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Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia* and the public role of sociology

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Abstract

Karl Mannheim's work, particularly his book *Ideology and Utopia*, has considerable relevance to current concerns about the public role of sociology. However, this is not widely recognised, and key aspects of his thought have frequently been neglected or disparaged. In this article the background to Mannheim's work is outlined, and a summary provided of the central argument of *Ideology and Utopia*, comparing this with the positions taken by Max Weber and Georg Lukács, both of whom were important influences on Mannheim. The major criticisms of, and problems with, Mannheim's argument are then addressed. While he was by no means completely successful in putting forward a convincing conception of sociology's public role, there is a great deal to be learned from his work, and from the manner in which he pursued it.

Keywords

Georg Lukács, Karl Mannheim, Max Weber, public role of sociology, relationism, sociology of knowledge

Today, there is a great deal of emphasis on the public function of the social sciences, from demands that they aim at 'impacting' on government policy, or on commercial or professional practice, to an insistence on their 'critical' role in challenging and changing the status quo. A variety of models have been assumed here: social scientists disseminating their findings directly to potential 'users'; serving as government advisers; engaging in public debates about policy issues; acting as advocates for particular groups or causes; or carrying out participatory forms of research *with* people directed towards *their* goals. But attempts to conceptualise the public role of sociology are far from new. In this article

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I examine Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*, which emphasised the role the discipline could play in political education. He saw sociology as essential to the operation of modern societies if the twin dangers of anarchy and totalitarianism were to be avoided. Recognition of the contemporary relevance of his work has often been confined to viewing him, at best, as one of the founders of the sociology of knowledge, but the implications of his arguments are more wide-ranging; and, early on, they were located within a very distinctive conception of the task of sociology (Loader and Kettler, 2002).

Mannheim's arguments have frequently been rejected without being given the careful consideration they warrant. They have, for example, been dismissed as relativistic, and his idea of a 'free-floating intelligentsia' has been widely ridiculed. Indeed, during the course of his life, and after his death, Mannheim's work was subjected to an enormous amount of criticism, and from diverse directions (Frisby, 1983: ch. 5; Kettler and Meja, 1994; Meja and Stehr, 1990). Much of this was based on caricature. This is true both of Popper's (1945: ch. 23) discussion of the sociology of knowledge in *The Open Society and its Enemies*, and of a great deal of the criticism by Marxists (see, for instance, Adorno, 1967; Goldmann, 1969: 51–52; Lukács, 1980: ch. 6, pt. 5).[1] While it is true that Mannheim's position raises serious questions, there is a great deal to learn from it. Furthermore, his arguments should be evaluated against alternatives, rather than simply pilloried on their own.

One reason why Mannheim's work has not always been given the attention it deserves is that there are undoubtedly obstacles in making adequate sense of it. First, there is the essayistic and discursive character of his writings, along with the complexity of the issues he was addressing. Also significant is the fact that the background literature on which he drew, and the contemporary situation to which he was responding, are unfamiliar to most readers today. Fortunately, in the past several decades a considerable literature has appeared that provides more accurate commentary on Mannheim's work, and fills in the background to it. I will draw heavily on this literature here.[2]

I begin by sketching the context in which Mannheim developed his ideas. Doing so is in line with his own conception of the requirements of the sociology of knowledge, but it is also of importance given that his work was very much shaped by contemporary circumstances and by a distinctive cultural background. I will then outline Mannheim's conception of sociology and its public role, relying primarily on the argument presented in his book *Ideology and Utopia* (Mannheim, 1936).[3] Following this, I will assess his position in the context of some alternative views that were prevalent at the time he was writing.

Early context

Mannheim was born in Budapest in 1893 to a Hungarian father and German mother, both of Jewish descent. His initial education was in that city, though before the First World War he went to Berlin (where he studied with Simmel). During the course of his childhood and youth there had been considerable pressure for political and cultural reform in Hungary, which was still a largely agrarian country governed by the nobility and administered by a gentry class. There was a thriving middle class in Budapest, promoting commercial and cultural change, cosmopolitan in orientation, looking towards Austria and

Germany in particular, and seeking to redefine Hungarian national identity in more Western terms. One example of the pressure for reform was the establishment of a Sociological Society by Oszkár Jászi and others, a precursor of the Hungarian Sociological Association (Kulcsár, 1969). This was primarily concerned with applying Western socio-logical and political ideas to Hungarian society. Jászi combined a commitment to liberal values with an insistence on the need for the knowledge provided by sociology, exempli-fied by the work of Comte and Spencer. Mannheim became closely involved in this society, for example giving lectures as part of the free school it set up for workers and university students.

However, during the First World War he also participated in a group with a very dif-ferent orientation, one closer to the outlook that is often thought to be symptomatic of the last years of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century in Germany and Austria (Schorske, 1979). While still at school, he had already been in contact with Georg Lukács, who was a few years older, and when the latter, along with some other writers and artists, set up a journal and a Sunday Circle to discuss the ideas they were interested in, Mannheim joined. They believed that there was a fundamental cultural crisis in the West, reflected in a profound sense of alienation from the modern world.[4] Lukács exemplified this sense of alienation, going through a phase in which he took tragedy to be the form of literature that best represented the nature of human existence, though he later shifted to a more redemptive view (Congdon, 1983). While, from early on, Lukács was influenced by the work of Marx, he read this from the perspective of late Romantic literature, and through the writings of Fichte, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Simmel, as well as the novels of Dostoevsky and an interest in mysticism. These influences were important for Mannheim too, but, like Lukács, his ideas were also strongly shaped as regards epistemology by neo-Kantianism and *Lebensphilosophie*, especially the hermeneutics of Dilthey. Central here was the idea of a distinctive form of cultural science and a rejection of positivism, particularly its treatment of natural science and mathematics as the model for humanistic and social inquiry.[5]

The orientation of this group is reflected in Lukács' (1916) *The Theory of the Novel*, and also presented in Mannheim's (1917) published talk on 'Soul and Culture', this constituting the opening lecture of a series given by members of the group. In this lec-ture, in terms close to those of Simmel, Mannheim deplores the gap between individual and objective culture, and the desiccation of the latter – its loss of vitality because no longer informed by the aspirations, concerns, and feelings of the new generation and the new times they faced.[6] He argues that any cultural expression is inevitably less than the soul that produced it, because language and culture are an alien medium; yet, at the same time, it is more than the soul that produced it because it operates independently, according to its own laws.[7] As a result, cultural expression does not provide for direct communion with others; more than this, it can represent a form of estrangement – what Simmel (1997) referred to as 'the tragedy of culture'. Following Lukács, Mannheim claimed that a stage of historical development had been reached where the gap between objective culture and the vitality of the soul had become extreme, resulting in an exac-erbated sense of alienation.

