual practices of actors in a conjunctive experiential space. My proposition is that this can be done in two fundamentally different ways.

The most common way in the sociology of intellectuals is to practice the *retrospective interpretative reconstruction* of intellectually relevant events. The key concept in this case is that of *transposition*, expounded in § 21 in Chapter 3. By way of reminder, Mannheim formulated the concept of transposition in the context of his discussion of the sociology of knowledge as the science of historical dynamics, whose practical task and main challenge is the reconstruction of the passage (the “sublimation”) of class-position (and other situational determinations) into commitment to spiritual-intellectual standpoints actualized in intellectual knowledge (and hence interventions). Mannheim was primarily interested in the question: “What was the social event, relationship, structure, position, determination, etc., that has been ‘transposed’ into this ‘idea’?” The reconstructive standpoint takes this “idea” as the point of departure, and through multiple mediations tries to “regress” to the conjunctive life-spaces in which the “idea” emerged and made possible an intellectual intervention. Thus, from a reconstructive perspective, the *methodological value of intervention* is to be *an indicator of past transpositions*: it signals the advent of an intellectually relevant action or event.

Notwithstanding their deep differences, this reconstructive approach characterizes such empirical works as Mannheim’s study on German *Conservatism*, Robert J. Brym’s investigation of the Russian radical leftist intelligentsia and Collins’ *Sociology of Philosophies* (which I have discussed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation). However, the reconstructive attitude in the sociology of intellectuals is not restricted to historical research. It is also at work in such works as Bourdieu’s *Homo Academicus*, which studies the working of these mechanisms in a specific segment of the French intelligentsia from a contemporary – quasi-ethnographic – perspective. The case of Bourdieu’s inquiry, however, because of the *reflexive* character of his work (he is himself part of the world he describes), is a borderline case: it already points to the other fundamental way in which the sociology of intelligence can be practiced.

Indeed, the definition of intelligence as capacitation to act in a substantially rational way suggests that the phenomenon of transposition can be tackled also from a *prospective* viewpoint, by taking an “activist” stance and asking: “How to think in this situation in order to bring about a looked-for change in it?” Transposition, in this case, is not a past act or event to be reconstructed regarding its function in a given context or a situation. Instead, it becomes the *practical goal of an actual epistemic activity* in which the intellectual actor is engaged: from a prospective point of view, *transposition is the goal* (and *projected result*) of intellectual intervention, itself made possible by the intellectual knowledge it actualizes.

This approach underlies Konrád and Szelényi’s *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, insofar as it had the distinctly practical goal of demonstrating the necessity of the politicization of the “marginal intelligentsia”, in alliance with the working classes and the technocratic intelligentsia in order to effect the democratization of the East-European Soviet-type regimes against the aspirations of the ruling party-elite (the “caste”) (Konrád–Szelényi 1979: 184-252.) But it is even more present in another type of sociological endeavor, whose main instances are participatory action research (PAR), community-based research (CBR), as well as other types of participatory research whose explicit goal is social and political transformation of reality (such as workers’ inquiry and co-research).¹¹⁷ Through the shared goal of social transformation and the voluntary and experience-based breaking up of the asymmetrical relationship of researcher and researched (cp. Fals Borda 1991: 5), PAR, CBR, co-research and similar ventures seem indeed to be a royal way for the social scientist to access the conjunctive experiential space in which intellectual knowledge emerges in the first place.

I believe this insight able to deeply recast the very idea of the sociology of intelligence as a scientific endeavor, which it converts from a reconstructive theoretical enterprise into an engaged, activist epistemic practice, whose goal becomes, accordingly, *to catch intellectual knowledge in the making through direct participatory observation and based on it*, to theorize about how human groups (lay or expert) build their capacity for intellectual intervention. The political rationale for the coupling of PAR-type endeavors with the sociology of intelligence as I envision it stems from the congruence between the latter’s commitment to the democratization of the processes of knowledge-production, namely within social-scientific research, and the basic political conviction of PAR, according to which

¹¹⁷ On this, see (Marion–Tverdota 2018), especially section 6.

“[p]eople cannot be liberated by a consciousness and knowledge other than their own (...). Consequently it is absolutely essential that the people develop their own endogenous consciousness-raising and knowledge generation, and that this process acquires the social power to assert vis-a-vis all elite consciousness and knowledge.” (Rahman 1991: 14.)

