

Philosophy, Sociology, and the Intelligentsia: Hannah Arendt's Encounter with Karl Mannheim and the Sociology of Knowledge

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ABSTRACT

This essay examines Hannah Arendt's appraisal of *Ideology and Utopia*, Karl Mannheim's foundational argument for the sociology of knowledge. It describes the background and content of this encounter, and explores some of its implications for Arendt's later thought.

Seen from an elongated perspective, Arendt's youthful collision with the sociology of knowledge assumes greater significance. First, it comprised her only explicit encounter with a major sociological work. Second, Arendt's review of Mannheim is significant in prefiguring her aversion to the Marxist-sociological stratagem of "unmasking," and her contempt for what she called "functionalism". After Arendt's exile in America she would subject sociology to intensive criticism, claiming that its approach was "abominable" and that its categories systematically falsified the experience of totalitarianism.

Key Words: Hannah Arendt, Karl Mannheim, sociology of knowledge, intelligentsia, totalitarianism

Introduction

This essay examines Hannah Arendt's appraisal of *Ideology and Utopia*, Karl Mannheim's foundational argument for the sociology of knowledge (Mannheim, 1929; 1936).¹ It describes the background and content of this encounter, and considers some of its implications for Arendt's later thought (Arendt, 1994a: 28-43).² Written before she developed her own political theory, Arendt's review is moderate and discriminating, bereft of the acidic contempt for sociology that would come later. If she had perished in Auschwitz or Treblinka, we would today read this essay as little more than a period piece, a small contribution to a debate that ephemerally caught scholarly attention in the twilight years of the Weimar Republic. But Arendt was not murdered in a Nazi camp. She fled Germany in 1933 to become one of America's most celebrated and controversial public intellectuals until her death in 1975. And throughout her post-war career Arendt repeatedly attacked the social sciences, those "abominable" disciplines that were, she said, congenitally disabled from grasping the terrible novelty of totalitarian regimes.

Seen from that elongated perspective, her youthful collision with the sociology of knowledge assumes greater significance. First, it comprised her only explicit encounter with a major sociological work. If she found sociology "disturbing" at this point in her career, she was at least still willing to engage with its exponents, a fact confirmed by her attendance of the Frankfurt interdisciplinary seminar, conducted under Mannheim's auspices, on "Social History and History of Ideas: Early Liberalism in Germany."³ Noth-

1 Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1936)= *Ideologie und Utopie* (Bonn: Cohen, 1929).

2 Hannah Arendt, "Philosophy and Sociology," translated by Robert and Rita Kimber, in Arendt (1994a: 28-43)=1930, "Philosophie und Soziologie: Anlässlich Karl Mannheim, Ideologie und Utopie," *Die Gesellschaft* 7(1): 163-176. More conveniently, the article can be found in Meja and Stehr (1982: 515-530) which is the German version I cite below.

3 More precisely, the "Working Group on Social History and History of Ideas" was a joint academic venture led by Mannheim together with, Adolf Löwe, Ludwig Bergsträsser and Ulrich Noack; respectively, this fielded a sociologist, an economist, a political scientist and a historian. The workshop spanned the academic years 1931-33. Among the student attendees were Arendt, her then husband Günther Stern, Hans

ing in her subsequently published oeuvre or literary remains written after 1933 suggests that Arendt took a serious interest in Mannheim again. The Mannheim she knew and occasionally recalled was the prodigy of Weimar, not the melancholy exile in England who became a champion of rationalism and planning.⁴ Second, Arendt's review of Mannheim is significant in prefiguring her aversion to the Marxist-sociological stratagem of "unmasking"—a rhetorical mode of exposure she later condemned as naïve, sinister and cruel—and her dislike of what, somewhat idiosyncratically, she called "functionalism". As a mature political theorist, writing in America, she lacerated both stances. Here we see the first inklings of that opposition.

I begin by sketching the background to Arendt's encounter with Mannheim, proceed to outline her critical review of *Ideology and Utopia*, and then examine Mannheim and Arendt's contrastive analyses of intellectuals.

Before the Cataclysm: The Background to Arendt's Encounter with Mannheim

The occasion was the publication in 1929 of Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*, which Arendt reviewed a year later for *Die Gesellschaft*. The

Weil, Norbert Elias, and Hans Gerth. Gerth went so far as to claim that the historical passages in the *Origins of Totalitarianism* were stimulated by this workshop, but to what extent that is true is hard to judge and, to this author, is doubtful. For this information, see the comments by Ulrich Herrmann to his edition of Gerth (1976: 9, 81).

4 Among other things, I base this statement on a) the paucity of references to Mannheim in Arendt's post-Weimar writings; b) the remnants of Arendt's library, now housed at Bard College, N.Y. That library contains *Ideologie und Utopie* (with marginalia and a dedication from the author in German: "To Miss Arendt with very best wishes, KM"), a special edition of "Die Bedeutung der Konkurrenz im Gebiete des Geistigen" (again, with marginalia) and "Strukturanalyse der Erkenntnistheorie" (without marginalia and probably unread). Reinhard Laube, to whose research I am indebted, tells me that the marginalia in the first two works "clearly reflect the general thrust of her argument in 'Philosophy and Sociology'" (Letter to the author, November 22, 2005.) Note, too, that none of Mannheim's works in the Bard Arendt library are in English; this supports the conjecture that Arendt never read the Shils-Wirth version of *Ideology and Utopia* with its two added chapters, "Preliminary Approach to the Problem" and the capstone encyclopedia article "The Sociology of Knowledge". Mannheim's orchestration of the English language edition is brilliantly discussed in Kettler, Meja and Stehr (1984: 107-128) and Kettler and Meja (1995: 193-246). See also Kurt H. Wolff's Introduction to Mannheim (1971, lxi-lxxii).

flagship theoretical journal of the German Social Democratic Party, founded by Rudolf Hilferding, *Die Gesellschaft* was principally run after 1928 by Albert Salomon.⁵ That the editors commissioned three other critical pieces on *Ideology and Utopia*, penned by Paul Tillich, Herbert Marcuse and Hans Speier,⁶ indicates the fanfare with which Mannheim's work was greeted. And it was not only leftists who took note. Ever since his electrifying contribution to the Sixth Congress of German Sociologists in 1928—the lecture on “Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon,”—Mannheim had become somewhat of a phenomenon himself, the centre of attention for those who either applauded or excoriated the new “sociology of knowledge” (Mannheim, 1971: 223–261).⁷ Attended by such luminaries as Alfred Weber, Werner Sombart, Emil Lederer, Han Jonas, Adolf Löwe, Norbert Elias and Leopold von Wiese, among others, the Congress afforded a remarkable audience of sociological elders and neophytes in front of which to showcase the sociology of knowledge. Most important for an ambitious young scholar, Mannheim's arguments provoked annoyance and dissent. Marxists were upset about Mannheim's dilution of, and challenge to, Marxism itself; the implication that it could be “unmasked” like other ideologies was particularly unwelcome. Conversely, liberal-minded sociologists were suspicious that Mannheim's theory was little more than Marxism shorn of its most simplistic claims, a materialist Trojan Horse bearing down on the sociological citadel. And anti-sociologists (notably, Ernst Robert Curtius) called down a plague on both ideological houses, insisting to boot that the sociology of knowledge was a nihilist's charter (Curtius, 1990; Meja and Stehr, 1990: 113–120).⁸ On all counts, Mannheim's challenge was hard to ignore. It earned him a growing reputation and the appointment as Professor of Sociology at Frankfurt in 1930.

Ideologie und Utopie was centrally concerned with political questions—notably the malaise of Weimar (truncated in the English translation) and discussion of socialism, fascism, liberal democracy, bureaucratic and “historicist” conservatism. Its longest chapter is entitled “Is a Science of Politics Possible?” Mannheim averred that it was. Politics, Mannheim says, is a

5 In 1928, Hilferding became German Minister of Finance.

6 They are collected and translated in Meja and Stehr (1990).

7 “Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon” in Mannheim (1971: 223–261).