Hungary was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which sided with Imperial Germany in the First World War. In the aftermath of defeat, while it gained independence

it was subject to economic hardship and to invasion of its territory by other nations, supported by the French. The Russian Revolution and the establishment of the USSR further de-stabilised the situation by promoting the prospect of world-wide revolution. The coalition government that took control in 1918, in which Jászi was involved, failed to resolve the problems it faced. Already influenced by Marxism to some degree, and by the anarcho-syndicalism of Erwin Szabó, Lukács joined the Communist Party and participated in the new Social Democratic-Communist government that replaced the first, liberal, regime. Formally his role was deputy cultural commissar, but in fact he took charge of educational and cultural institutions. He made a large number of replacement appointments, with Mannheim being assigned to work in the college of the University of Budapest concerned with preparing teachers for secondary schools (a key area of policy for the regime). While Mannheim did not follow Lukács in embracing Marxism, when the Communist government fell, after less than a year, both of them were forced into exile.[8] Following a brief stay in Vienna, where Lukács and other members of the Sunday Circle were now based, Mannheim returned to Germany, going to Freiburg and then to Heidelberg, where he completed his studies with Alfred Weber, and began to forge an academic career. Later, he became professor of sociology at the University of Frankfurt at the relatively young age of 36. However, in 1933 he was again forced into exile with the rise to power of the National Socialists, eventually taking up residence and an academic position in London, initially a junior position at the London School of Economics, but eventually gaining a chair at the London Institute of Education. He died in London at the age of 54.

Mannheim on sociology and politics

In outlining Mannheim's conception of the relationship between sociology and politics, I will focus primarily on *Ideology and Utopia*, which was published in Germany in 1929, and later translated into English with additional chapters in 1936.[9] In this work, Mannheim seems to substitute a new problem for the previous one that had preoccupied him about the disengagement between objective and subjective culture, one highlighted in his break with Lukács – that of fundamental ideological divisions within the emerging democratic arena and how the political anarchy that these threatened to produce could be avoided and societal development facilitated.

In an important respect, Mannheim begins from the work of Max Weber, particularly the latter's article on 'Objectivity' (Weber, 1949) and his lectures on the vocations of science and of politics (Owen and Strong, 2004), where he emphasises the value conflict that is characteristic of modernity. It has been suggested that the central chapter of the German edition of *Ideology and Utopia* was originally written as a discussion of his work, which had very wide influence during the Weimar Republic. Weber is reported to have remarked that a modern scholar must, if honest, admit that 'he could not have accomplished crucial parts of his own work without the contributions of Marx and Nietzsche'. This is because they pose two key questions: 'What is the relationship between science and politics?' and 'What is the meaning and value of science?' (see Owen and Strong, 2004: xix; the original citation is to Baumgarten, 1964: 554). And these are questions that are at the centre of Mannheim's book, with a particular focus on the character and public role of sociology as a science.

Mannheim's writings are essayistic rather than systematic in character, and this includes *Ideology and Utopia* (Kettler et al., 1984). Nevertheless, a coherent overall argument can be identified in that book, as follows:

1. He draws a distinction between partial and total ideology. The former is a universal feature of human society: people's views are often treated as false because distorted by their own interests or prejudices. The focus here is usually on specific actions and utterances, and the motivations seen as causing the distortion very often consist of types of interest that anyone can have – they are part of human nature rather than being specific to some particular group. However, Mannheim argues that, in Europe since the early nineteenth century, the concept of total ideology has emerged: increasingly, the views of people belonging to different groups have been treated as reflecting their commitment to perspectives that involve fundamentally conflicting assumptions, these reflecting their social positions. Thus, there have emerged competing political worldviews that differ in their ontological presuppositions about the nature of society and in the very modes of thinking on which they rely. Examples he identifies are conservatism, liberalism, socialism, and fascism.

2. This development reflects and exacerbates a deep crisis, since now there is not only class conflict in the economic and political spheres but also in the intellectual sphere. Representatives of each worldview dismiss that of others *in toto* as fundamentally misconceived, and/or simply talk past one another when they engage in debates. Here, Mannheim is no doubt drawing on his experience of post-war Budapest and Weimar Germany.

3. One of the disturbing implications of this feature of modern society is that it undercuts any possibility of an objective standpoint above those of different social groups. Social scientists cannot step outside the societal process that produces these conflicting perspectives – they are necessarily implicated in it. However, Mannheim argues that their work is made possible by, and has a capacity to shape events because of, a further development: a move towards what he refers to as a *general* conception of total ideology, where some partisans of ideologies begin to recognise that their own views (not just those of others) are socially determined, and are therefore perspectival.

4. Indeed, this crisis provides for, and demands, a sociological approach – in particular, it calls for the sociology of knowledge. This can, first of all, *describe* the political perspectives corresponding to different social classes and generational groups, along with the circumstances in which these arise, showing the interconnections between the two. This brings to attention what, for the protagonists, would otherwise remain largely below their level of consciousness. Mannheim shows what this would involve in his analysis of conservatism (Wolff, 2017) and in his discussion of this ideology and of others in Part III of *Ideology and Utopia*. Also relevant here are his discussions of ideological competition and of generational differences in perspective (Mannheim, 1952: chs. 5, 7). Secondly, Mannheim argues that, in examining these conflicting worldviews, sociologists can work towards identifying what is true and false, or at least what is socially

functional and dysfunctional, in each one; thereby providing a more accurate and comprehensive picture of the developing social situation. This does not mean that sociologists can produce a final, all-encompassing account; this is not possible because what is being studied is a dynamic, developing whole. The most that can be expected is the production of a broader and more accurate understanding than can be obtained from any single political perspective.

5. Mannheim suggests that it is possible for social scientists, as intellectuals, to carry out these tasks, of description and evaluation, because they participate in an epistemic community which includes members from various social classes and generations. As a result, their tendency to take for granted their own background perspectives will be challenged, and they will be forced to be more reflective and open-minded; this facilitated by their common educational experience. Here we have Mannheim's notion of 'socially unattached intellectuals'.[10] He contrasts this with intellectuals attaching themselves organically to particular classes, one example of this being his compatriot and mentor Lukács. However, he argues that even those who choose this other option will inevitably introduce something of the required holistic perspective into the thinking of the class which they support.

