Temporizing with Time Wars

Karl Mannheim and problems of historical time

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ABSTRACT. Karl Mannheim's orientations to time can be plotted between subjectivist and objectivist extremes. The latter corresponds to social engineering, while the former offers the context in which Mannheim uses Hobbes's primaeval war to imagine the chaotic struggle over time that he hopes to escape. Mannheim's distinctive achievement is 'dynamic sociology', an experimental approach marked by the recognition not only of historicity in social phenomena and concepts but also of the opportunities thereby provided for clarifying meaning on terms congruent with the experiences of contemporary humankind. Mannheim's initial statement of 'dynamic sociology' is refined by his better-known studies of generations, ideologies, and utopias, which specify his awareness of co-existent multiple time worlds. Coordination is left to *ad hoc* mediation. This does not answer Mannheim's deepest fears and wishes, but he has the discipline to settle for less. KEY WORDS • generations • historicism • ideology • utopia

Introduction

Karl Mannheim is best known for *Ideology and Utopia* (Mannheim, 1929/1968), a book published in two versions, which made him famous first among Weimar intellectuals and later among American sociologists. The genealogy of the 'sociology of knowledge' that he adumbrated in that book and in related articles has been freshly re-examined during the past 20 years (Simonds, 1978; Wolff, 1978; Meja and Stehr, 1982; Loader, 1985; Woldring, 1986; Longhurst, 1989; Hoeges, 1994; Kettler and Meja, 1995; Endreß and Srubar, 2000).

VOL. 13 No. 2/3 (2004), pp. 155–172 0961-463X DOI: 10.1177/0961463X04040739
www.sagepublications.com

Common to this generation of commentators is the recognition that Mannheim's work is grounded in the early twentieth-century debates about the use and abuse of history.[1] In 1922, as he was making his way from philosophy to sociology, Mannheim (1982) wrote:

> Historicism has unsettled man's feeling of permanence and set in motion the once stable image of the world, in which everything had had its place according to a divine plan. Our sense of life tells us that everything could also be different. Everything has come to be as it happens to be through history, determined to be such by innumerable causes. At the outset, one senses this condition of being historically determined . . . only with regard to 'external formations'; only politics, art and science seem to be subject to historical transformation. Later, this sense of being historically determined also reaches out to the substance itself; our feelings, our ultimate commitments, and our sensibilities also appear as having become. The ground upon which we had until now considered the world, as from a steady place to stand, is shaken loose; our very self is abandoned; it is as if we were suspended above ourselves. (pp. 121–2)

According to Mannheim, the answer is to dispense with the illusion of such a stable ground and to recognize that the alternative is not simply an irrational flood of time that flushes (or leaches) all meaning out of experience but rather a variety of structured temporalities hospitable to various forms of human thought and action. Mannheim's pluralism represents his most interesting contribution to thinking about time. The sociologist, in his view, simply brings to reflective awareness the multidimensionality of human experience in complex societies. In the process of *Realdialektik* that generates the minimal common ground required to keep political conflicts from spinning violently out of control, clocks cannot be synchronized, but allowances will be made.

To expound this stimulating side of his thought in sufficient detail, we will neglect two themes that are generally quite rightly given greater prominence. First is the question of the relationship between the conception of knowledge integral to sociology of knowledge, on the one hand, and, on the other, problems of knowledge as they arise in epistemology. Mannheim (1953) began as a philosopher, and his doctoral dissertation attempted a reinterpretation of Kantian epistemology from a pluralistic, ontological point of view. Yet it is important to recognize that, in keeping with this structural analysis of epistemology, philosophical inquiry as such was external to Mannheim's work as a sociologist, even in the extended sense that he gave this concept. Sociology was an autonomous cultural enterprise whose mode of knowing was self-generated and whose criteria were reflexive. The 'open system' of interpretive and explanatory social knowledge did not depend on legitimation by epistemology or any other philosophical theory, although it created cognitive 'realities' that philosophers would eventually have to comprehend. In that sense, Mannheim's much-debated construct of 'relationism' as a counter to the charge of 'rela-

tivism' is best understood as a place holder for a philosophical theory that does not yet exist and that is not necessary to establish the validity of sociology's uses of history. When Mannheim speculates about the 'implications' of his sociological work for philosophy, he disavows all claims to entailment; similarly, his remarks on changes in philosophy, notably the philosophy of the natural sciences, refer primarily to changes in the cultural setting for sociology, and the consequent liberation of sociology from the need to defend itself against overweening claims from positivist social scientists. Mannheim, in brief, has no philosophical theory of time. His most productive questions arise in the context of sociological self-reflection.