8 On the stakes of the conflict between Curtius and Mannheim, see Wolf Lepenies' sparkling *Between Literature and Science: The Rise of Sociology* (Lepenies, 1988: 313–333).

kind of “action” that is novel, previously unregulated, and requiring initiative—in contrast to “administration” which is concerned with routinized, settled, “reproductive” behaviour.⁹ Thus, an official who attends to a well-worn procedure, or a judge who applies a precedent to an uncontroversial legal case, is not involved in politics in Mannheim’s sense.

We are in the realm of politics when envoys to foreign countries conclude treaties which were never made before; when parliamentary representatives carry through new measures of taxation; when an election campaign is waged; when certain opposition groups prepare a revolt or organize strikes—or when these are suppressed.¹⁰ (Mannheim, 1936: 113)

A science of politics is no other than the sociology of knowledge. It is urgently needed in age of “total” ideology. A total ideology is more than the claim that an opponent is consciously or semi-consciously disguising his interests behind his opinions. That is what Mannheim calls a “particular” conception of ideology which spans the gamut from the outright lie to self-deception. When social actors embrace a “particular” notion of ideology, they do so as individuals confronting other individuals. Yet even as they seek to expose duplicity, both parties share the same basic frame of reference and “criteria of validity”. They argue on the assumption that, were it not for the obtuseness and perversity of the other, justice would prevail—“justice” being a datum every clear-sighted person could agree on. Since ego and alter inhabit the same mental universe, each takes it for granted that a solution exists to what can only be a temporary impasse. The “total” conception of ideology is very different. Seen from that perspective, an

9 The theoretically resonant German term for action—*Handeln*—is translated in Shils’s English version as “conduct.” Even the title of this chapter in English (“The Prospects of Scientific Politics”) misses the allusion to Max Weber’s post-war lectures on politics and science that is unmistakable in the German original: “Ist Politik als Wissenschaft Möglich?” These and other changes were orchestrated by Mannheim himself, who was keen to domesticate *Ideologie und Utopie* for an Anglophone audience.

10 Mannheim cites the work of Albert Schäffle as the source of this distinction. He acknowledges that the boundary between “routine affairs of state” and “politics” allows many shades of grey. A rather different view of politics is affirmed on p. 212. In the footnote on that page, Mannheim states that “politics” is capable of many definitions, each suited to a particular heuristic purpose and perspective.

individual's foibles or particular interests are irrelevant. So, too, are his motives. Far more important is that one's opponent is the bearer of a social stratum the mind set, categories, and values of which are at odds with ones own; a person's views are a "function" of the milieu and world view into which he has been inducted. Accordingly, modern political dispute rages over incommensurable *Weltanschauungen*, "fundamentally divergent thought-systems," which clash without respite. As vectors of impersonal social forces, ciphers of social structure, disputing parties inhabit different, dehumanized, "worlds" (Ibid.: 55-64). No compromise between them is possible because no common faith exists to form the basis of their reconciliation.

What are the social conditions that have caused the emergence of the "total" conception of ideology? The modern world, Mannheim points out, is no longer a unitary cosmos. It is deeply fractured along class and cultural axes. The clash between commercial and feudal society, and, later, the growth of Marxist and fascist social movements, betray an epoch in deep crisis (Ibid.: 64-65, 74-75, 84, 103, 105). Political discourse is marked by reciprocal unmasking and by irreconcilable judgements. As such, we "do not hold up to the adversary that he is worshipping false gods; rather we destroy the intensity of his idea by showing that it is historically and socially determined" (Ibid.: 250).

Political discussion is, from the very first, more than theoretical argumentation; it is the tearing off of disguises—the unmasking of those unconscious motives which bind the group existence to its cultural aspirations and its theoretical arguments . . . In addition to the gradual dissolution of the unitary objective world-view, which to the simple man in the street took the form of a plurality of divergent conceptions of the world, and to the intellectuals presented itself as the irreconcilable plurality of thought-styles, there entered into the public mind the tendency to unmask the unconscious situational motivations in group thinking.¹¹ (Ibid.: 39)

Mannheim himself was ambivalent towards the rhetoric of unmasking, unveiling or debunking—the English terms that Edward Shils and Kurt Wolff offer as renditions of *Enthüllung*.¹² The German word appears early

11 Cf. 40-1, 48. Also Mannheim (1936: 64, 74, 83, 96, 150, 162, 250).

12 Did Shils's and Wolff's translations miss some subtlety of the German that Mann-

in Mannheim's work, making its debut in his "Lady from Biarritz," an unpublished one-act play written in 1920 to evoke liberation from an alienated marriage (Loader, 1985: 33-35).¹³ It was also a staple of Marxist analysis.¹⁴ On the one hand, Mannheim posed simply as its chronicler, explaining the causes of its emergence and consolidation. "The weapon of . . . reciprocal unmasking" is a problem to be described, a temporary intellectual impasse, and a challenge to be resolved by the sociology of knowledge (Mannheim, 1936: 41).¹⁵ On the other hand, he acknowledged that unmasking represented a formative moment in the emergence of the sociology of knowledge itself, embedded in the discipline's own presuppositions.

Because he wished to go beyond the mentality of unmasking, with its poisonous impact on political discussion, yet also recognized its skeletal features in his own project, Mannheim was caught in a dilemma. He annulled it in an ingenious way. First, he occasionally resorts to a Heideggerian formulation, dropping the verb *enthüllen* (with its Marxist inflection) and replacing it by "uncover" (*aufdecken*), a salient term and concept in *Being and Time*. Thus, a Heideggerian concept is appropriated for sociolog-

heim himself would have wished to see preserved? After all, the German language does have a specific word for unmasking (*demaskieren*) which Mannheim himself avoided; *enthüllen* rather than *demaskieren* is Mannheim's word of choice, as in Mannheim (1929: 16, 17, 33, 236, 249). Two clues suggest that Mannheim's translators were correct to use "debunk," "unmask" and "unveil" as very close synonyms. The first, in *Ideologie und Utopie*, is Mannheim's resort to the English word "feign"—the context is a discussion by David Hume—as a forerunner of *Enthüllung*. ("Diese enthüllende Einstellung ist ein Grundzug unserer Zeit." etc. see Mannheim, 1929: 17.) Feigning is a kind of pretence or dissimulation. The second, and the clincher, is the widespread use of "unmasking" in the Mannheim-vetted English translation of *Ideology and Utopia*, and especially the chapter especially written for an Anglophone audience, "Preliminary Approach to the Problem." There "unmasking" is principally employed by Mannheim, with "debunking" and "unveiling" as close seconds. See Mannheim (1936: 39, 40, 41, 64, 74, 78, 262).

13 Loader notes that while unmasking appears first as a liberation from convention, it later emerges as an "ultimately stultifying" rhetorical trope.

14 See especially Georg Lukács (1971: 50, 54, 58, 65-66, 69-70, 72-73). On Lukács's impact on Mannheim, see Loader (1985).

15 The gradual obsolescence of unmasking as a strategy, and its replacement by the sociology of knowledge, is the leitmotif of Mannheim's 1925 essay "The Problem of a Sociology of Knowledge," in Mannheim (1971: 59-115); see especially pp. 66-71 on the emergence of "the 'unmasking' turn of mind" Cf. Volker Meja and Nico Stehr (1990: 5).

ical purposes. An example is Mannheim's assertion that the job of "political sociology" is not to indoctrinate but to "prepare the way" for "arriving at decisions . . . which have scarcely been noticed before." Such a discipline will "uncover the determining factors underlying" class judgments, "disclosing" the collective forces that condition them (Ibid.: 162; Mannheim, 1929: 132-133).¹⁶ How far this sleight of hand was deliberate is hard to tell. Mannheim was a former student of Heidegger's and, as we shall see, could not avoid his presence. But the stratagem's rhetorical impact is deflationary, absorbing one's rival by domesticating his terminology. Second, Mannheim takes both Marxist and existentialist ideas but re-describes them in a technical idiom suited to the new sociology of knowledge. This is the language of "functionalism," "correlation" and "correspondence," a lexicon that transmutes the language of suspicion into a social scientific framework.¹⁷ "Function" and its cognates appear often in Mannheim's Weimar and pre-war writings, and they predate *Ideology and Utopia*. As he observes, every "sociological 'explanation' . . . whenever it functionalizes intellectual phenomena —e.g. those found in a given historical group—with respect to a 'social existence' that lies behind them, postulates this social existence as a context of meaning more comprehensive than, though different from, those phenomena, whose ultimate significance is to be understood in relation to this context" (Mannheim, 1971: 123).¹⁸ A sociological approach to intellectual phe-

16 Also, see Mannheim's Contents (Mannheim, 1929: xv).

17 On "correlation" and "correspondence" see, inter alia, Mannheim (1936: 58), and "The Problem of a Sociology of Knowledge," in Mannheim (1971: 59-115), at pp. 107, 109, 111. One must not exaggerate the extent of this sociological redescription. At the very end of *Ideology and Utopia*, Mannheim remarks that "the objectivity which comes from the unmasking of ideologies always takes the form of self-clarification for society as a whole". And he interpolates into the English version of that text the contention that "by unveiling the hidden motives behind the individual's decisions" the sociology of knowledge puts a person "in a position to really choose" his own fate. Unveiling/unmasking thus assumes a positive dimension; it results in self-clarification which in turn furnishes the opportunity for self-control. To that extent, Arendt was right to see unmasking as integral to the sociological enterprise, a point to which I return.