6. In the third and final chapter of the German edition of his book (Part IV of the English edition), Mannheim goes on to distinguish between those total ideologies that are adapted to past circumstances rather than to the present (to which, confusingly, he gives the specific name 'ideologies') and those that are directed towards the future and involve a substantial break with the existing social order (utopias). His argument is that the task of the intellectual is to navigate between these two sorts of total ideology in order to provide a basis for political decision-making in the present. So, standing between ideology and utopia, but drawing on both, is sociology, which can offer a perspective that is attuned to present circumstances and indicate how best to move forward. What Mannheim appears to have in mind here is the sociology of knowledge acting as a kind of queen science, providing the basis for more specific social scientific inquiries as well as for political action – indeed, for what he calls a scientific politics.[11] The task is to try to bring under rational control what would otherwise remain irrational, and is potentially dangerous as well as productive; but it is a continual task of investigation and adaptation, one that can never be fully achieved or completed.

7. Mannheim believes that in this way sociology can play a crucial role in the political education of future leaders and of citizens generally. And he seems to have pursued this task in his own work as a university professor, educating students who would go on to play leading roles in society (Mannheim, 2001b).

As already indicated, Mannheim's argument needs to be understood, at least in part, as responding to the positions of Max Weber and Georg Lukács. Lukács was, of course, himself strongly influenced by Weber, but took a very different path. *Ideology and Utopia* is sometimes viewed as a bourgeois version of *History and Class Consciousness*, (Lukács 1971b), and it is certainly true that, in many respects, it was directly prompted by it – Mannheim puts forward a rival conceptualisation of the problem at the heart of the

contemporary crisis, and a different strategy for dealing with it. Where Lukács promotes a Hegelianised version of Marxism as representing the true consciousness of the working class, whose revolutionary overthrow of capitalism will resolve the crisis, Mannheim argues for the sociology of knowledge as a more effective means of dealing with the crisis of modernity. While, in some respects, this makes him closer to Weber, he too goes his own way – and, like Lukács, draws on Hegel and Dilthey.[12]

Weber insisted that science, even in the broad German sense of *Wissenschaft*, cannot validate judgements about what is good or bad, right or wrong, and therefore is not able to set the goals of action. However, at the same time he argued that it *could* make an important contribution to political action by providing factual knowledge (including 'inconvenient' facts) about the situation in which action must take place, about the means that may be necessary to produce particular results, and about the probable consequences of decisions made. It could also clarify and correct inferences from fundamental value principles to value-judgements about specific situations (Bruun, 2007). Complementing Weber's insistence on the distinction between the goal of science and the sort of value-judgements that are essential to politics is his rejection of what he calls an 'ethics of conviction' in favour of an 'ethics of responsibility', in which evaluative and prescriptive judgements are tempered not just by recognition of what is and is not feasible but also (following Machiavelli) by an awareness that harm may need to be done in order to achieve some kinds of good. He saw this political realism as the complement to a science that respected its proper limits, scientific research and politics each providing resources for the other; both being aspects of the process of rationalisation that he regarded as the dominant and characteristic trend in the West, one about which he was himself ambivalent.[13]

Thus, Weber insisted on a sharp distinction between theoretical and practical reason, the former concerned with facts, the second with producing value-judgements. Science is limited to producing factual knowledge, it cannot on its own validate value-conclusions. This is because the fundamental value principles that underpin these conclusions cannot be adopted rationally – they are necessarily a matter of personal commitment; and they frequently conflict in their implications. At the same time, Weber emphasised the relations between facts and values. On one side, practical value judgements necessarily rely upon factual assumptions that can be supplied or tested by scientific investigation. On the other, social science depends not only upon epistemic values, such as truth, but also on practical values providing a framework for identifying research questions that are of contemporary relevance, and therefore worth investigating.

Mannheim inherits from Weber the idea that sociological research can play a key role in politics, and he also takes over his insistence that there is an obligation to subject both factual and value assumptions to scrutiny.[14] This is a form of integrity that Weber regarded as the sole value that universities should teach. In parallel terms, Mannheim's commitment to rational appraisal of assumptions is central to the sort of political education that he believed was the key function of sociology (Loader and Kettler, 2002). However, he rejects Weber's sharp distinction between theoretical and practical reason, and his restriction of sociology to the production of factual knowledge. Mannheim argues that his own proposed solution to the problem – careful investigation of competing worldviews and their social contexts – can supply not only factual knowledge of the

world but also assessments of the value conclusions built into those worldviews.[15] Furthermore, he doubts that social scientists can produce sound factual knowledge simply by trying to counter any biasing effect of their value-commitments and prior assumptions, in the way that Weber and others assumed. He treats the sources of potential bias as deeper, and its effects as more pervasive, than this implies. This is why the sociology of knowledge is necessary; serving in a manner somewhat analogous to psychoanalysis (Mannheim, 1953: 213).

Unlike Lukács, Mannheim does not believe that any of the currently prevailing political perspectives – such as the socialism or communism that corresponds to the perspective of the working class – represents an epistemically privileged standpoint. On the contrary, he insists that we should assume that both truth and falsity, insight and illusion, will be found in all political perspectives. At the same time, as already noted, like Lukács he thinks that theoretical and practical reason can be unified, indeed that they are unified in and through a dialectical process of societal development. He assumes that, because the various perspectives are aspects of this process, inferences about what ought to be done can be derived directly from studying them: the distinction between factual and value issues is thereby 'overcome'. In this respect he blends together the liberal assumption that political discussion across different perspectives can reach truth, or at least produce compromise, with the Marxist idea that the contending positions reflect real social forces, so that what is required is a much more complex and less determinate process: a reflexive examination of the contending views in order to understand them and the forces behind them, this offering the prospect of more genuinely objective knowledge – in the form of a wider, multi-faceted perspective – that may reveal what would be in the common interest. In effect, Mannheim believes that intellectuals can participate consciously in the process of dialectical societal development, through facilitating the sort of intellectual synthesis of previously conflicting orientations that is its engine. But they can only do this because the irrational tendencies characteristic of the age operate psychologically within them. In 1930, in his introductory sociology lectures to students at Frankfurt, he states that:

> Dialectical thinking is not when one schematically sets thesis, antithesis, and synthesis against one another, but rather when one allows the mutually destructive enactments of living reality to assert themselves *(zur Geltung kommen)* within oneself, and then strives forward to a solution. I convey the thesis with everything that speaks for something *(Sache)*, drawing on an inner experiential process. Now I am trying to show a counter-movement, that which tells against that thing, and then finally, drawing on the historical powers living in us, to identify whatever comes into being *(zustande)* in ourselves. I want to formulate the alternatives as antithetical and then to find a relative equilibrium for our time. (Mannheim, 2001: 41)

