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**RETHINKING KNOWLEDGE AS IDEOLOGY :
REFLECTIONS ON THE DEBATE FROM MAX
SCHELER TO THEODOR ADORNO**

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Rethinking Knowledge as Ideology: Reflections on the Debate from Max Scheler to Theodor Adorno

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to examine the roles and lineaments of the notion of ideology relative to historical time and place. In the first section, I have dealt with the avowed theoretic role of the concept of ideology, which has been to apprehend the implications of the rootedness of thought systems, alluding therefore to the basic tenets of the sociology of knowledge. The second section deals with the purely empirical investigation of the ways in which social relationships influence thought. The empirical steps undertaken in the spirit of the sociology of knowledge would purport to show how the sociology of knowledge becomes more than a sociological description of the facts, which tell us how certain theoretical ideas have been derived from a certain milieu. It reaches the point where it also becomes a critique by redefining the scope and the limits of the perspective implicit in given theoretical assertions. By doing so, ideology as a mode of critique avoids the pitfalls of absolutism (fetishism and subjectivism) and relativism. However, the central problem in the debates surrounding the notion of ideology remains unresolved, that is, the ascertainment of what 'determination' in terms of a socially situated thought actually entails. This ambiguity or indeterminateness is further exacerbated through the shifting status of the concept of ideology itself, which appears as an index to the tension between the actual historical process and a critical consciousness nourished by the traditions of classical rationalism. The task of a study of ideology in a limited way has been to understand the narrowness of each individual point of view and the interplay among these distinctive attitudes in the total social process. In the last section, the meaning of determination is left open and it is proposed that only empirical investigation into the social processes of ideological thinking would show the strictness of the relation between history, life-situations and thought processes.

I. Ideology, Theory and the problem of Reality

Historically, the term 'ideology' made its first appearance at the time of the French Revolution, its author, Antoine Destutt de Tracy being one of the group of savants whom the Convention in 1795 entrusted with the management of the newly founded Institut de France. The creation of the Institute was part of an attempt to provide France with a nation-wide system of higher learning committed to the philosophy of the Enlightenment. Moreover, the ideologists of the Institute were liberals who regarded freedom of thought and expression as the principal conquest of the Revolution. Their attitude was "ideological" in the twofold sense of being concerned with ideas, and of placing the attainment of 'ideal' aims (their own) ahead of the 'material' interests on which the post-revolutionary society rested.

The word 'ideology' itself had to begin without any ontological significance; it did not include any judgment as to the value of different spheres of reality, since it originally denoted merely the theory of ideas. The 'ideologists' were the members of a philosophical group in France who rejected metaphysics. In fact, the modern conception of ideology was born when Napoleon, finding that this group of philosophers was opposing his imperial ambitions, contemptuously labelled them 'ideologists'. Thereby the word took on a derogatory meaning. In later stages of its development, the word ideology was used as a weapon by the proletariat against the dominant group. Further changes took place, which finally led to a point at where it was no longer possible for one point of view to depreciate all others as 'ideological' without itself being placed in the position of having to meet the same challenge. A decisive shift occurred when under the influence of what Mannheim calls the 'total' conception of ideology, the analyst subjected not just the adversarial point of view but all points of view, including his own, to 'ideological' analysis (Mannheim, 1936).

For most people the term 'ideology' is closely bound up with Marxism and that association largely determines their reactions to the term. Marx's conception of ideology as "false consciousness" leads back to the problem of establishing the true consciousness, which will enable men to understand their role. Marx also held that the philosophy of every age is the 'ideological reflex' of determinate social conditions. The historical character of the Marxian dialectic and with it the problem of ideology is a consequence of the discovery that there is not a single universal standpoint from which to judge the alienations imposed by that specific universal human standpoint. In other words, there are only particular human standpoints corresponding to particular forms of society, which arise from the interplay of material conditions and conscious attempts to organize the 'productive forces' (Lichtheim, 1965, p. 176).