18 "The Ideological and Sociological Interpretation of Intellectual Phenomena," in Mannheim (1971: 123). The essays shows the very close relationship between Marxism and Mannheim's own sociological project, at least in this stage of his thought.

nomena views them extrinsically, rather than immanently; it is concerned with “functional meaning” as distinct from “intrinsic meaning”; or rather it is concerned to connect both to social reality (Ibid.: 124).¹⁹ This in turn requires “the uncovering of all existentially conditioned relationships that alone make possible the emergence and the impact of an intellectual phenomenon” (Ibid.: 121).²⁰

The contemporary political preoccupation with unmasking, Mannheim opines, is divisive and destructive. Yet he spies an opportunity for the sociology of knowledge. It promises to offer illumination of the current political scene and clarification of the observer’s position in it. This elucidation is neither disinterested nor free of value judgements. Instead, it affords the engaged and reflexive actor with a means of criticism and self criticism, enhancing his capacity for conscious self control and self-correction. A “systematization” of doubt, the sociology of knowledge prepares the ground for “a new conception of objectivity” in which “not only the object but we ourselves fall squarely within our field of vision. We become visible to ourselves,” aware of the multiple determinations that make us the persons we are (Mannheim, 1936: 47).²¹ That orientation, in turn, impedes a sense of self-righteous dogmatism. And it is precisely by offering a comprehensive view of society’s contending forces, by offering a synthesis of their partial viewpoints, that a science of politics is made possible (Ibid.: 2, 43, 106, 149–152, 170–171, 183–185, 188–189).²² The sociology of knowledge promises a systematic “mediation” of political differences and, through its synthesis, “a dynamic reconciliation” too. Finally, since politics is a dynamic force, constantly in the state of becoming, and since new issues recurrently arise to test it with new challenges, no procrustean solution is possible or desirable. The point is to “reconstruct” the many vantage points of contemporary political actors so as to enable greater self-consciousness, stimulate open-

19 Mannheim (1971: 124).

20 And on p. 129 Mannheim describes sociological interpretation as a “variant” of the “positivist, functionalization of phenomena.”

21 And, more generally, pp. 45–50. Written especially for the English version of *Ideology and Utopia*, it is post-Weimar though pre-war; Arendt probably never read it. For that reason, I refer to it separately from *Ideology and Utopia*. Still, these remarks echo Mannheim’s comments in the original version of *Ideology and Utopia*, as will be seen in the footnotes that follow.

22 Mannheim (1936: 2, 43, 106, 149–152, 170–171, 183–185, 188–189).

ness, and facilitate mutual comprehension.

Mannheim, like Arendt, was Jewish, though originally from Hungary. Like Arendt, too, he hailed from an urban, liberal and assimilated milieu. In the same year, 1933, that Arendt fled Germany bound eventually for the United States, Mannheim repaired to England. Before that period of exile, both scholars were trained in philosophy and studied briefly under Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger. Yet, unlike Arendt, Mannheim was detested by both illuminati, and not only for his ideas. In 1929, the *annus mirabilis* in which “Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon” and *Ideology and Utopia* were published, another essay appeared in which Mannheim sought explicitly to clarify the relation between sociology and philosophy. His tone was conciliatory. Philosophy, he says, constitutes a particular and irreducible problem level. And, personally, “I am not only not against but expressly *for* metaphysics and ontology. . . ; I am only opposed to the presence of metaphysics which is not recognized and thus can serenely absolutize particulars.” To this end, Heidegger is approvingly contrasted to those “pseudo-metaphysicians who weigh on our political and sociological thought.” Heidegger’s “struggle for an ontology” marks “one of the most decisive achievements of contemporary philosophy” (Mannheim, 1971: 270).²³

But elsewhere Mannheim is less emollient. In *Ideology and Utopia*, while conceding that the nature of reality and of existence “as such” is a problem “which belongs to philosophy,” he proceeds to say that “existence as such” is a phantasm. To the degree that “man is a creature living primarily in history and society, the ‘existence’ that surrounds him . . . is always a concrete historical form of social existence” (Mannheim, 1936: 193). Mannheim’s essay “Competition as a Cultural Phenomenon” is equally provocative; it is intended, he says, to “make a contribution to a sociological theory of the

23 The essay is largely framed in terms of the relationship between philosophy and sociology—the title of Arendt’s own Mannheim review. The stakes were obvious to everyone. On p. 264, coming close to the visionary sociological imperialism he always denied, Mannheim invoked a “three-dimensional deepening of vision—in the direction of the terrestrial, the social and the historical—[that] 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: man is once again shedding his skin, striving after an enlarged form of his existence”.

mind.”²⁴ In the process, Mannheim pours scorn on *das Man*, Heidegger’s term (ostensibly) to depict that unthinking, somnambulant, “inauthentic” impulse which discourages people from pursuing unique choices and possibilities.²⁵ Such a notion, Mannheim implies, is sociologically useless and politically feeble:

The philosopher looks at this “They”, this secretive Something, but he is not interested to find out how it arose; and it is just at this point, where the philosopher stops, that the work of the sociologist begins. Sociological analysis shows that this public interpretation of reality is not simply “there”; nor, on the other hand, is it the result of a “systematic thinking out”; it is the stake for which men fight. And the 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” [which Mannheim then goes on to enumerate].²⁶ (Mannheim, 1971: 230)

Not only, then, is thought “existentially connected,” socially situated and conditioned. Intellectual and cultural phenomena are above all a product of rivalry and resolve, as various groups seek to impose their own definitions of reality on others. Thought has an activist core; human interests are the tracks along which knowledge develops. And “in the last analysis the move-

24 “Mind” lacks the historical baggage of the German term *Geist* and its ambiguity: the adjective *geistig* can mean spiritual, intellectual, or, at a stretch, cultural. “Cultural competition” might be better rendered “Intellectual rivalry.” See *Die Bedeutung der Konkurrenz im Gebiete des Geistigen*, in Volker Meja and Nico Stehr (1982: 327–328). Heidegger criticized the concept of *Geist* extensively in *Being and Time* (Heidegger, 1962: 480–486), e.g. at ¶182=pp.480–486. On his later treatment, see Richard Wolin (1993: 289).

25 Mannheim garbles Heidegger’s argument. It would have been closer to Heideggerian terminology for Mannheim to have objected to *das Man-selbst*—the “they-self”—rather than *das Man*. The distinction, which Mannheim elides, is pertinent because for Heidegger *das Man* is as an essential part of Being in the World. It is, so to speak, the ground of culture from which all projects of authenticity must embark. It is only the numb, herd-like, careless “they-self” that we are exhorted to repudiate. See Heidegger (1962: 163–168).