It is this dialectical conception of historical development that allows the identification of progressive and regressive policies; it also underwrites the very possibility of intellectuals being in a position to gain a synthetic perspective, since they are a product of it.[16]

Mannheim rejects what has been referred to as Weber's decisionism: his insistence that value commitments are adopted in a non-rational manner that cannot be rationalised. The task of sociology is precisely to rationalise these decisions, to bring them under conscious control as far as possible. In this respect he differs from influential contemporaries who were also influenced by Weber and took decisionism even further than he had

done: the sociologist Hans Freyer and the legal philosopher Carl Schmitt. In effect, they did not attempt to rationalise the irrational but declared acceptance of it via a leap of faith. Where Lukács had leapt into the arms of communism, they went in the direction of fascism (Muller, 1991).

At the same time, Mannheim shares with Freyer the idea that history is a vital process in which the sociologist participates and through which he or she will be (and must be) changed, even while seeking to exercise control over it. In Mannheim's case what seems to have been involved is a form of neo-Hegelianism, filtered through the work of Dilthey as well as that of Marx. He believed that a sociological approach was not just demanded by the times, but was also a product of them: sociologists must engage with the new attitudes emerging among the younger generation, but at the same time help its members *cultivate* those attitudes in ways that would facilitate the process of societal development.[17] The key aspect of this process of development, as Mannheim saw it, was democratisation: the increasing involvement of the whole population in the political process. He suggested that this required the development of a political elite recruited more widely than in the past, and the formation of attitudes on the part of the citizenry that would suit this new form of governance. Neither of these conditions were satisfied in Weimar Germany, and he believed that this was a major reason for the socio-political disorder which prevailed in the 1930s, this eventually leading to the collapse of the Republic and the takeover by the Nazis.

It is also necessary to locate Mannheim's argument in the context of his situation as a junior teacher of sociology in Heidelberg and later as professor at Frankfurt.[18] An influential idea at this time was that sociology could play an important role as the basis for republican political education, thereby underpinning the rather fragile state of the Weimar regime (Kettler, 2002). Mannheim's appointment to the chair at Frankfurt was encouraged by Carl Heinrich Becker, the Prussian Minister for Culture, precisely on this basis (see Loader and Kettler, 2002: 14–15). As already noted, Mannheim argued that it was important for universities to engage with the spontaneous views of students from different social classes, since these were a crucial sociocultural factor in the emerging situation. Equally, though, what was required was rational appraisal of these, so that students, rather than simply accepting and acting on their inherited ideological assumptions, would come to understand and assess different perspectives, and thereby be able to act as rational citizens and indeed as future political and administrative leaders. This would enable practical politics to transcend ideological divisions (see Loader and Kettler, 2002; Mannheim, 2001). While what Mannheim proposed was not a sociology that is directly in the service of politicians – it is not a form of policy science but a genuine academic discipline – he did nevertheless see it as very closely linked to current political concerns. In fact, he specifically warns against the danger of 'scholasticism', of investigating topics that are of little contemporary public importance.

Appraisal

What Mannheim attempted in *Ideology and Utopia* was extremely ambitious: his aim was not only to develop a viable focus and rationale for sociology as a newly established discipline in German universities, but also to do so in a way that would meet the political demands of the dramatic times in which he lived. Moreover, in this project he was in

competition with others who adopted somewhat different stances. For instance, on one side there was Leopold von Wiese, whose formal sociology represented a clearly but narrowly defined academic discipline that did not significantly overlap with competing disciplines, and was safely detached from current political concerns. On the other, there was Hans Freyer, whose view of sociology was more similar to that of Mannheim, albeit pointing in a very different political direction.[19] As I have explained, Mannheim believed that sociology was called for by the times, and that it could play a crucial role in mediating among conflicting political perspectives, and thereby provide a basis for progressive government under the new democratic conditions. At the same time, he regarded sociology as itself an emerging feature of the situation – a new form of consciousness – rather than an external invention being imposed upon it. He writes that 'the present structure of society makes possible a political science which will not be merely a party science, but a science of the whole. Political sociology, as the science which comprehends the whole political sphere, thus attains the stage of realisation' (Mannheim, 1936: 132). The task becomes to discern the character of this new discipline as it is emerging and to shape it in such a way as to serve its distinctive role, as quickly and effectively as possible.

What Mannheim puts forward is a very distinctive version of sociology. The sources on which he draws in *Ideology and Utopia* are almost entirely German: while he does refer, in one place, to the work of Pareto, there is no mention of Durkheim or Spencer (and just one citation of Comte), nor any reference to the considerable body of sociological work that had been produced in the United States by that time.[20] The significance of this is that he is operating within the tradition of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, a rather different configuration of disciplines from that in which sociology was located in most other European countries, one that was centred on what came to be called historicism (see Beiser, 2011; Mannheim, 1952: 84–133) and was closely related to philosophy, especially Romanticism and Idealism. Art history, philology, aesthetics, and even theology were included under this heading, just as much as political history, German historical economics, and sociology. The focus is on the distinctiveness of these human sciences, by comparison with physical science, and their grounding in hermeneutics. And Mannheim draws especially on the writings of Simmel and the Weber brothers, as well as on nineteenth-century German thought more widely, notably Hegel, Goethe, the Romantics, Dilthey, and the neo-Kantians, as well as authors who are much less well-known today.[21] Reflecting this, what he offers is a conception of sociology whose boundary with philosophy is fuzzy, to say the least.

So, in *Ideology and Utopia*, Mannheim locates sociology very much in the tradition of *Geisteswissenschaften*, and as specifically opposed to positivistic and psychologistic approaches to understanding human behaviour. One aspect of this is the socio-historical approach he adopts, another is his rejection of causal analysis in favour of hermeneutics, focusing on 'understanding' rather than 'explanation' (see Von Wright, 1971). A more distinctive feature, even among his German contemporaries, is that Mannheim identifies the discipline almost entirely with the sociology of knowledge: the main function of sociology, for him, seems to be to examine prevalent political worldviews and their social contexts, in order to understand them and to identify what is true and false within them, in order to develop a more objective perspective. This is sharply at odds with the

central preoccupations of Weber and Simmel, as well as with the rival contemporary versions of German sociology mentioned earlier.[22]

In some respects the conception of sociology that Mannheim puts forward is in the image of Marxism.[23] Aside from relying heavily on Marx's account of the infrastructure on which competing political perspectives are based – the development of social classes under capitalism – he also insists that sociology can have a direct relationship with political practice. And, as we have seen, he believes that it can produce normative not just factual conclusions. The model of Marxism, interpreted through Hegel, underpins his attempt to overcome any distinction between theoretical and practical reason, or at least to tie the two very closely together.[24]

A variety of problems can be, and have been, identified with this ambitious programme. In the remainder of this article I will examine the main ones.