The credit for restating the problem of ideology around 1900 would go to Max Weber who had benefited from the neo-Kantian revival. For Weber, science was both autonomous and morally neutral. At the same time, the implications of this standpoint were no longer veiled by metaphysical remnants. In particular, it was not possible for Weber to be complacent about the overall progressive direction of history. There was no guarantee that the rationalization of existence would promote the aims traditionally enshrined in philosophy. Matters were getting worse at any rate from the standpoint of one who valued personal freedom. This pessimistic outlook made it possible for Weber to divorce normative judgments from factual statements. Weber's approach is important since it involved a sharpened distinction between the two meanings of 'ideology'. The term can signify both the consciousness of an epoch and the "false consciousness" of men unaware of their true role. What a culture thinks about itself may be 'ideological' in one sense without being so in the other. Thus, for example, the thought forms which developed in the Middle Ages reflected the feudal-hierarchical structure of society. Weber fell heir to the problem of accounting for the

role of ideology, not as conscious or unconscious distortion of reality in the interest of some group, but as the intellectual reflex of determinate social processes (Lichtheim, 1965, p. 185).

Georg Lukács had fixed upon alienation and restitution of man as the pivotal point in the Marxian world-view. This gave him the meta-historical standpoint he needed to gain a critical view of the whole process. Lukács had seen well enough that empiricism could never attain to an intellectual grasp of the concrete totality of history. In addition to the sociological method oriented to Comte and Spencer, he also criticizes those Marxists who had gone back to Kant. As a historicist Lukács claimed that the historical process is reality itself, as a relativist he announced that our loss of the sense of the historical movement as a whole prevents the apprehension of the truth of the world which we experience, and as a sociologist he saw the collapse of our cognitive apparatus determined by a social situation. As a Marxist, however, he identified this social situation in the bourgeois conception of the world and in the capitalist mode of production. In Lukács' view, it is the capitalistic mode of production, which leads to the substitution of things for human relationships and fetishizes them. Mannheim's "*Ideology and Utopia*" has many passages, which reflect its author's awareness of the issues Lukács stirred up earlier (the category of 'totality' played a key role in the thinking of both Lukács and Mannheim). By linking the sociology of knowledge to the position of a definite stratum in society, Mannheim anchored the exercise of the freedom in the group interest of the intellectuals. His concern with group thinking does not, however, meet the objection that only a particular historic class at a particular moment can reshape the historical situation. The group is still made up of individuals whose minds are engaged with various aspects of experience and whose differing standpoints probably cancel out one another. This play of opinion and mutual cancellation of 'prejudices' is in fact regarded by Mannheim as essential to the emergence of an adequate scientific standpoint. The sociology of knowledge

arose as we would see in an effort to develop, as its own proper field of research, those interconnections which had become apparent in the crisis of modern thought and especially the social ties between theories and modes of thought.

II. Perspectivistic element in the social determination of knowledge

As theory, sociology of knowledge may take two forms. In the first place, it is a purely empirical investigation through description and structural analysis of the ways in which social relationships influence thought. This may pass, in the second place, into an epistemological enquiry concerned with the bearing of this inter-relationship upon the problem of validity. It is important to note that these types of inquiry are not necessarily connected and one can accept empirical results without drawing the epistemological conclusions (Mannheim, 1936, p. 239). It would be prudent at this stage to present the sociology of knowledge as a theory of the 'existential determination' of actual thinking. It would be well to begin by explaining what is meant by the wider term 'existential determination' of knowledge. As a concrete fact, it may be best approached by means of an illustration. The existential determination of thought may be regarded as a demonstrated fact in those realms of thought in which one can show (a) that the process of knowing does not actually develop historically in accordance with immanent laws, that is, it does not follow from the 'nature of things' or from purely 'logical possibilities' and that it is not driven by an 'inner dialectic'. On the contrary, the emergence and the crystallization of actual thought is influenced in many decisive points by extra-theoretical factors. These may be called, in contradistinction to purely theoretical factors, existential factors. This existential determination of thought will also have to be regarded as important (b) if the influence of these existential factors on the concrete content of knowledge is of more than mere peripheral importance, that is, if they are relevant not only to the genesis

of ideas but also penetrate into their forms and content (Mannheim, 1936, p. 240). The older method of intellectual history which was oriented towards the a priori conception that changes in ideas were to be understood at the level of ideas, blocked recognition of the penetration of the social process into the cognitive sphere. With the growing evidence of the flaws in this a priori assumption, an increasing number of concrete cases make it evident that every formulation of a problem is made possible by a previous actual human experience which involves such a problem. Moreover in selecting from the multiplicity of data an act of will is involved on the part of the knower and the forces arising out of living experience are significant in charting the direction which the treatment of the problem follows. According to Mannheim (1936, p. 240), "the world is known through many different orientations because there are many simultaneous and mutually contradictory trends of thought struggling against one another with their different interpretations of common experience."