26 Arendt refers to this article in her review of *Ideology and Utopia*.

ment of thought depends upon the tensions which dominate the social sphere.” (Ibid.: 246) To be sure, theoretical conflict is not reducible to social conflict. But it is certainly shaped by it because in “actual life, it is always some volitional centre, some locus of energy, which sets thought going; competition, victory, and the selection based upon it, largely determine the movement of thought.” (Ibid.: 244)²⁷ As Mannheim sardonically declares: “Philosophy, ladies and gentlemen, may look at this matter differently; but 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 the interpretation of the world the universal one.” (Ibid.: 228-229) A measure of decorum prohibits Mannheim from going all the way: he refrains from stating that modern Existenz philosophy is also explicable in sociological terms. But the innuendo is unmistakable²⁸, particularly when he proceeds to examine philosophy’s sub-types and epistemology. Political philosophy, for instance, “is always *the product of a particular mentality*”, the history of ideas being a history of “styles of thought” (Mannheim, 1971: 242). Similarly, the “categorical apparatus of thinking” is the vehicle of social contention and discord

27 And in Mannheim (1936: 213), Mannheim strongly opposes a history of ideas approach to the explanation of utopian mentalities. On the Chilastic utopianism, associated with Thomas Münzer and his followers, Mannheim notes: “Ideas’ did not drive these men to revolutionary deeds. Their actual outburst was conditioned by ecstatic-orgiastic energies.” What Mannheim failed to offer was a clear analysis of the source of this energy. That has since been explained by Randall Collins in his theory of interaction ritual. Applying that theory to intellectuals—or to what would now be described as intellectual networks—Collins argues that great intellectuals are those with large quantities of drive, initiative and ambition, an “emotional energy” (EE) that is not free-floating but requires social conditions to sustain it. These include a person’s location in the white heat of a controversy, previous or contemporary links with prestigious teachers, and ready access to media—universities, think tanks, publishing houses, t.v, stations, internet blogging sites—that allow ample scope for communication. Accordingly, EE ebbs and flow in intensity to the degree its protagonists are at the centre of the cultural fray. Those who possess EE are likely to cultivate more of it in a value-added spiral as their careers progress. However, EE may also dissipate when a thinker overreaches himself or when the stakes of the debate in which he has been focally implicated change. See Randall Collins (1998). See also “The Sociology of Thinking” in Collins (2004).

28 As Arendt (1994a: 31) recognized.

(Ibid.: 250).²⁹ The English are often deemed masters of the under-statement. Hungarians are obviously their peers. “I do not suggest,” Mannheim remarks, “that Heidegger, as a philosopher, would agree with the sociological theory I am propounding.” (Ibid.: 228)³⁰

Lecturing on Plato in the winter semester of 1931–32, Heidegger fired back, comparing the exponents of the sociology of knowledge to the cave dwellers of Plato’s famous simile, mistaking shadows for real objects and unable to sense the illumination provided by the sun. An escapee from the cave who returned to liberate its residents, delivering the news of the light of Truth, would doubtless be received with suspicion. Heidegger lays on the sarcasm: the liberator would be told by the cave dwellers that he was “one sided”:

Presumably, indeed certainly, they would have, down there in the cave, a “sociology of knowledge” with whose assistance they could explain how he [the liberator] operates with “worldview” presuppositions contradicting and disturbing what is agreed upon within the cave . . . Down there they don’t want to know anything of philosophy, e.g. of the philosophy of Kant, but at best they take an interest in the *Kant Association*.³¹ (Heidegger, 2002: 62)

Greeted with that reception, Heidegger jeers, it would be incumbent for the real philosopher, knowing the light’s true source, to dismiss the cave prattle, grab a few of its most worthy dwellers, and “drag them out . . . of the cave.” Not that Heidegger himself would stoop to such futile exertion. Significantly, the only “sociologist” who he (and Hannah Arendt) respected was Georg Simmel—for whom sociology was always something of a diversion from philosophy. And what is philosophy? It is certainly not, Heidegger says, “a cultural phenomenon, a realm of man’s creativity and of the works that issue from it.” Neither is it “a worldview” nor even a philosophy of existence. Philosophy, instead, is a *questioning* of and about Dasein [the human way of Being] (Ibid.: 84).

Karl Jaspers’ animus towards Mannheim was even more visceral. He

29 Emphasis in the original.

30 Referring specifically to *Being and Time*.

31 See also Rüdiger Safranski (1998: 214).

opposed unsuccessfully Mannheim's *Habilitation*, the postdoctoral degree required to teach in German universities.³² And in a letter to Heidegger dated July 25, 1931, he exulted in Mannheim's discomfiture two years' previously when "annihilated" in a Heidelberg seminar by Werner Brock's probing critique (Biemel and Saner, 2003: 137). 1931 was also the year that Jaspers published his *Die Geistige Situation der Zeit*, a short treatise in existential philosophy framed by a denunciation of sociology, psychology, anthropology and, more cryptically, Karl Mannheim himself.³³ Translated into English as *Man in the Modern Age*, Arendt assigned the book to baffled philosophy students at Berkeley in March 1955. Today this little-known text reads like an exercise in self-parody, abounding in the obscure and sententious phrases beloved of a certain species of German professor. Still, because of its chronological and moral proximity to Arendt's own *Das Gesellschaft* piece, it is worth examining a little more closely.

After acknowledging that the science of sociology has "manifold varieties", Jaspers promptly ignores them. Instead he devotes the bulk his treatment to one variety: Marxism, "the best known and most familiar example of sociological analyses" (Jaspers, 1931: 165).³⁴ Marxists believe that they have scientifically grasped "the true being of man. Man, they say, is the outcome of his life as a social being" (Ibid.: 163). Jaspers glosses that contention at some length before insisting that it is false. So too is the assertion that "[p]hilosophies are but ideologies" justifying particular, situation-bound interests (Ibid.: 163). Far from being a science, Marxism is little more than "an intellectualist faith" in which "man as he truly is, is always lost sight of" (Ibid.: 164-165). Fortunately, sociology has a better model to follow in the imposing example of Max Weber. Yet it is not Weber's sociological insights that Jaspers applauds. Of far greater import is his mentor's recognition that sociology could never be "the philosophy of human existence." Weber's perspectivism "leaves man in himself untouched" (Ibid.: 166), vouch-

32 See Loader and Kettler (2002: 69). His *Habilitation* sponsors at Heidelberg were Alfred Weber and Emil Lederer. Mannheim's *Habilitation* topic was nineteenth century conservatism. An English version appears as *Conservatism: A Contribution to the Sociology of Knowledge* (Mannheim, 1986).

33 For a parallel, if rather different, discussion of anthropology, psychology, and biology, see Heidegger (1962: 71-75).

34 To avoid the proliferation of footnotes, page references to Jaspers' text are given in the main text.

safing only a modest “science of human behaviour and its consequences” (Ibid.: 165). Heidegger commended Weber for broadly similar reasons, while also alleging that Jaspers had, in his *Psychology of World Views*, misunderstood him.³⁵

If only modern psychology had a Weberian equivalent! Instead, having lost its anchor in “metaphysical principles”, psychology deteriorated during the nineteenth century into behaviourism, the study of aggregates of sensory data (Ibid.: 166). Whereas Kierkegaard and Nietzsche had grasped psychology’s potential to connect thought to existential concerns, its contemporary variants were a bundle of confused “doctrines and facts.” Freud’s psychoanalysis promised a new coherence and had made an important contribution to the analysis of psychopathology. But Jaspers considered psychoanalysis to be demeaning. Its preoccupation with basic drives, particularly the libido, and with an unconscious which determines everyday life, reduced Man to an animal or a “puppet” (Ibid.: 167). Psychoanalysis was thus just as reductive or “functionalist” as Marxism. Granted, no one can sensibly deny the reality of human impulses and instincts. “They are real enough, of course, but we have to set bounds to them, and to learn to contemplate human existence as something different from them.” As for anthropology, the third of Jaspers’ targets, it too suffers from an exaggerated naturalism.³⁶ Its deterministic racial explanations degrade a being that is above all a “being of liberty.”

Jaspers concedes that sociology, psychology and anthropology have their uses (Ibid.: 172). But overall these sciences of mankind are disastrous: reductive and “ruinous to whatever is unconditioned” (Ibid.: 173). In that they articulate the mood of modern times. “They will turn against any one who has faith, of whatever kind; and they will ‘unveil’ him in their sense of the term” (Ibid.: 173). Jaspers retort is to turn the tables on his adversaries,

35 The charge must have been particularly wounding for Jaspers. In essence, Heidegger argues that Jaspers’s extrapolation of Weber’s sociological approach to the field of psychology is bound to obscure the latter. “To emulate Weber truly would rather be to strive just as radically and incessantly as he did to achieve ‘systematic’ mastery in one’s own field of psychology and, more particularly, with reference to the problem of working out the whole of psychology as a science.” See “Comments on Karl Jaspers’s *Psychology of World Views*,” in Heidegger (1998: 34-35).