The problem of relativism and the dialectic

Perhaps the most common criticism of *Ideology and Utopia* is that it implies a form of relativism, and therefore has nihilistic implications for science, and for social life generally.[25] Of course, Mannheim did not believe his approach to be relativistic – he coins the term 'relationism' as an alternative (Simonds, 1978: 166–167; for a parallel see Cassirer, 1910). In fact, he sees the task of sociology as to counter both the dogmatism and the relativism that were increasingly common in Weimar Germany (Mannheim, 1936: 237). He argues that this can *only* be done by acknowledging the fact that perspectives are related to social circumstances, rather than by trying to defend the traditional view of objectivity which assumes the existence of an external overarching perspective. Furthermore, Mannheim insists on both the possibility of synthesising different political perspectives and on the need for this. While critics argued that his account seems to provide no place for the sociologist to stand that would offer a vantage point across different perspectives, he would have insisted that this is too static a metaphor – as we have seen, he has a dynamic view of society, relying on the idea of dialectical societal development. He treats this as underwriting the possibility of objective knowledge, or at least of approximations to it, as immanent rather than transcendent. Thus, there is an important sense in which his approach is no more relativistic than that of Marx or Hegel. Like them, he views factual knowledge of the world, as well as values and attitudes, as socio-culturally variable, but at the same time he sketches a means by which a more objective perspective can be gained. Furthermore, he emphasises that what is demanded here is empirical investigation, the structural analysis of thought and its social contexts, by contrast with the 'speculative' approach of Hegel.

There are, of course, well-known criticisms of this notion of dialectical societal development, especially when it assumes a historical teleology, which was certainly the case with Hegel and with the early position of Marx. It is less clear whether Mannheim relies on such an assumption, but it is also questionable whether the concept of dialectical development can be sustained without this. After all, the analogy on which it relies would no longer be intellectual discussion that has an inbuilt tendency towards discovery of the truth but rather, potentially at least, a contingent and rambling conversation. For Hegel, the capacity to identify what is true and false arises at the end of history, in other words

retrospectively. By contrast, both Marx and Mannheim assume that it is possible, during the course of historical development, to identify what is true and what is false; though they seek to justify this in different ways.

Closely associated with this difference from Hegel is another one, this time regarding the role of conscious and directed action in the historical process. For Hegel, the dialectical development of the spirit takes place autonomously, without those involved acting deliberately to bring it about (indeed, they could not know how to do this). However, for Marx, the working class's consciousness of its role in overthrowing capitalism is a requirement if this goal is to be achieved: that class must change from being 'in-itself' to being 'for-itself. And this was a central emphasis in Lukács' writings (see Frisby, 1983: 89–93). For Mannheim, too, the process of dialectical development requires that actors become conscious of its character and act on the basis of this. This is true even though he does not adopt a stage theory, in the manner of Hegel and Marx, but rather assumes a process of continuous development: change is always occurring, and trends can be identified, progressive ones encouraged and regressive ones countered. Understanding must be continually revised, and further action taken to try to bring events under control so that human needs and ideals are satisfied – but without there being any immanent tendency that guarantees this.

Mannheim seems to have retained a commitment to the sort of liberalism represented by Oscar Jászi in Hungary in the 1920s (Kettler and Meja, 1995: ch. 1; Kettler et al., 1984: ch. 1) – in Anglo-American terms this would correspond broadly to what came to be called 'new liberalism' in Britain at the end of the nineteenth century, or perhaps even the 'new liberalism' of Dewey in the USA. In some respects it is similar to the Fabian conception of governance characteristic of the Webbs in England, where experts play a key role in developing and applying policies in the common interest, with the population assumed to recognise the character and value of such rational governance (see Kettler and Meja, 1988).[26]

However, given Mannheim's recognition that different political perspectives are founded on discrepant assumptions and modes of thought, it is not clear how there could be any integration of elements from diverse viewpoints into a more total perspective, or in what way elements of these worldviews could be evaluated as true or false, functional or dysfunctional. He seems to assume that what is correct and what is false will become evident in the course of attempting to achieve synthesis, but does not offer clarification of how this would occur. In short, Mannheim leaves uncertain the question of how the sociologist is to determine what is true and what is false in competing perspectives, and why we should expect that a consensus would emerge even among sociologists themselves. Furthermore, his account of the precondition for this is another feature of his argument that has been criticised: his idea that intellectuals are 'socially unattached'.[27]

The role of intellectuals

Like Weber's term 'value-freedom', the phrase 'socially unattached' or 'free-floating' intellectuals has often suffered from too literal an interpretation. Just as Weber did not mean that sociology could or should be completely free from value commitments (Hammersley, 2017), so Mannheim was not arguing that intellectuals are or can become

completely unattached socially, enabling them to adopt a 'view from nowhere'. As noted earlier, he drew the idea of socially unattached intellectuals from Alfred Weber (see Loader, 2012: 46, 50–51), and his argument is that the social position of intellectuals, and their diverse backgrounds, allows (and perhaps even forces) them to distance themselves from their prior assumptions, and to recognise what may be of value in other perspectives. This is crucial to the possibility of developing scientific knowledge that stands between ideology and utopia, and provides superior understanding of the world.

At first sight, there is a central contradiction in Mannheim's argument here. On the one hand, he insists that all thought is socially determined; yet, on the other hand, he appears to suggest that intellectuals, such as himself, can think in a way that is relatively untrammelled by their social backgrounds or positions in society. But there are two reasons why Mannheim can reasonably deny any such contradiction. First, the notion of 'the social determination of thought' is not intended to imply a causal relationship, though it is hard to identify just what the character of the relationship is supposed to be. 'Causality' has often been taken to imply the operation of social laws, and Mannheim certainly rejects these in his early work. However, Max Weber adopted a different approach, concerned with the causation of individual phenomena in particular situations (see Heidelberger, 2010). It is unclear whether or not Mannheim allows this sort of causation; or, instead, is adopting a view that is closer to Hegel's concept of internal relations (though it is even less clear than with Hegel how he could warrant this).