The thesis that the historico-social process is of essential significance for most domains of knowledge and ideology itself, receives support from the fact that we can trace the concrete assertions of human beings to when and where they arose and when and where they were formulated. By the use of pure analysis of thought structure, we can determine when and where the world presented itself in such a light to the subject that made the assertion and the analysis may be carried to the point where the more inclusive question may be answered as to why the world presented itself in such a manner. 'Perspective' signifies the manner in which one views an object, what one perceives in it and how one construes it in his thinking. Perspective, therefore, is something more than a merely formal determination of thinking. It refers also to qualitative elements in the structure of thinking. It is precisely those elements which are responsible for the fact that two persons may judge the same object very differently even when they apply the same formal-logical rules

in an identical manner (Mannheim, 1936, p. 244). Mannheim shows how the same words or the same concept in most cases mean very different things when used by differently socially situated persons. In the early years of the nineteenth century, when an old style German conservative spoke of 'freedom' he meant the right of each estate to live according to its privileges. If he belonged to the romantic conservative and Protestant movement, he understood by it 'inner freedom'. When a liberal of the same period used the term 'freedom', he was thinking of freedom from precisely those privileges, which to the old-style conservative appeared to be the very basis of all freedom. The liberal conception was then an 'equalitarian conception of freedom'. In brief, even in the formulation of concepts, the angle of vision is guided by the observer's interests. Hence, thought is directed in accordance with what a particular group expects (Mannheim, 1936, p. 240). Not only do concepts in their contexts diverge from one another in accordance with differing social positions but the basic categories of thought may likewise differ. Conservative thought, according to Mannheim (1936, p. 248), "tend to use morphological categories which do not break up the concrete totality of the data experience but seeks rather to preserve it in all its uniqueness. As opposed to the morphological approach, the analytical approach characteristic of the radical left, broke down every concrete totality in order to arrive at smaller, more general units which might then be recombined through the category of causality on functional integration. The groups oriented to the left intend to make something new out of the world as it is given and therefore they divert their glance from things as they are, they become abstract and atomize the given situation into its component elements in order to recombine them anew."

Another characteristic of the perspective is to be found by investigating the level of abstraction, beyond which a given theory does not progress or the degree to which it resists theoretical, systematic formulation. It is never an accident when

a certain theory fails to develop beyond a given stage of relative abstraction and offers resistance to further tendencies towards becoming more concrete. Here too the social position of the thinker is significant. The narrowed focus that a given position imposes and the driving impulses, which govern its insights, tend to obstruct the general and theoretical formulation of these views and to restrict the capacity for abstraction. There is a tendency to abide by the particular view that is immediately obtainable and to prevent the question from being raised as to whether the fact that knowledge is bound up with existence is not inherent in human thought structure as such. In the usual usage, abstraction and the approach to the concrete move in opposite directions.

The term 'sociology of knowledge,' was coined by Max Scheler in the 1920s. It originated in particular situation of German intellectual history and in a particular philosophical context. The immediate intellectual antecedents of the sociology of knowledge were three developments in nineteenth century German thought: the Marxian, the Nietzschean and the historicist. From Marx it inherited not only the sharpest formulation of its central problem but also some of these key concepts with which it was principally engaged, such as the concept of 'ideology' and 'false consciousness'. Nietzschean ideas were less explicit in the sociology of knowledge but, nonetheless, they belonged very much to its general intellectual background and to the mood within which it arose. Nietzsche's anti-idealism gave additional perspectives to human thought as an instrument in the struggle for survival and power. Nietzsche developed his own theory of false consciousness in his analyses of the social significance of deception and self-deception and of illusion as a necessary condition of life (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 18). The historicist's insistence that no historical situation could be understood except in its own terms could readily be translated into an emphasis on the social situation of thought. The particular heritage in the sociology of knowledge predisposed the latter

towards a strong interest in history and the employment of an essentially historicist method (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 29).