36 Jaspers refers to anthropology in its original sense, as “the science of man, embracing human physiology and psychology and their mutual bearing,” (to quote from the *Oxford English Dictionary*). In Jaspers’ day, anthropology was strongly associated with eugenics.

grasping their own master metaphor and using it against them. These sciences, he insists, furnish “the most widely diffused veilings of mankind. The direct brutality of hatred and of eulogy which have come to prevail with the development of mass-life finds its expression therein” (Ibid.: 171). Positivism, too, is no better whenever it arrogantly seeks to overreach itself, for then it creates its own “mask” under which “people can conceal their own aridity” (Ibid.: 180). In a summation that Arendt herself could have written, Jaspers opines:

Sociology, psychology, and anthropology teach that man is to be regarded as an object concerning which something can be learnt that will make it possible to modify this object by deliberate organization. In this way one comes to know something about man, without coming to know man himself; yet man, as a possibility of a creature endowed with spontaneity, rises in revolt against being regarded as a mere result. . . . [An astute student of these disciplines recognizes that their approach to understanding] is nothing more than a deceptive substitute for true philosophy, and that those who wish to escape from freedom seek justification for their action in a spurious knowledge of being. (Jaspers, 1957: 174)

Jaspers’ jeremiad is not over. For having first assailed the “sciences of man,” he then turns to confront their grotesque progeny in the shape of the modern Sophist.

An intriguing endnote in the Arendt-Jaspers correspondence states that the model for Jaspers’ portrait of the Sophist was no other than Mannheim himself (Arendt, 1992: 706).³⁷ If true, that depiction is more ironic than Jaspers may have realized. In Chapter 1 of the English version of *Ideology and Utopia*, written specifically to clarify his project to an Anglophone audience, Mannheim credits “the Sophists of the Greek Enlightenment” as a distant

³⁷ Neither the German nor English versions of this text mention Mannheim explicitly, so we have to rely on the editors’ gloss. That Hans Saner was a longtime assistant of Karl Jaspers, and in a position to know his dislikes, gives the attribution some authority. Arendt called Saner [*Lectures on Kant’s Philosophy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982a, p.7) the only disciple Jaspers ever had—in other words, the only thinker who knew Jaspers well enough to be worthy of being a disciple. Compare Jaspers (1957: 182–188) with Jaspers (1931: 152–154).

forerunner of the sociology of knowledge.³⁸ That Enlightenment consisted precisely in “an attitude of doubt”—the kind of doubt on which Mannheim’s own project was predicated. Rather than censure the Sophists for pointing out the indeterminacy of epistemological and moral standards, they deserve praise for their courage to express openly what “every person who was really characteristic of the epoch felt, namely, that the previous unambiguity of norms and interpretations had been shattered, and that a satisfactory solution was to be found only in a thoroughgoing questioning and thinking through of the contradictions.” (Mannheim, 1936: 9) Comparing the youthful sociology of knowledge with venerable Greek sophism may appear to be a tad presumptuous. But immodesty becomes downright self-serving when Mannheim invites an even more illustrious comparison:

Was it not . . . the great virtue of Socrates that he had the courage to descend into the abyss of this scepticism? Was he not originally also a Sophist who took up the technique of raising questions and then raising further questions, and made it his own? And did he not overcome the crisis by questioning even more radically than the Sophists and thus arrive at an intellectual resting-point which, at least for the mentality of that epoch, showed itself to be a reliable foundation? (Ibid.: 10)

Needless to say, Jaspers’ figure of the Sophist bears none of these appreciative markings. On the contrary, the Sophist is berated for a host of sins. His intellectual and spiritual bankruptcy “can only be described as an unceasing perversion . . . Well versed in all possibilities, as opportunity arises he seizes now this one and now that one” (Jaspers, 1957: 183). Among the epithets that Jaspers hurls at the Sophist are the following: he is dishonest as an adversary, vain and crudely rationalistic as an intellectual, disloyal and shameless as an individual. Most of all, Jaspers’ tirade is aimed at the Sophist’s lack of enduring principle and unwillingness to take a firm or uncompromising stand. The Sophist is “pliable when vigorously resisted” (Ibid.: 183). He

38 This chapter—entitled “Preliminary Approach to the Problem”—is replete with psychological and psychoanalytical terminology. The word “unconscious”—as in “unconscious motivations” or “collective unconscious” or “collective-unconscious motivations”—appears twenty seven times. To be sure, Mannheim’s starting point is always the *situation* from which these impulses derive. But the marriage of sociological and psychological discourse, evident in this new chapter, is striking.

is an ironist who “metamorphoses everything” (Ibid.: 184) and is an inveterate master of the art of compromise. As such he has no real existential independence. At bottom, which is quickly plumbed, he is a sham, hiding behind a “mask of indignation” (Ibid.: 183).

The ferocity of this invective points to more than a philosophical profile; it gestures at extreme personal dislike. We need not pursue the issue here, except to say that Jaspers’ depiction of Mannheim as the mercurial Sophist received its mild-mannered counterpart from a by no means unfriendly source: Jean Floud (née McDonald) who worked with Mannheim on the English revision of *Ideologie und Utopie* in the mid-1930s. She recalled: “there was something in his conversational manner that was ‘slippery’. He trimmed and adjusted what he was saying, in order to forestall objections and keep the flow. He sought thereby to create the impression of general agreement, even when his evasions left the point quite muddled and his partner in conversation often quite frustrated.” (Kettler, Meja and Stehr, 1984: 155) Alfred Meusel, a participant in the original sociology of knowledge dispute, hinted at something similar when he complained of Mannheim’s “intellectual liberality” and taxed his lack of courage to draw firm political and intellectual boundaries (Kettler and Meja, 1995: 118, 282). A more sympathetic reading of Mannheim’s conciliatory manner is offered by his foremost modern interpreters: Mannheim, they say, was preoccupied “with bridging mutually alien worlds, overcoming conflicts, and cultivating comprehensive unities.” (Kettler, Meja and Stehr, 1984: 15)

Sociology and “the mistrust of thought”³⁹

The sociologist does not inquire into ‘Being in the world’ as a formal structure of existence as such but into the specific historically determined world in which any given human being lives. This delimiting of sociology appears harmless, as if all it did was define the discipline’s field of competence. It becomes a threat to philosophy only at the point when it claims the world can be investigated only in its particulars, not

39 Arendt’s essay refers repeatedly to *Geist*, *Geistigkeit*, and *das Geistige*. Robert and Rita Kimber, whose translation I use, observe that these terms may be rendered as “spirit” or “spirituality” but that in the context of Arendt’s review of Mannheim, they are more appropriately translated as “mind”, “intellect”, “thought” or “intellectual activity”, see Arendt (1990: 42).

as a formal structure of human existence. This calls into question the possibility of an ontological understanding of being” (Arendt, 1990: 33).⁴⁰ The nature of “reality” or “existence as such” is a problem which belongs to philosophy, and is of no concern here. However, what is to be regarded as “real” historically or sociologically at a given time is of importance to us and fortunately can be definitely ascertained. Inasmuch as man is a creature living primarily in history and society, the “existence” that surrounds him is never “existence as such,” but is always a concrete historical form of social existence. (Mannheim, 1936: 193–194)

We are now in a position to look more closely at Hannah Arendt’s estimation of Mannheim’s project. Saturated in the philosophical terminology of Heidegger and Jaspers, one is not surprised to see her review raise many of their concerns. It shows no trace of political interest.⁴¹ Published three years before Hitler’s seizure of power, Arendt had yet to develop her own political theory.⁴² Mannheim’s lament that all too often the “experience of contemplative types of men are arbitrarily imposed upon political reality,” later became a fundamental Arendtian motif (Ibid.: 175).⁴³ In 1930, however, protecting philosophy from an intellectual parvenu was of far greater moment to the fledgling scholar. And even then Arendt was less concerned

40 In this section I resort to the notation practice mentioned in footnote 34 above.

41 Nor does that of her first husband Günther Stern (later known as Günther Anders, also an erstwhile student of Heidegger’s) who wrote a parallel commentary in the prestigious journal of social science that Max Weber jointly edited until his death in 1920. See Anders (1930: 492–509). The article is translated in Meja and Stehr (1990: 183–185), as “On the so-called ‘existential connectedness’ of consciousness”. In 1981, Anders attached a coda to the republication of the article remarking that, as a student of philosophical anthropology and aesthetic theory, he had “virtually no familiarity with Hegel and Marx” (Ibid.: 194).