One could however object that such project is at odds with Mannheim’s personal inclination, oriented toward a more distanced, reconstructive approach to the intellectual question. Yet, this objection is not decisive because of the good many instances in Mannheim’s oeuvre where he clearly advocates for the epistemic necessity of practice-based research against traditional academic research. An example of this can be found on the last pages of “A sociological theory of culture and its knowability”. There, Mannheim wrote that

“knowledge is not pure contemplation and the solving of puzzles but rather originates in action and in connection with action (...). The social process only becomes recognizable when people try to affect it and confront it with their interests. The contemplative desk-work of theory (...) becomes productive only when it lives, at least in a mediated fashion, within one of the stresses that animates its historical surroundings. A particular manner of life is required for knowledge; and it is not the willing subject itself that knows, but rather collective volitions that know in and through the knowing subject.” (Mannheim 1982b: 277-278.)

Therefore, I believe that the association with PAR would provide a unique opportunity for the sociology of intellectuals to correct its exaggerated theoreticism and reduce its distance from the phenomena it seeks (or should seek) to theorize. What Rahman writes about the shortcomings of social theory in matter of understanding the dynamics of social change, namely that “professional research is still rather ‘primitive’ in its understanding (and in knowing how to understand) the complex forces – social, cultural, ethnic, psychological – which influence the course of an attempted social transformation” (Rahman 1991: 19), holds as much for the difficulties the sociology of intellectuals has in understanding the processes of emergence of intellectual knowledge. It is in any case in tune with Mannheim’s evaluation of the consequences of the hegemony of natural-scientific rationalism and communicative thinking in science: “the practical man dealing with concrete situations, and applying his knowledge informally, was more intelligent than the theorist who observed only a limited sphere because he was imprisoned by the presuppositions of his science. It became more and more obvious that

the former had some knowledge in realms where the latter – i.e. the modern intellectual theorist – long ago ceased to have any knowledge.” (Mannheim 1963: 166.¹¹⁸)

This, however, raises the question whether there is a similar contribution of the sociology of intelligence to PAR and in general to militant research. I can see two major areas where such contribution is possible. The first is situated within participatory research activity itself and hence authorizes a more direct input. It is based on the fact that the aim of an activist sociology of intelligence will not be restricted to working out a path to intellectual knowledge in a given context to make it available for theoretical description. Rather, it will consist in *actively contributing to its emergence*, more precisely, to its passage from an implicit state to the state of “explicit science” “systematically generated by a process of collective inquiry” (Rahman 1991: 23), thereby altering the boundaries between intellectuals and non-intellectuals not only in theory but also in practice, while at the same time theoretically registering the process and reflecting on it (cp. Marion–Tverdota 2018).

The second potential contribution is situated within mainstream academic science and thus involves a more indirect input. By offering a criticism of the bias reflected in the academic conceptions of legitimate knowledge, of what constitutes the intellectual, and especially of the distinction between intellectuals and non-intellectuals, a democratized sociology of intelligence has the capacity to bring the struggle for recognition of oppressed groups, together with its epistemological and methodological consequences, to the fore of academic discussions in these domains.

This second area is also where an answer to the opening question of this chapter can be formulated: what is the contribution of this reshuffled, Mannheim-inspired sociology of intelligence to the debate over public sociology? The first input I see is the reframing of the very object of the debate. The first paragraphs of this chapter have pointed to the notion of intellectual knowledge as the “great absent” of this debate; the subsequent paragraphs were devoted to the elaboration of the meaning of this concept and to arguing for its centrality for

¹¹⁸ See also (Mannheim 1963: 164-165): “Actual experience shows that (...) it is precisely in the course of actual conduct that specific and relevant knowledge is attainable in increasing measure, and under certain conditions communicable. Consequently, it appears that our conception of science is much narrower than the scope of present-day knowledge; and that attainable and communicable knowledge by no means ends at the boundaries of established present-day sciences. (...) [L]ife affords possibilities of knowledge and understanding even where science plays no part.” And (*ibid.*: 173): “The fact that sciences are cultivated in academic surroundings constitutes a danger in that the attitudes adequate to the understanding of an actual sector of human experience are suppressed in the contemplative atmosphere which prevails in academic institutions.”

the sociology of intelligence (as I envision it). Based on these results, the dispute over public sociology can be said to revolve around the nature of sociological knowledge, and more generally, of the nature of human- and social-scientific knowledge. More precisely, the central question it poses is whether there is an irreducible intellectual element in all sociological (and more largely in social- and human-scientific) scholarship, research, and theorizing, and if so, where this intellectual element is to be found, and what its structural place in the discipline is or should be.