Scheler's interest in the sociology of knowledge and sociological questions was essentially a passing episode in his philosophical career. His final aim was the establishment of a philosophical anthropology that would transcend the relativity of specific, historically and socially located viewpoints. The sociology of knowledge was to serve as an instrument towards this end, its main purpose being the clearing away of the difficulties raised by relativism. For Scheler (1942, p. 23), the fundamental principle of the sociology of knowledge is that "the forms and the contents of mental acts, through which knowledge is gained are always, by necessity, co-conditioned sociologically, that is, by the structure of society." Insofar as its task is not merely to describe the external objective structure of knowledge within a group but also to gain insight into the group mind, the sociology of knowledge cannot rest upon the methods of positive science. In fact, it has to lend itself to phenomenological viewing (Scheler, 1942, p. 24). Scheler never clearly delineated the correlations between ideal group types and the types of knowledge present within those groups but he did offer some suggestions along these lines by delineating three distinct types of knowledges. First, knowledge of salvation; second cultural knowledge or knowledge of pure essences; third, knowledge that produces effects. Knowledge of salvation is that belonging to the community of church; within such a community the only things worth knowing are those that lead to salvation; all other concerns appear trivial. Knowledge of pure essences is that found within a cultural community. Knowledge of effects is societal knowledge; it is knowledge that can be used for practical purposes, knowledge that leads to control and manipulation of things, that is, knowledge of technology. The objective hierarchy among these forms of knowledge corresponds to the objective hierarchy of value. It is not a hierarchy of exclusion but rather

one in which the higher grows out of the lower and incorporates the lower (Scheler, 1942, p. 27). Scheler therefore shows that there are no absolute, historical constant forms and principles of reason. Hence the Kantian modalities are considered merely as representative of European thinking and culture rather than as category for all peoples (Scheler, 1967, p. 67). The essentially Durkheimian bent of Scheler's thinking becomes more apparent when discussing the social forms of intellectual cooperation. He stresses their relation to the type forms of human groupings, such as close-knit kinship groups, sacred and secular societies and interest groups. As a constructed type, the sacred society would exemplify the following characteristics: one, truth and knowledge are traditional and given; second, the method is predominantly ontological and dogmatic; third, the way of thinking is realistic rather than nominalistic; fourth, the system of categories is organismic and mechanistic. This outline taken from the opposite direction also characterizes the main features of knowing in a secular society (Scheler, 1942, p. 203).

While the evaluative element in social knowledge has received formal recognition, relatively little attention has been given to concrete analysis of the role of actual interests and values as they have been expressed in specific movements. It is at this point that Mannheim's contribution marks a distinctive advance over the work that had hitherto been done in Europe and America. Mannheim sought to trace the specific connection between actual interest groups in society and the ideas and modes of thought, which they espouse (Woldring, 1987, p. 157). Mannheim (Woldring, 1987, p. 183) asks "what intellectual and vital factors made appearance of a given problem in the cultural sciences possible and to what extent do they guarantee the solubility of the problem?" He asserts, "relating of ideas is not all concerned with denying any idea nor is it only reflective of any particular interests, but we must see they are part of Weltanschauung, which as a whole is bound to, one stage of

the developing social reality. From this point on, worlds confront worlds - it is no longer individual propositions pitted against individual propositions" (Woldring, 1987, p. 159).

Every analytical step undertaken in the spirit of the sociology of knowledge arrives at a point where the sociology of knowledge becomes more than a sociological description of the facts, which tell us how certain theoretical ideas have been derived from a certain milieu. It reaches a point where it also becomes a critique by redefining the scope and the limits of the perspective implicit in given theoretical assertions. When we speak of the 'position behind a point of view,' we have in mind a complex of conditions which determine the nature of an assertion. Even where formalization has gone farthest and where we are concerned with mere relations, there is still a minimum of evidence of the investigator's general interests. For example, when Max Weber in classifying types of conduct distinguished between 'purposeful rational' and 'traditional' conduct, he was still expressing the situation of a generation in which one group had discovered and given evaluative emphasis on the rationalistic tendencies in capitalism, while another discovered the significance of tradition and emphasized it over against the former. The interest in the typology of conduct itself arises out of this particular social situation. If another had attempted a formal systematization of the types of conduct, it would have arrived at quite another typology (Mannheim, 1936, p. 273).

According to Mannheim, the achievement of the concept of ideology thus far has been to discredit the views of one's political opponents by reference to their social determination. What Marx meant by 'ideology' appears plainly enough from the *Theses on Feuerbach*, where the latter is blamed for not having carried through to the end his inversion of Hegel's system. He says for example: "Feuerbach sets out from the fact of religious self-alienation, the duplication of the world into a religious and a secular one. His work consists in resolving the religious world

into its secular basis. But the fact the secular basis deserts its own sphere and establishes an independent realm in the clouds can only be explained by the cleavage and self-contradiction within the secular basis" (Mannheim, 1936, p. 273).