42 But she would begin to do so soon: 1929 was the year that Arendt commenced work on the book that eventually would be published as *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess* (Arendt, 1958), a scathing account on the follies of both inwardness and “exceptionalist” strategies among cultivated Jews.

43 See also p. 173 on the distinction between the “contemplative, intellectualist point of view and the living standpoint.” Arendt’s own contrast between the *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, and their alternative approaches to politics, is the pivot of *The Human Condition*.

to challenge sociology's existence as a field of enquiry—that lay in the future—than to examine its disquieting implications for philosophy in general and for its Heideggerian and Jasperian variants in particular.

Philosophy, Arendt begins, is the art of thinking *par excellence*; more than that, it offers the prospect of ontological understanding, of investigating the “Being of the what Is” (Arendt, 1990: 29), or what Jaspers calls *Existenz*: moments during which individuals, reflective and solitary, experiences their authentic self. For Jaspers such authenticity occurs in those “border situations” where the individual momentarily breaks with ordinary life in the habitual here and now, and recognizes his uniqueness and vulnerability. The mundane world, routinized and reified, is a “falling away” from this authenticity (Ibid.: 31). The possibility of *Dasein* “being itself”—a questioning being, pursuing its own unique possibilities—requires an extrication of that self from what Heidegger calls the “publicness of the ‘they’” (Ibid.: 32).

Sociology's root assumptions and priorities, as formulated by Mannheim, are very different, Arendt argues. Though a sociologist like Mannheim cannot escape entirely ontological questions—the “analytical de-structuring” (*Destruktion*) of reality he champions presupposes a reality that can be destructured⁴⁴—his attention is focussed “on the very thing that philosophy deems irrelevant” (Ibid.: 29): the ontic or everyday, the “What is” rather than the “Being of what Is.”⁴⁵ Furthermore, the mode of thinking that seeks to grasp the everyday, and render it coherent and meaningful, is typically bound to specific social situations, so that the primacy given by *Existenz* philosophers to the solitary moment and the search for authenticity it promises to reveal is bogus. For if thought is itself a function of social situations, there is simply no asocial, quintessentially individual, authenticity to be discovered. It follows, too, that philosophical reflection on some absolute reality is equally chimerical. Not only is (social) reality in constant

44 Mannheim (1936: 193) admits as much when he says that “a definite conception of ‘existence’ (*Sein*) . . . underlies” the distinction between ideology and utopia. Note, too, that Heidegger also employs the concept of *Destruktion* in his attempt to unravel the history of ontology. See Heidegger (1962: 19–27). Also, Heidegger (1988) describes the “three components” of the ontological method: reduction, construction, destruction (in that order); destruction is part of construction. The book is based on a lecture course delivered at the University of Marburg in the summer of 1927.

45 The distinction between “ontology” and the “ontical” comes from Heidegger (1962: 32–35).

transformation; it is also the source and impulse of the philosopher's own categories. It transpires that philosophy is thus parasitic on the very order it claims to transcend—the ontic and everyday—which, ironically is the “more original” (Ibid.: 30) i.e. the more basic reality that philosophy “has forgotten.” “From a sociological point of view philosophy can no longer yield any answers about the ‘Being of the What Is’, but is now revealed as one What is among others, bound to and entangled in the world of What Is and its motivations” (Ibid.: 30). The danger of sociology is not simply that it “relativizes” philosophy by historicizing thought, but that it attempts something far more radical: a “refutation” of philosophical enquiry by tracing all validity claims to the peculiar social locations from which they arise, hence “unmasking consciousness of the absolute as *ideology* (in the sense of “total ideology”) that is, as a consciousness that is unaware of being bound to the ontic precisely because of ontic conditions” (Ibid.: 30). Through its attack on the possibility of individual transcendence, sociology brings “even ‘peak experiences’ down to the level of [everyday, concrete] reality, making them subject to its historical continuity and its laws. In this view solitude can be understood, if at all, only as a negative mode of human existence (fear of and escape from the world or, as Mannheim puts it, a consciousness ‘that is not congruous with the world around it’.” (Ibid.: 31)

The problem with this epistemological deflation of solitude is not only that it banishes philosophy's concern with the authentic and non-authentic, which are now considered by the sociologist to be vacuous categories. Nor is it simply that the everyday world from which thought arises appears to be a structure of economic relations. The more basic problem is that Mannheimian sociology has caricatured the experience of both solitude and transcendence. Though Arendt acknowledges that detachment from “communal life” is no guarantee of authenticity, this is not to say that solitude and the transcendence of the everyday it allows are without purpose. On the contrary it is “a positive and genuine possibility of human life” (Ibid.: 38–39). Arendt claims that transcendence “can be a *positive* way of saying no the world without being utopian”, and in support of this contention she adduces the case of Christian brotherly love—an example also employed by Mannheim (Mannheim, 1936: 194–195). Its exemplar was St. Francis of Assisi, a man who lived in the world, who did not seek to escape it, and who was “guided by a transcendence that does not conceive of itself as realizable on earth” (Arendt, 1990: 40). Mannheim's ideal-typical schema is thus too procrustean; it ignores modes of being which are neither ideological nor uto-

pian. Moreover, that solitude is not tantamount to a simple “flight from the world” is also evidenced by Max Weber’s study of early Protestantism. Calvinists had an intense feeling that they were alone, with no possibility of priestly intercession, and with no way of knowing whether they constituted one of the elect. They were not animated by a “utopian” search for a better secular order; rather, the believer’s purpose was to do his duty and resist life’s pleasures and blandishments. Yet out of this inwardly solitary, detached, and transcendent consciousness came world-shaping activity which has done its share to impose an economic order on the individual from which today it is difficult to be free (Ibid.: 40–41). A final irony is that while sociology seeks to “unmask” thought, it can neither do without it nor convincingly deny its effectiveness in certain situations (Ibid.: 38). Besides, what else are Mannheim’s free-floating intelligentsia than a group whose thought is able to transcend the ideology and utopia of their times?

Behind Mannheim’s alleged denigration of Being, truth and authenticity, Arendt discerns both an emotion and a programme. The emotion is sociology’s “inherent *mistrust* of thought” (Ibid.: 39), or, as she puts it elsewhere, its “mistrust of the mind” (Ibid.: 33), a suspicion that Mannheim himself locates in the “homelessness” and deracination of modern intellectuals. No longer either a caste in its own right or an organic representative of a status group, the intelligentsia becomes free-floating and disenchanting, detached from a stable society, aware of multiple worlds and irreconcilable values. Their lack of belonging to any class or rank gives intellectuals a vantage point that enables them not to find some objective truth, but to decide on which set of current ideas is adequate—appropriate, realistic—to the prevailing *Zeitgeist*. “Ideology” and “utopia” refer to modes of thinking that are inappropriate to the time in which they are formulated, either because they are regressive, clinging quixotically to an outmoded past whose standards have ceased to be congruent with the current era, or because they look speculatively to a future that is as yet unlikely.⁴⁶ However, whereas “ideology”

46 Mannheim describes *both* ideology and utopia as “transcendent” orientations. Ideologies consist of ideas that are unrealizable under current conditions; they fall short of their ideals. One example he cites is the ideal of Christian brotherly love which cannot be lived consistently in a society that is class divided and exploitative. Utopias are transcendent in seeking a rupture with current arrangements that is potentially realizable. Utopias are not only incongruous with reality, as ideologies may be too. They seek fundamentally to shatter reality in the here-and-now. Mannheim grants

is chained to the past and thereby relinquishes all attempts to build a new order, “utopia” struggles to transform the present into the kind of world its visionaries wish to see established; “utopia” has the ability to create new realities and is thus a major source of power. Considered within this framework, philosophy looks very much like “ideology,” an intellectual pastime that doggedly retains a mode of thought that is not only incongruent with modern life, but also “forgets” its own social determination (Ibid.: 36). Sociology is the “unmasking” science.