Second, then, is the persistence in Mannheim of the post-Hegelian hope for an integrative, total view of the socio-cultural world, an equivalent to the 'philosophy of history' in its most ambitious sense. Yet this is an undertaking that he is tenaciously unwilling to speed along to a premature closure. There is no doubt that his immersion in the Marxist work of Georg Lukács, who had been his mentor in cultural studies during his Budapest years, was a factor in his eventual shift from aesthetic phenomena to political ideas in culture, but Mannheim never accepted any version of Marxist thought as the culminating synthesis. From the standpoint of the present interest in his contributions to the understanding of time and society, as Laube (2004) also notes, Mannheim's synthetic aspirations are not as important as his practical recognition of plurality, conflict and partial mutual adaptation. To take an expression that Mannheim himself borrowed from art history and that has also fascinated cultural commentators from Walter Benjamin to the present, Mannheim may be seen as a pioneer explorer of the non-contemporaneity of the contemporaneous, of the mutually fructifying co-existence of multiple times.

The present article opens with a dramatic contrast between two radically different orientations to the problem of time, both enunciated by Mannheim and never wholly abandoned by him. This is the context in which Mannheim imagines the struggle over time as somehow equivalent to Hobbes's war of each against all, a metaphor that captures a chaotic possibility that Mannheim hopes to escape. Next we turn to Mannheim's account of 'dynamic sociology', an approach marked not only by the recognition of historicity in its objects but also by an appreciation of the opportunities thereby provided to the interpreter for clarifying meaning on terms that are congruent with the experiences of contemporary humankind and therefore a source of enlightenment and cultivation for them (Loader and Kettler, 2002). We will show that the initial statement of 'dynamic sociology' is substantially refined by Mannheim's studies of generations, ideologies, and utopias, which amplify and specify his awareness of coexistent multiple worlds. The surprising finding emerging from this review is Mannheim's ambivalence towards those who assign meanings in the world of action without regard to time. While he sees something profoundly precious in

the mystic's experience of timelessness and displays a certain awe for the spiritual force of the 'chiliastic' utopian who imagines that the timeless and infinite are palpably present, he also rejects those who enter the political scene without a clock, so to speak, notably the fascists. If conservatives, liberals and socialists, differ in their conceptions of history, they agree that they must negotiate a mutually comprehensible historical conception in order to sustain a civil world. In the emergency of the Hitler era and in his dispiriting English exile, Mannheim imagined that he could lay down the terms of such a conception, but that phase of his work, frozen in the contemporaneous polemically charged critiques of Karl Popper and Friedrich Hayek exceeds our present modest brief.[2]

I

A comparison between a 1922 literary essay (Mannheim, 1922), published in a Hungarian exile periodical, and a letter to the religious thinker, Eduard Heimann, written from a new exile in 1935 (Mannheim, 2001), marks the outer limits between which Mannheim's conceptions of time were variously situated. In the earlier writing, time is conceived qualitatively, in relation to the most intimate subjective standard. He contrasts the quality of time subjected to imperatives of social functions, not excluding the casual claims of friends – whom he luridly addresses as Hobbesian 'time-wolves' engaged in a war of all against all – with the quality of time that is fully at the disposition of the subject – where it verges upon the timelessness of the mystic. Speaking as if to these friends, he writes:

> There was a moment once, at a point halfway between childhood and early manhood, and in the days before you had begun to persecute me, when I could hear time growing. I sensed the point where timelessness meets time. Ever since, there have been two kinds of time for me. One of them is taken up by life itself: Work, longing, activity and thought. It is an external thread along which you easily find your way; but the high price it exacts is the leaving-behind of one's own self. The other time (which you can also call timelessness) is the silent reaching-out of your bare soul, a spark burned down to a mere speck and sinking ever more deeply into its own glow. (Mannheim, 1922: 573–4)

Thirteen years later, in contrast, he is responding to a reproachful former Frankfurt colleague, with whom he had earlier shared a deep interest in Paul Tillich's social theology, with its distinctive qualitative concept of *kairos* as an irrational moment of freedom transcending the constraining conditions of historical temporality. Mannheim moves away from Tillich's views and defends the conception of planning central to his work in England, which accepts the supposed functional imperatives of 'the age of social reconstruction' and

operates within the objective and uniform time frame of the social engineer. With a self-critical eye to his own earlier style of thinking, he writes:

> It was precisely the sin of the German intellectuals that they did not look first at the fundamental general contours of things (as is naturally done by people who are impelled to action in public), but rather (corresponding to the conditions of privacy and intimacy characteristic of their existence) fled directly into nuances, and dissipated themselves there. (Mannheim, 2001: 191)