CONCLUSION

At the endpoint of this project, I would like to provide a brief, synthetic overview of its main aims, goals, and achievements. This dissertation offered an interpretation and reassessment of Karl Mannheim's sociology of intelligence – understood as a sociology of intellectual knowledge – by simultaneously problematizing the status and meaning of what is variously called sociology of intellectuals, sociology of knowledge, or sociology of ideas. Two related intuitions underlaid this project: first, that it is questionable whether the sociology of knowledge and the sociology of intellectuals are best conceived as academic fields; second, that Mannheim's endeavors in these domains are not always well understood and treated at their value. My claim, therefore, is that understanding Mannheim's project aright necessarily entails a revision of the currently dominant conceptions of what the sociology of knowledge and the sociology of intellectuals are, and that this in turn can be done most fruitfully through a reassessment of Mannheim's legacy in these domains. I would like to stress that the goal of this project is prospective: it is to show the actuality of Mannheim's sociology of intelligence, so that it can trigger and inform new research in the sociology of knowledge and the sociology of intellectuals.

The above claim is based on the observation of the oddity of Mannheim's situation within these domains of research, which he is credited to have founded, but in which his point of view seems to be either repressed or only very selectively admitted. One of the aims of this dissertation was to find an explanation for this oddity. To this effect, I have proposed the hypothesis that Mannheim's position in the domains of research he has contributed to found is the result of a process analogous to what psychoanalysis calls "repression". I mean by this that Mannheim started something that was and is still perceived today in academic science as subversive and whose growth therefore had to be inhibited. In my view, the most important among the symptoms of this repression is the lack of recognition of the essentially dissenting character of Mannheim's project. My wager was that reestablishing this aspect would greatly enhance the likeliness that Mannheim be considered an author whose ideas have actuality in contemporary sociology of knowledge and sociology of intellectuals.

To bring this about, several theoretical gestures were necessary, which I have carried out in the three chapters constituting the second part of this dissertation. In the first place, to ground my understanding of Mannheim's project, a viable model of intellectual change was needed, one that can help understand how Mannheim's project was at the same time embedded

in but also dissenting from the academic-institutional context in which it was born. To this effect, as a critical reworking of Frickel and Gross' proposition that the motors and carriers of scientific change in the modern academia are so-called scientific/intellectual movements (SIMs), I have introduced in Chapter 5 (following a suggestion of Netti) the concept of "dissenting scientific/intellectual movement" ("disSIM"). The main difference between "SIM" and "disSIM" is the vector and motive of innovation in each case: whereas SIMs' impact and motivation are intra-academic and concern mainly the members of the scientific community, disSIMs are contentious challenges to idea-systems, practices and institutional structures which are brought about by transdisciplinary motive forces. Based on this conceptual framework, my argument in Chapter 5 was that Mannheim did not intend his sociology of knowledge to become a specialty field in sociology; instead, it was a disSIM that challenged core assumptions in the very way social science and the humanities were conceived and practiced in his days.

To give content to this general hypothesis, I have come to investigate in Chapter 6 the practical rationalities underlying some of the less studied writings of Mannheim, those on sociology written roughly between 1929 and 1936. These writings show Mannheim aspiring to establish sociology, a then emerging science in Germany, as the synthetic and basic discipline of the social and human sciences. Mannheim considered sociology fit for this role because he saw the transdisciplinary impulse that had once called it to life as being still active in it. Because he recognized that the keeping alive of this impulse (that he dubbed the "sociological attitude") depended on extra-academic factors as well, Mannheim welcomed the gradual diversification of the social composition of the German academic community and saw it, together with the critical political and institutional context of his days, as opportunities for an intellectual intervention that would counter the nefarious consequences of the pervasive functional rationalization of society ("reification"), manifested within academic walls as the hegemony of a "scholastic disciplinary habitus" and in society at large as "fascist reprimativization" (and as "political orthodoxy", in the case of Marxism).

A crucial part of this intervention, and of Mannheim's sociology of intelligence in general, was the attempt to bridge the institutional chasm between academic research and nonacademic intellectual activity. I consider this as the most actual aspect of Mannheim's endeavors. This is important to stress since Mannheim's concrete suggestions for institutional and disciplinary reform in the early 1930s laid out in Chapter 6 are probably not applicable (and for some, maybe not desirable at all) in contemporary circumstances. To make the claim that Mannheim's sociology of intelligence is a valid and actual research paradigm, one must

therefore exhibit those dimensions of his project that are relevant to think the contemporary challenge of transdisciplinary communication between intellectual groups.