Mannheim introduces two distinct meanings of the term 'ideology'- the 'particular' and the 'total'. The 'particular' is implied when the term denotes that we are skeptical of the ideas and representations advanced by our opponents. They are regarded as more or less conscious disguises of the real nature of a situation. These distortions range all the way from conscious lies to half-conscious and unwitting disguises; from calculated attempts to delude others. In the 'total' conception of ideology we refer to the 'ideology of an age or a concrete historic-social group, example, of a class, the structure and composition of the total structure of the mind of an epoch'. These conceptions of ideology, accordingly, make the 'ideas' a function of the subject who holds them and of the subject's position in the social milieu (Mannheim, 1936, p. 49). There are other significant differences between the particular and the total conception of ideology. The particular conception of 'ideology' makes its analysis of ideas on a purely psychological level. In the total conception of ideology, when we attribute to one historical epoch one intellectual world and to ourselves another, we refer not to the isolated case of thought but to fundamentally divergent thought systems. While the particular conception assumes that this or that interest is the cause of a given lie or deception, the total conception uses a formal functional analysis confining itself to an objective description of the structural differences in minds operating in different social settings. The purpose of an evaluative conception of ideology is to distinguish the true from the untrue, the genuine from the spurious among the norms, modes of thought that exist alongside one another in a given historical period (Mannheim, 1936, p. 51). From the point of view of the sociology of knowledge, an ethical attitude is invalid if it is

oriented with reference to norms with which action in a given historical setting cannot comply. A theory then is wrong if in a given practical situation it uses concepts and categories, which would prevent a man from adjusting himself to his reality at that historical stage. Antiquated and inapplicable norms are likely to degenerate into ideologies whose function it is to conceal the actual meaning of conduct rather than to reveal it.

We have a case of ideological distortion when we try to resolve conflicts and anxieties by having recourse to absolutes. This is the case when we create myths and avow allegiance to 'ideals' though in our conduct we are following other interests. Another type of ideological distortion may be seen when this ideology as a form of knowledge is no longer adequate for comprehending the actual world (Mannheim, 1936, p. 84). There are a whole series of possible types of ideological distortion. As the first type, there is the case in which the thinking subject is prevented from becoming aware of the incongruence of his ideas with reality by a whole body of axioms involved in his socially determined thought. The second type emerges when the possibility of uncovering the incongruence between ideas and their application is not exposed but instead these insights are concealed in response to certain vital-emotional interests. As a final type, we have the ideological mentality based on conscious deception, where ideology is to be interpreted as a purposeful lie (Mannheim, 1936, p. 175).

With the emergence of the general formulation of the total conception of ideology, the simple theory of ideology develops into the sociology of knowledge. It is in this statement and what it entails that the crux of Mannheim's ambivalence is to be discovered. If sociology of knowledge traces its heritage directly and immediately to the general theory of total ideology, then it is bound to be inextricably tinged with non-scientific, emotive elements. Max Horkheimer (1993) argued that the transformation of the concept of ideology from the particular to the total shifts

our attention from real events upwards to the misty regions of contending 'world postulates'. In the total concept of ideology, 'the thought of all parties in all epochs' is branded as ideology. Herewith the concept of ideology is cleansed of the residues of its accusatory meaning and its integration into the philosophy of mind is complete. If all thought as such is to be characterized as ideological, it becomes apparent that ideology, just like 'particularity' signifies nothing other than inadequacy to eternal truth (Horkheimer, 1993, p. 79). In Mannheim, we see the reinstatement of the Hegelian roots in Marxism. Mannheim's sociology of knowledge provided an idealist interpretation of existing contradiction, which was stated in terms of opposition of ideas, styles of thought and 'systems of Weltanschauung', sustained by particular historical contexts (Horkheimer, 1993, p. 145).

III. The Practice of the Sociology of Knowledge

History consists of an infinite variety of facts, which are in essence highly unrelated and are mostly in the nature of imponderables. This makes it imperative and also desirable to introduce a selective point of view into history, that is, to write that history which interests us. Karl Popper (1957, p.151) calls this selective point of view, 'historical interpretation.' A theory or hypothesis could be described as the crystallization of a point of view. It is a truism that we select only facts, which have a bearing upon some preconceived theory. Popper placed primacy upon the selection of such facts with an attempt at falsification of the existing theory (Popper, 1945, p. 260). All the historical interpretations are not of equal merit. First, there are always interpretations, which are not really in keeping with the accepted records; secondly, there are some which need a number of more or less plausible auxiliary hypotheses; again, there are some that are unable to connect a number of facts which another interpretation can connect (Popper, 1945, p. 266). The first approach to a historicist mode of thought and

living lies in the ability to experience every segment of the world appear as it is in a state of flux and growth. Historicism is more than the discovery that men have been feeling, thinking and writing in different ways from one age to another (Remmling, 1963, p. 102).