The second, and stronger, line of defence that Mannheim can adopt is to insist that his argument was not that intellectuals are unaffected by their backgrounds or situations but rather that *by the very nature of their social position as intellectuals* they are subject to contradictory pressures, and are therefore forced to work on the whole range of ideas and ways of thinking available to them in order to resolve these contradictions. Thus, the capacity to deploy the sociology of knowledge in order to identify the insights and biases in each total ideology, and to use this analysis to diagnose social problems, is very much a product of *intellectuals'* distinctive social situation – there is no suggestion of an absence of social determination. Rather, here determination takes a different form: the conflict, and thereby the dialectic, does not operate between groups but *among* intellectuals as a group, and indeed *within* each intellectual.

There are, nevertheless, some questions to be asked about this second argument. It may be true that intellectuals are, as a result of their situation, freer to, and perhaps *motivated* to, reflect on the ideas they have inherited, and on those of others with whom they come into contact. However, it is not clear that there is anything built into this situation which would provide them with a distinctive *capacity to discover* what is true and false, functional or dysfunctional, in competing worldviews. Once again, then, we can ask: what reason is there to believe that their investigating these ideas, rather than taking them for granted, would lead to determinate conclusions of the kind claimed? It may be that Mannheim is relying on the idea of a universal capacity for reasoning that is independent of social position – but, if so, this may be at odds with the notion of the social determination of knowledge. Alternatively, perhaps he is assuming that it is possible because they share similar cultural resources provided by a common educational background. However, to the extent that this implies a reliance on science, in the broad sense of *Wissenschaft*, this brings his position back closer to that of Max Weber.

By contrast, as we have seen, both Hegel and Marx, with Lukács following them in this, provide a rationale for why one particular perspective could have epistemic privilege: either that which stands at the end of history, or that which is destined to be victorious in the process of class struggle. However, this sort of standpoint epistemology is not sustainable (Hammersley, 2011), and both Hegel and Marx seem to revert to some notion of method as providing access to the required knowledge, whether this is dialectical thinking or 'real positive science' (Marx and Engels, 1846: 38). As already hinted, this fallback position would also be an option for Mannheim, but the method concerned would need to allow the sociology of knowledge to produce evaluative not just factual conclusions (Mannheim, 1936: 80–87). Yet it is doubtful whether the documentary method (Mannheim, 1993; Simonds, 1978: 110–115), the main distinctive method Mannheim puts forward in his writings, is capable of establishing the truth even of factual claims built into worldviews, even less their evaluative components. Its function appears to be limited to understanding the relations among components of worldviews and interpreting their meaning in light of their different social contexts.

Mannheim's conception of synthesis as offering the prospect for discovering what is true and false in competing perspectives seems to rely heavily on his projection of a total perspective, towards which movement can be made even though it can never be fully grasped. The concept of truth here relies heavily on the analogy with the perception of physical objects, where a move towards gaining a true understanding of them can be pursued by broadening one's perspective, by taking in what they would look like from different angles. In these terms, errors resulting from restrictions on a particular perspective are never simply wrong but make sense when seen from a more comprehensive viewpoint. This, too, seems to have been an inheritance from Hegel; but the latter posited achievement of a totally comprehensive view, and insisted that we can understand nothing truly until we have understood everything. But, if this is true, then it is not clear why a broader perspective of the kind posited by Mannheim would be any more likely to be true than a narrower one; given that what is involved is dialectical rather than linearly progressive movement.

The relationship between science and politics

There are also some problems with Mannheim's conception of politics and of the relationship between it and disciplinary knowledge. As we have seen, in *Ideology and Utopia* he appears to reduce sociology to the sociology of knowledge, and he also neglects the contribution to policymaking of other disciplines – not just other social sciences but also the natural sciences. Beyond this, though, in places he seems to conflate sociology with a 'political science' that is taken to be the mode of thinking appropriate for those actually engaged in political action (Mannheim, 1936: ch. 3). As noted earlier, this is part of his attempt to overcome the distinction between theoretical and practical reason, to unify theory and practice. What results, on one side, I suggest, is a rather narrow and functionalist conception of academic science and, on the other, a highly intellectualised conception of political practice (though he recognises the tensions experienced by party intellectuals, see Mannheim, 1936: 34).[28]

So, on the disciplinary side, sociology seems to be subordinated to the sociology of knowledge. At the same time, since it is dealing with whole political perspectives, it would presumably need to engage with the full range of economic, social, and political issues, not just those that are traditionally part of sociology's domain. It is hard to see a coherent and delimited discipline here, and one that has clearly defined relations with associated fields. It is true that, at the time Mannheim was writing, sociology was not a single, well-defined entity – there were sharply different competing notions of what form it should take. Nevertheless, while Mannheim's conception of its public function is clear, his view of its overall shape is not.

Turning to the other side of the relationship, to politics, like some other sociologists Mannheim treats his discipline as providing a comprehensive practical orientation (see Hammersley, 1999). One problem with this is that he tends to neglect the essential role of what Aristotle called phronesis: judgement that relies on tacit practical knowing. Indeed, it would seem that he consigns tacit knowledge to the realm of the irrational, rather than treating it as involved in the process of rationalising the irrational. Equally important, he appears to overestimate the extent to which political opinions in a democracy can be brought under rational control through education, a failing he perhaps inherited from Jászi.[29] We should note that part of the problem with his combining a concern with both factual and evaluative matters is that when he describes political thinking he is also prescribing, and indeed seeking to promote, a particular conception of this. Perhaps even more than in the case of Lukács, there are grounds for the charge of idealism here: of failing to recognise the degree to which politics is governed by strategic and tactical considerations, as well as by economic and social conditions. I suggest that Mannheim is overly optimistic about the capacity of sociology to integrate the perspectives of different sections of society into a common orientation, and equally about the power of this common orientation to overcome conflicting interests and socio-economic contingencies – factors that must have become increasingly evident in the tempestuous history of Weimar Germany.[30]