To achieve this, one needs a viable definition of “intelligence” and of “intellectual knowledge”. It was the task of Chapter 7 to provide such definitions and therethrough to show Mannheim’s actuality for contemporary discussions about the place of intellectual knowledge in academic science. The first part of the chapter was dedicated to a current debate about so-called “public sociology”, triggered by Michael Burawoy’s presidential address at the ASA meeting in 2004, which I see as revolving around the question of the place of intellectuals and intellectual knowledge in academic science, without however either Burawoy or the other participants attaining sufficient conceptual clarity over this fact. Through the analysis of this debate and the demonstration of its conceptual limitations, my aim was to suggest that if Mannheim’s ideas concerning the reorganization of the social-scientific disciplines may be obsolete today, his way to frame the problem, however, is still topical and relevant not only to the sociology of intellectuals but to sociology and even the social sciences at large.

I expounded this proposition in two main steps: first, through a critical review of some of the most paradigmatic definitions of intellectuals; second, through the construction of an alternative conception of intelligence, based mainly on the idea – shared by a minority of authors working in this domain – that instead of (often vague) notions of intellectual roles, professions, types of personality, institutional affiliations, etc., the theoretical basis and point of departure of the sociology of intellectuals should be a concept of intellectual knowledge, understood in a pragmatist key as capacity to carry out an intellectual intervention. I understand intellectual intervention as capacitation to act in a substantially rational way, that is to say, the capacity to autonomously attribute meaning and elaborate an adapted response to an indeterminate situation on the basis of one’s socially embedded mental and behavioral *habiti*. Since any person, group, or association that possesses and uses such a capacity (i.e., such a knowledge) fits and deserves the adjective “intellectual”, this conception has a considerable potential for democratizing the sociology of intellectuals, whose mainstream often tends to operate with somewhat elitist background assumptions.

According to the conception I elaborate in Chapter 7, intellectuals are simply defined by the fact that they possess and make use of intellectual knowledge, regardless of their social status and of whether these actors are conventionally associated with intelligence. Because intellectuals as carriers of a specific kind of normative knowledge that has the capacity to orient the behavior of actors in a cross-contextual manner do arise in all sorts of social groups (not only in academic ones), I have proposed to define the sociology of intellectuals’ most general

purpose as the identification and empirical study of the ways in which various intellectual groups belonging to different subcultures emerge and develop in concrete historical conjunctures, whether these groups belong to established elites or arise from subaltern groups. For a research-program grounded on these premises, the prime tasks are to determine whether intellectual knowledge is present in a given conjuncture, and if this is the case, to analyze the forms and ways it arises and manifests itself.

This latter task, however, I suggested, could itself be understood in two distinct ways. Indeed, the democratized, theoretically inclusive, yet conceptually rigorous notion of intelligence that I sought to elaborate in Chapter 7 is useful both in what I termed “reconstructive research” and “activist research” research. By this latter idea, I mean practicing the sociology of intelligence – for example in the frame of participatory action research (“PAR”), co-research, or community-based research (“CBR”) – as an engaged epistemic activity whose goal is to catch intellectual knowledge in the making through direct participatory observation and based on it, to theorize about how human groups (lay or expert) build their capacity for intellectual intervention. This is clearly the most tentative but also possibly the most promising proposition of this dissertation, which obviously needs yet to be put into practice and elaborated in future endeavors. In contrast to this, by “reconstructive research”, I understand the more classical type of theoretical-historical work in the sociology of knowledge. As I frame it, reconstructive research means the retrospective interpretative reconstruction of intellectually relevant events and their contexts. Reconstructive work in this sense sets off from the material traces of intellectually relevant acts, and through multiple mediations tries to “regress” to what Mannheim called the conjunctive life-spaces in which and in view of which said acts were carried out in the frame of an intellectual intervention.

How Mannheim framed what I term reconstructive research – and how his ideas were misunderstood by many of his critics and commentators – was the object of the first part of this dissertation. The order of exposition I followed in the dissertation – talking first of Mannheim’s contribution to reconstructive research and then of the transdisciplinary dimension of his endeavors – stemmed from the above-mentioned hypothesis of the repression of the central, dissenting dimension of Mannheim’s project by the social-scientific mainstream. My wager was that it would be prudent to prepare the introduction of this unsettling hypothesis by first offering a reading of Mannheim’s project as a methodology for reconstructive research in the fields of the sociology of knowledge and the sociology of intellectuals, because this poses the problem in terms considered receivable by mainstream standards, while at the same time

making possible to gradually point out those features of Mannheim's sociology of intelligence that transcend self-contained, specialized academic scholarship.