Popper (1945, p. 217) argues that the sociologists of knowledge hold that the 'freely poised intelligence' of an intelligentsia, which is only loosely anchored in social traditions maybe able to avoid the pitfalls of total ideologies, that it may be able to see through the various total ideologies and the hidden determinants which inspire them. Only he who has socio-analyzed and who is freed from this social complex can attain to the highest synthesis of objective knowledge. Popper further argues that the methods of the sociology of knowledge are both easy to handle and good fun for those who use them. However they clearly destroy the basis of rational discussion and lead to anti-rationalism and mysticism (Popper, 1945, p. 216). According to Popper (1945, p. 217), "Objectivity is closely bound up with the social aspects of scientific method, with the fact that objectivity does not result from the attempts of an individual scientist to be objective but from the social cooperation of many scientists." Popper acknowledges that the major activity of the sociology of knowledge is "an increasing tendency towards making conscious the factors by which we have so far been unconsciously ruled...those who fear that our increasing knowledge of determining factors may paralyze our decisions and thereafter 'freedom' should put their mind to rest. For only he is truly determined who does not know the most essential determining factors but acts immediately under the pressure of determinants unknown to him" (Popper, 1945, p. 223). Popper (1945, p. 223) categorically makes the assertion that "Self-analysis is no substitute for those practical actions which are necessary for establishing democratic institutions which alone can guarantee the freedom of critical thought."

In the framework of socially related theoretical thought, the concept of ideology assumes an important place. Some use it in a particular sense to clarify certain ideas, some use it to criticize or justify society. Beneath the doctrine of ideology lies the conviction that thought itself has the capacity to discover its own prejudices and free itself from them. The concern here is to show the methodological steps outlined by Mannheim's sociology of knowledge and his mode of ideological analysis, using these as an axis or lever from where one can proceed towards apprehending both truth and objectivity of a period. The preliminary step is to juxtapose the different modes of theoretical knowledge and to show or explain how each of the theories is connected with the existential situations; with the predilections and interests prevailing in a particular historical period (Popper, 1957, p. 17). The next step is to show 1) the structure of the life situations in the whole of the historical constellation with the view to illuminate the 'functional dependence of each theoretical standpoint on the differentiated social group reality' 2) the place and position of the thinker which influence the results of thought and also condition the ideal of truth (Mannheim, 1936, p. 268).

After careful consideration, I have selected some theoretical positions in the sphere of sociology of knowledge that have exerted a definite and profound influence on society and future developments. These theoretical standpoints belong to a particular time and space. The time frame that I have in mind is constitutive of a period in European history beginning with the end of the First World War in 1918 and onwards, the inter-war years which witnessed the rise of totalitarian regimes in Germany and Italy and the end of the Second World War; and ending with the growth of parliamentary democracy and the Cold War. It was in this sea of historical change that the characteristic themes and concerns of the whole ensemble of theories of this period underwent mutations and drastic transformations. I have in mind the theorists of the Frankfurt School like, Max Horkheimer,

Herbert Marcuse and Theodor Adorno who were witness to these events and whose lives were irrevocably affected by the same. The emergence of the Frankfurt School of 'Critical Theory,' as an academic center for Marxist research within Germany in 1923 was a new departure in the history of socialism. Its trajectory is consequently of critical importance not only for the evolution of Marxist theory as a whole but also serve as a litmus test for evaluating the historicity of social thought from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge.