Worldviews

Another issue worth mentioning is Mannheim's argument about the ontological status of worldviews or total ideologies. He seems to regard these as not simply cognitive in character, a matter of explicit belief, but as incorporating implicit knowledge or habitus. They are practical orientations as much as sets of ideas. At the same time, he emphasises that they are internally coherent and do not correspond to the ideas of any individual member of a social class, nor to an aggregated picture of the views of all its members. Yet he does not treat the concept of worldview as an ideal type, in Weber's sense of the term. From that point of view, the characterisation of each worldview would simply be an analytic device, rather than referring to a phenomenon that exists in either empirical or metaphysical terms. Instead, Mannheim's model appears similar to Lukács' notion of an ideal working-class consciousness, viewed as an objective possibility that can be realised through education and political practice (see Frisby, 1983: ch. 3). And, as Kögler (1997) indicates, this raises questions about whether there is scope even for intellectuals to transcend a total ideology. Moreover, while Mannheim's account is more realistic than those

of either Hegel or Marx, in that he recognises the plurality of very different political perspectives that are in competition in modern Europe, without viewing them simply as progressive or regressive, those previous writers have a meta-historical rationale for the existence of idealised perspectives, whereas it is less clear what basis Mannheim could claim for this. Indeed, if the aim is to overcome, or at least moderate, conflict among contemporary groups with sharply divergent perspectives through processes of understanding and negotiation, the public sociological project must surely operate on the *actual* attitudes of key representatives of the contending groups, who are likely to be members of political rather than intellectual elites, and therefore will not possess 'pure' versions of the worldviews that are in contention.

Truth or functionality?

A final problem I will discuss is a crucial ambiguity in Mannheim's discussion regarding the criteria by which worldviews are to be assessed. He appeals to both truth and functionality, but seems to conflate the two. For example, he insists that thought is 'an instrument for dealing with life-situations [. . .]' (Mannheim, 1936: 268). At one point he writes: 'a theory [. . .] is wrong if in a given practical situation it uses concepts and categories which, if taken seriously, would prevent man from adjusting himself at that historical stage' (Mannheim, 1936: 85). Encapsulated in the notion of relationism, his argument seems to be that beliefs would not be adopted if they did not serve a function in some context, so that in this sense they must be true – they gear into the world. There are similarities with Hegel here, and with the views of some pragmatist philosophers with whose work Mannheim may have been familiar even when writing the German edition of his book, such as James and Dewey.[31]

There are, however, fundamental problems with this pragmatic conception of truth (see Prokopczyk, 1960). For example, it seems to imply that what Mannheim calls utopias can be made true if their adherents can gain the power necessary to bring about the sought-for change (see Polanyi, 1952). Also, it appears to assume that any beliefs that facilitate 'adjustment' must be true in this relational sense. There is a failure here, I suggest, to take account of the variety of functions that beliefs can serve, by no means all of them requiring beliefs to be true if they are to be efficacious; indeed, in some cases the reverse is required. An example would be Freyer's treatment of the idea that there is a single German *Volk* (Muller, 1987: 98). Mannheim's pragmatism is in danger of legitimating the adoption of whatever belief is convenient for current purposes, albeit purposes that are projected into the dialectic of history. This was not, of course, what Mannheim was proposing, but it is difficult to see what defence he can offer against such a position. And, as Von Schelting (1936) pointed out, Mannheim deploys other conceptions of truth in some places, including a more traditional correspondence view. In fact, it seems that this is unavoidable in the absence of a coherent meta-history that warrants a dialectical and teleological process of societal development to underpin his relationism.

In short, Mannheim's laudable aim of mediating between conflicting perspectives falls short of success. Yet the difficulties involved should not be underestimated – in light of these, the failure is hardly surprising. A fundamental problem, one shared with much of what we can call Enlightenment thought, is the assumption of a correlation between

the true and the good, so that knowledge is taken to have desirable consequences, and progress is assumed to be impossible without knowledge. It is not that these assumptions are entirely false, simply that the relationship between knowledge and bringing about desirable political outcomes is more mediated, complicated, and contingent than is frequently believed. A starting point for clarification would be the identification of different types and sources of knowledge, and consideration of the range of values in terms of which we can evaluate policies. In this respect, it seems to me that, by comparison with Weber's post-Enlightenment recognition of value conflict, Mannheim reverts to the sort of Enlightenment optimism that was also characteristic of Hegel and Marx.

Conclusion

In this article I have outlined Karl Mannheim's ideas about the public role of sociology, indicating their subtlety, but also considered some of the problems associated with them. It is important to reiterate that Mannheim did not see himself as putting forward final or complete solutions to the issues that he addressed, but rather as attempting to work towards their resolution. This highlights one of several important lessons that can be taken from his writings: rejection of the belief that solutions to challenging intellectual problems are immediately accessible, having previously been hidden from others because of their ideological blinkers.

Equally important, and closely related, Mannheim deplored proponents of different ideologies simply using arguments to wage war against one another. He insisted on the scope for, and importance of, learning from diverse perspectives; a point that it is worthwhile reiterating today. At the same time, he recognised that total ideologies involve fundamental differences in ontological and epistemological assumptions, rather than being simple disagreements about particular facts or evaluations. Furthermore, these ideological differences are linked to differences in social position. He employs the metaphor of 'perspective' in a relatively strong form here: just as what we can physically see depends upon our location, the same is true when it comes to social and cultural phenomena – there is no 'view from nowhere' or 'god's eye view'. This means that different perspectives will give access to different aspects of phenomena, but one viewpoint may provide a fuller or more accurate picture, in particular respects, than do some others; and we can put together what we can learn from different perspectives to obtain a broader (though never a total) view.

A further lesson is Mannheim's emphasis on the value of moving to what he called the general level of ideological analysis. While, today, the depth of ideological differences is widely recognised, rather less common is for people to acknowledge the necessarily partial and fallible character of their own viewpoints. Mannheim drew on the historicism that was institutionalised in German thought in the nineteenth century, according to which those belonging to different societies, whether from the past or in other parts of the world, can only be properly understood by starting from how they understand themselves. He applied the same insight to social groups living contemporaneously within his own society. However, today, even where there is recognition of the need for appreciative understanding of marginalised groups, this often involves reducing their views and experiences to a prior ideological template (the 'ontological turn' in anthropology was a

reaction against this: see Heywood, 2017), along with suspension of any attempt to understand the beliefs and practices of dominant groups that are held responsible for injustices (see Hammersley, 2008: ch. 1).

Within some parts of social science, the need has been recognised for what has come to be called reflexivity – self-scrutiny that takes account of how one's own path through the world will have shaped one's understanding of it, not least in terms of what one is motivated to believe and to deny.[32] But such reflexivity has often been associated with purported rejection of the very possibility of knowledge. As already mentioned, while Mannheim insisted on the key role of interpretation in understanding social and cultural phenomena, he did not deny that some interpretations can be true and others false, or that there may be stronger and weaker grounds for belief. Indeed, he specifically argued against the fallacy that, since there is no universal perspective, there can be no truths: the fact that all knowledge claims are partial and fallible, that we can never have access to a total comprehension of the world whose validity is absolutely certain, does not mean that knowledge claims are necessarily false or cannot be warrantably believed (or justifiably regarded as false).