However, I did not want to suggest an artificial opposition between reconstructive research as a supposedly non-intellectual, neutral specialty field on the one hand and a politically charged, activist research on the other. Quite the contrary, such a fictitious and pernicious division of labor is exactly what I wanted to argue against. It must expressly be stressed that reconstructive scholarship can be as intellectually relevant as activist research. Whether this is the case, however, depends on the degree to which the awareness of the transdisciplinary dimension of the sociology of intellectuals informs reconstructive research. One thing that the first part of the dissertation shows are the theoretical shortcomings and difficulties stemming from the non-recognition of this dimension, resulting in the reduction of the sociology of intelligence to a value-neutral, non-political specialized research field. Conversely, another point that the first part wished to put forth is that Mannheim's paradigm was able to handle exactly those phenomena whose mishandling caused these shortcomings and difficulties. In retrospect, what the second part of the dissertation helps understand about the results of the first is that the reason why Mannheim's methodology for specialized, reconstructive research and scholarship is better equipped than most other paradigms in this domain stems precisely from its transdisciplinary and reflexive character.

The main assumption of Mannheim's sociology of intelligence as reconstructive research is that it is in great part through intellectual knowledge that social existence shapes the consciousness of socialized individuals. The central chapter of the first part of the dissertation is Chapter 3, where the categories of worldview, committedness, and transposition are elaborated. I see these categories as setting Mannheim's sociology of knowledge apart from the other major paradigms analyzed in Chapter 2 and then in Chapter 4. Their theoretical function is to ensure the mediation between the human groups creating intellectual knowledge and the larger sociopolitical framework of such production. This very theoretical preoccupation of Mannheim proceeds, I believe, from the transdisciplinary orientation of his sociology of intelligence. It owes to this orientation that, as Chapters 2 and 4 show, Mannheim avoids both the pitfall of Collins and the "new sociology of ideas" of artificially separating intellectual networks and groups from meso- and macro-level social processes (as if the only relevant social processes for ideation were to be found in elite intellectual circles), and the reductionism of the class-bound paradigm (for which it is consistently extra-intellectual logics that account for the emergence and outlook of "ideas"), as well as the idealism characteristic of the class-in-themselves approaches, setting intellectuals apart as an autonomous class based on the

conception of high culture as a sphere tightly separated from economic and political processes at large.

A further and consequent considerable advantage of Mannheim's approach over other programs in the sociology of intellectuals is that it makes possible the thematization of the plurality of the systematic points of departure of the diverse sociologies of intellectuals – as well as the reasons and stakes of that plurality. In my view the main reason for this is that knowledge produced in the sociology of intellectuals being itself intellectual knowledge, the way reconstructive research is practiced in this domain therefore inevitably reflects the scientist's social position, commitments, and aspirations, and attitude to the dissent within and without the academia. The first part of the dissertation could therefore also be seen as a first contribution to a sociologically reflexive assessment of these different positions, commitments and aspirations crystallizing in programs, and rival interpretations, which I have exhibited by constantly confronting them to my understanding of Mannheim's methodology. The approach I adopted in the first part of the dissertation thereby also illustrates the general assumption of this work, namely that since Mannheim is the founder of the sociology of intelligence, the right understanding of his project necessarily impacts the conception of the sociology of intelligence as such; at the same time, one can understand what Mannheim's project is about only if one sees it in the light of the alternative programs in the field.

At the end of this dissertation, my hope is that these endeavors will contribute to rehabilitating Mannheim to the place he deserves in the sociology of knowledge and the sociology of intellectuals. More importantly, however, my wish is that they can contribute to instill into contemporary research some of the sociological reflexivity that has animated Mannheim's project, and thereby help rethink the problem of the intellectual dimension of contemporary academic knowledge. Whether and to what extent these objectives will be realized depends of course on whether reconstructive researchers will apply and make use of the contributions of Mannheim's methodology, whose main lines I tried to sketch in the first part of this dissertation, and whether the intuition of an intimate and productive link between the sociology of intelligence and activist research will be exploited, with the adequate practices and methods being worked out by future practitioners.

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