I observed earlier that Mannheim was ambivalent about the tactic of unmasking. Arendt was not. Sociology’s “relativization” of Being, its “refutation” of the absolute by “unmasking consciousness . . . as ideology” (Ibid.: 30, 38), she condemned unreservedly. As a mature political theorist, even more than as a young existentialist philosopher, Arendt repeatedly attacked the implications of that language, arguing that it was a kind of formalism which denied the reality of events and domains; its sublimation into the language of “functionalism,” made it no less repugnant to her. Here we can simply note that in “Philosophy and Sociology,” Arendt avoids Mannheim’s use of the term *enthüllen* (which possesses a certain semantic complexity) and replaces it by the starkly negative verbs *demaskieren* (to unmask) and *entlarven* (to expose in the sense of revealing a person as a scoundrel) (Arendt, 1982b: 517, 525). Hence, even against Mannheim’s protestations against unmasking as an ultimately sterile approach to understanding, which the sociology of knowledge would transcend, Arendt associates his whole project with it.

If sociology’s emotion is a suspicion of thought, its programme, Arendt claimed, is to be the adjudicator of which kinds of consciousness are adequate and tenable in any given period. “Sociology claims to be the ‘key science’ because it alone is capable of revealing the determinants of thought”

that the distinction between ideology and utopia is somewhat blurred in real life, not least because many ideas that challenge the social and political order are deemed utopian by those happy with the way things are. In addition, it is the existing order that gives birth to utopias which then strain to transform it—just as feudal society harbored a bourgeoisie which, with its utopia of “freedom” eventually negated it. Ultimately, however, Mannheim’s criterion of demarcation between ideology and utopia is retroactive: the ability of the latter, as distinct from the former, to realize their goals; to, in other words, be successful in the project of transforming the world and, in some cases, “tearing it asunder”. See Mannheim (1936: 192–204).

(Ibid.: 37), of distinguishing ‘ideology’ from ‘utopia’—and tracing their social locations—and of insisting that “thought’s passion for the absolute is simply an unacknowledged forgetting of the conditional” (Arendt, 1990: 37). From sociology’s perspective, “human freedom, and with it the freedom of thought as such” are “mythical borderline” phenomena (Ibid.: 38).

Yet compared with psychoanalysis, sociology’s ambitions are relatively modest. Both sociology and psychoanalysis claim “to penetrate to a more original reality” than thought itself; both promote a form of “understanding” that proceeds not “directly”, taking consciousness in its own right, but by means of a “detour” to a world more primal; both “disciplines share a conception of thought as secondary and alien to reality.” Yet while sociology preserves, however derivatively, the validity of the intellectual realm by at least showing its relationship to social situations, psychoanalysis denies the validity of that realm altogether by insisting that it is nothing but the result of “repression” or “sublimation.” And more decisively still, whereas sociology proceeds historically, and thus takes for granted the realm of history itself, the locus of human freedom, psychoanalysis claims to have privileged access to “that very realm over which human beings do not have, and never have had, control, i.e. to the realm of the ahistorical” (Ibid.: 33). For this reason “the ‘reality’ of psychoanalysis is far more alien to thought than is that of sociology” whose method commits it to being “a historical discipline” (Ibid.: 34). Even so, sociology ends up with a view of reality which not only slights thought as a *sui generis* human capacity; it also has a restricted conception of reality itself. Sociology is above all concerned with “reality that exerts power over thought. Reality exerts power over thought because thought is at its origins alien to reality, as is shown by the example of ideology, which forgets the actual world that determines it” (Ibid.: 36).

The Intelligentsia

Of Mannheim’s many portraits in *Ideology and Utopia*, none is better remembered today than his depiction of the socially unattached intelligentsia (*freischwebende Intelligenz*), a stratum uniquely positioned to be the bearers of a science of politics (Mannheim, 1936: 155).⁴⁷ United by a common

47 On the pedigree of *Intelligenz* in Mannheim’s work, and its initial somewhat derogatory connotation, see Loader (1985: 89–90).

education and cultivation (*Bildung*), its members harbored the potential to rise above narrow partisanship, ease communication across class divides, and pursue an “advanced form of political science” that offered theoretical synthesis and political vision. Mannheim was no stranger to intellectual fanaticism, and he deplored it. He understood that detachment was a matter of degree; or, rather, a matter of location and discipline. But he also believed that the *Intelligenz* embodied a force for good in a world of cynicism and special pleading. An alternative to party indoctrination and ideology, “watchmen in an otherwise pitch dark night,” intellectuals could provide a forum for wisdom “in universities or in specialized higher institutions of learning”.⁴⁸ The intelligentsia, in Mannheim’s specific use of the term, were not identical with all those “who bear the outward insignia of education”. They represent “those few among them who, consciously or unconsciously, are interested in something else than success”—most importantly, being a social bulwark against routinized complacency. And today, Mannheim opined, the socially unattached *Intelligenz* are needed more than ever. The pacification of the workers’ movement, attendant on its own institutionalization, presages an age without obvious social tensions, an era of adaptation and moral torpor. Under those conditions, intellectuals are free to become hardened sceptics, ideological revivalists, or aesthetic quietists, paths that already being taken by many of their number. But Mannheim hoped ardently for an alternative course: that at least some intellectuals would remain true to the utopian impulse for change and renewal (Ibid.: 258–260).

The *Intelligenz* was that rare thing: an entity capable of a prudentialism and principle, vision without fanaticism, realism with ideals. But transcending myopic antagonism required something more than a socially unattached stratum. It demanded a distinctive pedagogy enshrined in the sociology of knowledge. Current political education, Mannheim cautioned, was dominated by party schools, each with its own agendas and animosities, each limited by its own assumptions. On that basis, politics all too often degenerated into polemic. A new kind of training was called for, one that would not sanitize politics but allow a forum in which “a relatively free choice among alternatives” might be enabled (Ibid.: 183). Political interests, far from being extinguished, would be transmuted, by means of a “prior total orientation”, into a

48 Phrases in quotation marks come from Mannheim (1936: 153–164).

more self-critical one. It is mistaken, Mannheim emphasizes, to conceive of politics as tantamount to radical slogans or revolutionary initiatives. Responsible governance is required too. But that is only possible when one understands the complex social conditions on which politics depends. The sociology of knowledge promotes such understanding because it is a method capable of controlled replication. It allows those who employ it the following formula:

Given such and such interests, in a given juncture of events, there will follow such and such a type of thinking and such and such a view of the total social process. However, what these specific sets of interests will be depends on the specific set of traditions which, in turn, depends on the structural determinants of the social situation. Only he who is able to formulate the problem in such a manner is in the position to transmit to others a survey of the structure of the political scene, and to aid them in getting a relatively complete conception of the whole.⁴⁹ (Ibid.: 163)

Furthermore, a “survey” of the political scene would be considerably enhanced by the creation of independent institutes of higher learning, charged with the responsibility of training aspirant politicians in history, law, and economics, and introducing them to “the objective technique of mass-domination, and the formation and control of public opinion” (Ibid.: 183). The sociology of knowledge is the prism through which such subjects should be taught, the scientific organon of political knowledge. The educational centres it inspired would bring together people of contrasting temperaments and persuasions to ensure a many-sided illumination (Ibid.: 183–184). Evaluative rather than simply bureaucratic, yet technically suited to the specialized conditions of today, sociological training would present students with a range of alternatives, “a total perspective which embraces all points of view.” (Ibid.: 172) It would infuse fledgling politicians with a sense of

49 The phrasing is redolent of Max Weber’s “Science as a Vocation,” in Weber (1970: 151); while the ending of Mannheim’s essay, with its fear of mediocrity, and a world bereft of heroism and ideals, reminds one of the concluding lines of *The Protestant Ethic and the “Spirit” of Capitalism*. As with Weber, Mannheim’s disquisition on the loss of utopian élan and the consolidation of complacency, is attributed, paradoxically, to man’s quest for “rational mastery”. The influence of Weber on Mannheim is a major theme of Colin Loader’s book, cited above.