Under Max Horkheimer, the Institute of Social Research was oriented to develop social theory on an interdisciplinary basis. He wanted theory to benefit both from the reflective capacity of philosophy and the rigorous procedures of the individual social sciences. However the triumph of Nazism in Germany changed Frankfurt School's future course of history. The Nazi rise to power forced many members of the Frankfurt School to take refuge in Geneva and the United States with the exception of Karl Mannheim who left for England to become part of the London School of Economics and Political Science. The activities of the Institute suffered massive disruption. A hiatus emerged between works in philosophy and social theory and also between theory and practice. The differences between the intellectual traditions, which informed German and American scholarship, heightened the feelings of disarray and alienation. In fact, the emigration of the Institute to United States transferred it into a different environment devoid of mass working class movement. Martin Jay pointed out that there was a conscious toning down of radicalism due to fear of political harassment and deportation. Horkheimer and Adorno continued to maintain an acerbic hostility to the American society revealed after the war in their joint work '*Dialectic of Enlightenment*' whose basic argument effectively equated North American liberalism and fascism. Theory, according to Horkheimer, is an aspect of praxis devoted to creating a better society; it retains a militant character. Critical

Theory is in favour of the liberation of the proletariat but it also wishes to preserve its independence and refuse to commit itself to passive acceptance of the proletarian viewpoint. Precisely because it is 'critical', theory must remain autonomous vis-à-vis every existing form of social consciousness. The main principles of Critical Theory are those of Lukács' Marxism but without the proletariat. This difference makes the theory more flexible and less dogmatic (Kolakowski, 1978, p. 355). Theory is intertwined with history. It will be confirmed in so far as 'men who have it bring it to power' (Held, 1980, p. 191). Both Critical Theory and sociology of knowledge owe total allegiance neither to idealist philosophy nor to positivist pragmatism. Critical Theory, in particular, sharpens sociology of knowledge by trying to erect a triad whose three interrelated points are theory, praxis and history.

The return of the Institute to Frankfurt after the war could not alter the fundamental change in its social function and orientation that had supervened in the United States (Held, 1978, p. 37). Horkheimer frequently acknowledged the inadequacy of the conceptual tools he employed in the 1930's for the analysis of major events in the 1940s. The optimism, which he had felt during the pre-war years with regard to the transformative potential of theory, faded away. By the early 1940s there was little in Horkheimer's work to suggest the imminent emergence of needs compatible with universal moral principles. The strategy of justifying Critical Theory's project by reference to the position of the proletariat became less and less important. Horkheimer concentrated on immanent criticism in the context of interdisciplinary research. There was less discussion of the relation between theory and revolutionary praxis. Perhaps the most important development was Horkheimer's re-evaluation of certain metaphysical and theological traditions. His thought became increasingly speculative as he sought to develop an areligious conception of theology. It became extremely hard to

recognize Horkheimer's original program for a critique of ideology in his later works (Held, 1980, p. 198).

Marcuse's work is frequently presented as falling into three distinct stages 1) his early stage from 1928 to 1933; 2) his Critical Theory stage from 1933 to 1941 and his post war writings. What is most evident is the revision in his social theory during the post second world war period. There is a significant rupture between the militant optimism of "*Eros and Civilization*" in contrast to the bleak pessimism of "*One-Dimensional Man*". Starting around 1966 he however returns to more utopian and optimistic perspectives on human liberation (Kellner, 1984, p. 364). During the period of McCarthyism (Red Scare) in the 1950s, it was untenable to find any revolutionary forces in advanced capitalist society. In the early 60s, the most visible forces of opposition were the non-integrated outsiders, students and intellectuals involved in the civil rights movement which Marcuse alluded to at the end of "*One-Dimensional Man*". With the beginning of the anti-war movement and the 'New Left,' Marcuse discovered new political forces that led him to modify his theory. His involvement in the student's revolt of 1968 is noteworthy. He was in a way forced to posit more modest political strategies (Kellner, 1984, p. 364). Marcuse argues that theory periodically demands revision and development since the categories are historical. It is the openness and non-dogmatic radicalism of Marcuse's project and the absence of any finished body of clearly defined truths, which constitute the continuing importance of his work.

In the atmosphere of post-war reconstruction and the Cold War many key intellectuals from Germany's past were subject to attack in the press and in the academia; direct lines were traced from Hegel to Nietzsche to fascist ideology and from Marx to Stalinism. Horkheimer and Adorno resisted this fashion and helped to restore serious discussion of these thinkers. They risked pleasing neither conservative thinkers nor radical authorities.

They were attacked in the 1960s for their political pessimism and lack of practical involvement and political irresponsibility (Held, 1978, p. 39). However it requires mention that Adorno remained the radical critic against the prevailing society's omnipotence, both against the reified West and the regimented East.