Finally, I suggest that there is also a negative lesson to be learned from Mannheim's work: for the reasons I have explained, his conception of the public role of sociology is grandly overambitious. Of course, he is hardly alone in this. A failure to understand the role of the discipline in the context of other disciplines, and against the background of the complexities of political practice, is by no means uncommon. While I would certainly not deny that sociology can play a key role in political education, in my judgement that role is closer to the one envisaged by Max Weber than that outlined by Mannheim. Nevertheless, there are many respects in which Mannheim deepens our understanding of the issues involved in the public roles that sociology can play.

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Notes

1. This is even true of the very brief but nuanced review by Michael Polanyi (1952).
2. Important examples of this literature include: Simonds (1978), Kettler et al. (1984) and Loader (1985). While positive reference to Mannheim's work in the general sociological literature remains rare, Scott (1998; Letherby et al. 2013) has recently argued that his position offers a basis for resolving the continuing problems surrounding sociology and objectivity.
3. As Green (2009) points out, Mannheim's early work, and particularly this book, have been much more influential than his later writings.

4. They were by no means alone in this of course: aside from the work of Simmel, which was a direct influence on them, the idea of estrangement as a key feature of modernity was common in German intellectual circles, see Mitzman (1973).

5. On this early period, see Kettler (1971), Kettler et al. (1984) and Karácsony (2008).

6. This must be seen against the background of the German youth movements influential in Germany before the First World War, see Laqueur (1984). For discussion of one aspect of this that was particularly significant for the ideas discussed here, see Muller (1987: 30–34).

7. This is an idea that goes back at least to Schleiermacher, see Palmer (1969: 92–93).

8. Mannheim was involved in securing Lukács' escape – the latter's name was on the 'wanted list' of the right-wing government that took power.

9. I will be working from the English edition. While it has been noted that changes, as well as additions, were made for the English translation (Kettler and Meja, 1995: 213–216), I do not believe that these are significant for my argument here.

10. While drawn from Alfred Weber (see Loader, 2012), this perhaps also relates to Max Weber's insistence on the importance of research communities having members with diverse political perspectives and backgrounds.

11. This is an idea that he develops further in his later book *Man and Society* (Mannheim, 1940).

12. On the similarities and differences between Lukács and Weber, see Tarr (1989) and Villa (2013).

13. As did others at the time, see Mitzman (1973).

14. Breiner (2004) claims that Mannheim was 'translating' Weber's position, but in my view this exaggerates the similarity between the two. He also claims that there was a sharp break between Mannheim's early position and his later focus on planning, but I suspect that there is rather more continuity than he allows.

15. There is an element of uncertainty about this. In his reply to criticism by Edward Heimann in 1935 (Mannheim, 2001) he appears to argue that, with Weber, he was limiting his analysis to whether or not particular goals were feasible. However, I think it is evident in *Ideology and Utopia* he was going beyond this.

16. On the complex relationship between Mannheim and Marxism, see Loader and Kettler (2002: ch. 6). Both the idea of a crisis of conflicting worldviews and the need for synthesis were widespread, for instance in the work of Troeltsch (Barth, 1976: 182), but Mannheim was unique (not least) in proposing the sociology of knowledge as the vehicle for this.

17. The importance of such cultivation seems to have been drawn from Jászi, though of course the idea of *Bildung* had long been part of the German tradition, see Buford (1975).

18. At Frankfurt, Mannheim shared office space with Max Horkheimer and other members of the privately-funded Institute for Social Research, the base for what came to be called the Frankfurt School of Marxism, some members of which had been strongly influenced by Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness*. While there was informal contact between Mannheim – along with his two assistants, Hans Gerth and Norbert Elias – and members of the Institute, there was also considerable tension. Indeed, Horkheimer and later Adorno were openly critical of Mannheim's position (see Fischer, 2009; Jay, 1974).

19. Freyer drew directly from Mannheim, and so too did the circle of right-wing intellectuals involved in the influential magazine *Die Tat* (see Pels, 2001: ch. 4).

20. Durkheim's *The Rules of Sociological Method* is included in the bibliography section of the final chapter of *Ideology and Utopia*, along with a few other non-German references; and he draws on Durkheim in *Man and Society*. This distinctive conception of sociology is even more obvious in his introductory lectures on the subject at the university of Frankfurt; see Mannheim (2001).

21. There is also some evidence that Mannheim was influenced by Cassirer and Heidegger, whose historic debate took place in 1929: see Gordon (2010).

22. Mannheim criticises the latter in a couple of places in *Ideology and Utopia* (1936: 249–250, 272–274).
23. His view of Marxism was strongly influenced by one of his mentors in Heidelberg: Emil Lederer.
24. In this respect his position is also similar to that of Durkheim, who regarded sociology as able to diagnose social problems, and offer remedies for them, albeit in the context of a rather different conception of societal development from that assumed by Mannheim.
25. The most powerful example of this criticism is provided by Von Schelting (1936).
26. Mannheim developed this aspect of his ideas in a subsequent book: *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* (Mannheim, 1940).
27. There are similar problems with Marx's position. Whereas for Hegel the idea that he stood at the end of the historical process, however implausible in itself, could provide a basis for judgements about what is true and false in past ideas, this vantage point is not possible for Marx: there is nothing that can underpin Marx's meta-history, his treatment of the working class as the vanguard of historical development, having the capacity to bring about a society in which all human ideals are realised. This cannot have a rational basis either in Hegelian or in more conventional epistemological terms. As already hinted, for Lukács what is involved was closer to Kierkegaard's leap of faith.
28. It has been noted that, subsequently, Mannheim seems to have retreated to establishing the sociology knowledge as a speciality within the university (Kettler et al., 2008), though it is not clear that he abandons his earlier vision of what we might call a public sociology, indeed this aspiration re-emerges clearly after his emigration to England.
29. On Jászi, see Litván (2006).
30. Arguably, Mannheim came to recognise this, see Kettler et al. (2008).
31. Gerth (1985: 204) reports that Mannheim 'accepted the instrumentalism of Dewey or Mead as the epistemological viewpoint of his sociology', see also Nelson (1995).
32. There are, however, different meanings of the term 'reflexivity', see Lynch (2000).

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