realism, complexity, discrimination, and flexibility, and, most of all, the capacity to make responsible decisions. Indeed the sociology of knowledge is itself premised on such a decision, one in “favour of dynamic intellectual mediation.” (Ibid.: 189) Its promise is to enlarge the scope of decision making. Recognizing the environments that shape our thoughts, our categories and our lives does not mean a renunciation of freedom; it is the road to it. For the more we understand about the forces that constitute our social being, the better able we are to liberate ourselves from unconscious impulses, and to make informed “situational diagnoses” of our time (Ibid.: 45).⁵⁰ In short, the sociology of knowledge offers “the possibility of the scientific guidance of political life” (Ibid.: 5) based on increased “transparency,” calculation, broad prediction of the correspondence between collective interests and modes of thought, and hence control (Ibid.: 189–190).⁵¹

What did Arendt think about Mannheim’s account of the *Intelligenz*? Her review of *Ideology and Utopia* gives us no clear answer. It is likely that Arendt was sceptical or critical, as she was with the book as a whole. Of one thing we can be certain: that shortly thereafter she went on to develop a series of sketches of intellectuals that stressed their conformism, irresponsibility and unworldly character. To that extent, contemporary developments refuted Mannheim’s aspirations for the socially unattached *Intelligenz*. Weimar’s collapse and its aftermath had revealed an intelligentsia far too social and far too attached; Arendt recorded that conviction in a 1964 television interview with the German commentator and cultural critic Günter Gaus. Of course, she had expected enemies. Enemies were natural. But that her friends, fellow intellectuals prominent among them, would disown the republic and so quickly fall into goose step with the Nazis was far more shocking—and revealing: “it was as if an empty space formed around one.”

I lived in an intellectual milieu, but I also knew other people. And among intellectuals *Gleichschaltung* [compliant synchronization] was the rule, so to speak. But not among the others. And I never forgot that. I left Germany dominated by the idea—of course somewhat exaggerat-

50 The same point appears in Mannheim (1936: 189). “Actually, it is the one who is ignorant of the significant determining factors and who acts under the immediate pressure of determinants unknown to him who is least free and most thoroughly predetermined in his conduct.”

51 Cf. pp. 47–48 where control is also emphasized.

ed. Never again! I shall never again get involved in any kind of intellectual business. I want nothing to do with that lot Arendt. (1994b: 11)

Did she still feel that way, asked her interviewer? Not to the same degree, Arendt replied. Nor did she personalize matters as much. What had astonished her at the time was not the compliance of those who had a family to protect. It was the credulity of intellectuals who, for however short a period, “really believed in Nazism.” Now she understood that these intellectuals “were trapped by their own ideas” as intellectuals so often are, for “it belongs to the essence of being an intellectual that one fabricates ideas about everything.” (Ibid.: 11)

Arendt distinguished among a variety of professors who supported National Socialism: those who cooperated passively; those who actually adopted Nazi ideology for a shorter or longer time; and true believers who owed their careers to the regime (Arendt, 1973: 339).⁵² Among the second type were academics such as Carl Schmitt, Gerhard Kittel, Hans Freyer, Walter Frank, and Heidegger, who briefly served the Reich and lent it the tincture of respectability. Their naïveté was quickly exposed. The Nazis’ own credo had nothing in common with arguments of real profundity. What the Nazis wanted most was “techniques and technicians with no ideas at all or educated from the beginning in only Nazi ideas.” (Arendt, 1994b: 202) Least of all did the Nazis need real scholars like Schmitt or like Heidegger “whose enthusiasm for the Third Reich was matched only by his ignorance of what he was talking about,” and who was soon replaced by the nonentity Alfred Bäumler.⁵³ Significantly, however, it was not the crimes of the Third Reich that repelled many of its initial intellectual supporters. It was the regime’s *vulgarity*. And after the war ended, many German intellectuals forgave their own collusion by rationalizing their deeds, or by projecting themselves as secret opponents of the regime.

The degeneration of scholars into Nazis was Arendt’s first, and most bracing, experience of how great thinkers could behave in an unworldly

52 Drawing on, but mildly dissenting from Weinreich (1946).

53 “Most interesting is the example of the jurist Carl Schmitt, whose very ingenious theories about the end of democracy and legal government still make arresting reading; as early as the middle thirties, he was replaced by the Nazis’ own brand of political and legal theorists, such as Hans Frank, the later governor of Poland, Gottfried Neesse, and Reinhard Hoehn,” see Arendt (1973: 339).

manner. But we might also note that Mannheim's notion of an intellectual elite, charged with purveying the sociology of knowledge to politicians, entails an educative mode of politics that Arendt herself later emphatically rejected. For Arendt, the idea that one can *politically* educate adults entails a misunderstanding of the nature of politics. In a political dialogue, people argue in principle as equals. Such equality is based on the citizenship conferred on them in virtue of being a member not of a species but of a polity. Communication proceeds through discussion and accommodation as actors seek to persuade each other of their case. Conversely, wherever a scientific argument is invoked in the political realm, discussion and accommodation become subordinated to instruction. Education, after all, is a social activity that is vertical and unequal by its very nature. It rests on the authority of the teacher to teach, and that authority is based on his or her accredited competence in a particular area. Wherever the educative model underpins a conception of politics, disagreement is seen as the result of error or mystification; consciousness has to be "raised," opinions corrected. The citizen is envisaged as a child to be taught, and education is extended to a sphere where it has no business to be. For whoever "wants to educate adults really wants to act as their guardian and prevent them from political activity. Since one cannot educate adults, the word 'education' has an evil sound in politics." (Arendt, 1993: 177) The idea that sociologists might "train" politicians was for Arendt a relapse into ersatz Platonism, with its guardians and philosopher kings.

Conclusion

Arendt recognized *Ideology and Utopia* as a serious, scholarly and provocative book. It deserved to be rebutted rather than dismissed out of hand. Had she never embarked on a career as a political writer, historians of sociology might today depict her as a young philosopher considerably less hostile to sociology than most of her philosophical contemporaries. That impression would gain added credence by perusing her subsequent review of Hans Weil's [The Origin of the German Cultural Principle], a sociological analysis of the development of the German cultural idea from the time of Herder. Written under Mannheim's auspices, it was published in the series he edited entitled [Writings on Philosophy and Sociology]. Even when disagreeing with its arguments, Arendt refers to the book in glowing terms, calling it "weighty and stimulating," and, in its "predominantly sociological analysis

[yielding] one of the best of the modern portrayals of Humboldt.”⁵⁴ Soon everything was to change. After Arendt’s exile in America she would subject sociology to intensive criticism, claiming that its approach was “abominable” and that its categories systematically falsified the experience of totalitarianism. But that is another story and must be told at another time.

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54 Arendt’s review was published in a journal with a strong sociological pedigree, the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* (Arendt, 1931: 200-205); the quotations are, respectively, from pp. 200 and 203.

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哲學、社會學與知識份子： 當漢娜·鄂蘭遇上曼海姆與知識社會學

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摘 要

本文將檢視漢娜·鄂蘭 (Hannah Arendt) 對《意識型態與烏托邦》(Ideology and Utopia) ——即曼海姆 (Karl Mannheim) 藉以倡議知識社會學 (sociology of knowledge) 的基本論據——的評價。本文將描述這場遭遇的背景與內容，並考察其中某些與鄂蘭後期思想有關的意涵。

從長程的視角出發，鄂蘭年輕時與知識社會學之交鋒顯得極為重要。首先，這是她唯一一次直接處理重要的社會學作品。其次，鄂蘭對曼海姆的評論預示了她後來對馬克思主義社會學式的「揭露」(unmasking) 策略的厭惡，並且預示了她對「功能論」的反感。鄂蘭流亡至美國後，便開始大力批判社會學，宣稱社會學的研究取徑是「糟糕」的，且社會學的範疇有系統地歪曲了極權主義的經驗。

關鍵字：鄂蘭、曼海姆、知識社會學、知識份子、極權主義