The central trajectory of thought of the successors of the Western Marxist tradition from 1920s onwards was a turning back from economics and politics to philosophy and culture (Anderson, 1976, p. 53). Theory became during the post war years a discipline greatly distanced from politics. In the absence of a revolutionary class movement, the needle of the whole tradition tended to swing towards the study of contemporary bourgeois culture. The crises of theory may point to their obsolescence and demise but they may also enable the theory to modify itself and survive. The remarkable amount of the output of the Frankfurt School became a prolonged 'Discourse on Method'. Theoretical pronouncements effectively suppressed the whole material problem of the unity of theory and practice and this was the shape theory assumed in the epoch after World War II (Anderson, 1976, p. 53). The individual theoretical systems within the tradition of Western Marxism were seen to be conditioned by the diverse national political situations. Each of these systems received the impress of a plurality of historical determinations, deriving from different horizons and levels of social and ideological structures of our time producing major changes in orientations over time.

It is noteworthy that when Karl Mannheim moved from Heidelberg to the University of Frankfurt in 1930, he was assigned office space in the building that also housed the Institute for Social Research. Despite such close physical proximity, relations between Mannheim and the Institute appear to have always been rather distant. Undoubtedly, this distance was largely due to the serious substantive disagreements that served to divide

Mannheim from the Frankfurt School. In many ways, these areas of substantive disagreement may be traced back to differences in their respective receptions of Georg Lukács' *"History and Class Consciousness"*. The Frankfurt School opposed Mannheim's extension of the theory of ideology into a generalized sociology of knowledge. In their view, Mannheim would often point to antagonistic groups struggling in society and then, alongside such references, he would point to opposing sets of world views—without ever making explicit the connections between them. The weak though persisting influence of Marxism led the Frankfurt School to affirm that the truth of conflicting views would ultimately be decided in concrete historical struggles and not in the application of the concept of ideology to all thought. This implied that there was no philosophical truth, indeed no absolutist truth at all in the dialectical scheme. There are several recurrent themes in the Frankfurt School's critique of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge. Mannheim's concept of socio-historical totality was rejected as a regression to idealist metaphysics. Mannheim's account of the relation between consciousness and social existence was said to have remained vague and without specific determination. Mannheim's expansion of the concept of ideology into a "general-total" formulation was said to have resulted in the loss of its original critical content. Because of the important formative influence of *"History and Class Consciousness"* on both Mannheim and the Frankfurt School, there are however, some areas of common agreement. The problem of ideology was central for both Mannheim and the Frankfurt School. For both, the theory of ideology provided an essential bridge between epistemology and social theory. Both expected the analysis of ideology to yield certain implications for political practice.

Adorno pointed out the lack of an 'active' orientation in the sociology of knowledge. Mannheim's sociology of knowledge seemed to him to be a 'mockery of reality'. Lukács concluded

that Mannheim comes to "what we know as the night of thorough-going relativism in which all cats look grey and all perceptions relative" (Woldring, 1987, p.197). Mannheim (Woldring, 1987, p. 230) argued, "This problem of relativism can only be mastered if we make it into the axis, the starting point for theory and only afterwards ask how it could be overcome at the stage at which it confronts us." The fact that practical and theoretical problems are too much intertwined in the field of social and political knowledge creates methodological difficulties for the social sciences. Popper (1957, p. 223) is right in saying that, "The sociology of knowledge hopes to reform the social sciences by making social scientists aware of the social forces which unconsciously beset them. The main trouble about prejudices is that there is no such direct way of getting rid of them." This reform is attempted through detours – through the practice of the sociology of knowledge, which treats ideology as an 'analytical tool', as a mode of ascertaining the explicatory and heuristic value of different theoretical ideas prevalent during particular time and space.

In the post-war period, Jurgen Habermas' attempts at analyzing the connections between knowledge and human interests by laying bare the structure of the processes of enquiry that determine the meaning and the validity of our statements claiming objectivity mark the continuation of the profound legacy of the debates within and between Critical Theory and the Sociology of Knowledge. In terms of the consequences of these approaches to studying social phenomenon, C.W. Mills' (1940, p.330) statement seems particularly apt, "The detailed self-location of social science, if systematically and sensitively performed, not only will lead to detection of errors in methods under way but constructively will result in presentations of sounder paradigms for future research." Furthermore, the sociology of knowledge by showing the one-sidedness of standpoints and the transcendence of the limitations of the

'particular' points of view provides a possible way out of the intellectual crisis of our age – an age in which faith in the unconditional validity of the various views has been fundamentally shaken.

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