Between the timelessness of the mystics and the unending regulative chronometry of the mechanical world was the plural, diverse, and always changing temporal world of human history, and this is the focal point of Mannheim's most productive explorations. Encounters with the contrasting extremes can themselves be thought of only as events in historical time, as with the 'moment' of fiery intuition that Mannheim situates in his own biography, and the time of history, Mannheim came to believe, is configured by sequences of social relations and underlying understandings. Mannheim's image of the thinker suspended over himself is transmuted into the conception of the socially (relatively) unattached intellectual whom he postulates as the subject of sociology of knowledge and of the more comprehensive dynamic sociology with which this project is intimately associated. The critical clarification is that the knowledge of the intellectual is not seen as the product or possession of an isolated individual. Knowledge is always social; and the individual inquirer is always engaged in negotiating with others in the attempt to identify the limits of the respective perspectives and to achieve a synthesis. The test of the bargain cannot ever be more than that it holds and works among inquirers who mutually recognize one another, if only for a time. To extend the Hobbesian metaphor, the story of human action in time is the story of 'constitutions' always coming into being, always being made: There is no univocal contract and no sovereign.

II

When Mannheim arrived in Germany in 1919, in self-chosen political exile from his native Budapest, he came to an intellectual scene rife with experimentation, much of it focused on the widely noted 'crisis of historicism'.[3] Amplifying the transitional remarks on this problem constellation quoted earlier, Mannheim (1952) wrote, in an essay called 'Historicism':

> The historicist principle not only organizes, like an invisible hand, the work of the cultural sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*), but also permeates everyday thinking. Today it is impossible to take part in politics, to understand a person . . . without treating all those realities which we have to deal with as having evolved and as developing dynamically. . . . These forces are grasped and understood as poten-

> tialities, constantly in flux, moving from one point to another; already on the level of everyday reflection, we seek to determine the position of our present within a temporal framework, to tell by the cosmic clock of history what time it is. (p. 84)

The radicalization of temporality in the self-understanding of cultural theorists responding to the 'crisis of historicism' spawned a rich variety of intellectual experiments, for better and for worse, to overcome the aporia of philosophical relativism and political disorientation. Nineteenth-century historicists had ignored the inherent relativism of their world-view, secure that they were the arbiters of norms for an organic cultivated public. In assuming this elevated status, mainstream historicism was closely aligned with the classical ideal of cultivation (*Bildung*). But as that public began to fragment in the late Empire and especially in the Weimar Republic without the prop of the imperial state, relativism emerged as a larger problem (Loader, 1976). Historicists such as Ernst Troeltsch and Friedrich Meinecke lamented:

> This endless pluralism of individual values which we are discovering everywhere . . . is able, especially now in our gloomy position, to thrust us into confusion and leave us helpless. Everything is individuality following its own laws, everything is flux. . . . How are we to emerge from this anarchy of values? From historicism how does one again come to a science of values? (Meinecke, 1922/1948: 223–4)

Even in the article in which he accepted historicism as the frame of reference for his own work, Mannheim (1952) admitted that disciplinary and social divisions remained unreconciled: 'That historicism has not solved this task must be emphasized rather than concealed' (p. 131).

The fragmentation of the public was accompanied by a fragmentation of perceptions of time. In the absence of a 'Greenwich mean time', other alternatives presented themselves. One could retreat into a Bergson-like vitalism in which time became an endless stream, an immeasurable duration; or one could discipline time via the dialectic in good Hegelian fashion; or one could adopt the liberal faith in a mechanistic idea of progress; or one could cling to the old organic hopes of the former mainstream. All of these sought to establish a single time and thus were 'utopian' in the Mannheimian sense. Another alternative, the one taken by Mannheim, was the acceptance of the fragmentation of time. He pluralized time, postulating a time-space continuum that allowed for different times connected to different social spaces. These differences could never be subordinated to a single organic system, but could be addressed in a manner that related one to the other.

In the 1922 manuscript in which he raised the unsettling nature of historicism, Mannheim (1982) distinguishes three types of sociology and their corresponding sociologies of culture. A critical dimension of the distinction are differences in the concepts of time characteristic of each (pp. 101–30). He identifies 'pure' or 'formal' sociology with various philosophically driven projects for finding a

universal non-metaphysical ground for knowledge about the variations and diversities of the historical world, abstracted from both time and space. In intention, such sociology negates historical time. Mannheim is not unsympathetic in principle to 'pure sociology', although he criticizes the efforts of Simmel, von Wiese, and others of that generation, because he is convinced that the future of this type of sociology lies in an adaptation of phenomenological intuition of essences. 'General sociology' is a second type. In this approach, exemplified above all by Max Weber, the social phenomena are comprehended in their historical facticity, but the reliance on the induction and the aim of generalization mean that 'it does not accept historical time as a constituent part' (p. 113) of its materials. General sociology generates 'surface' typologies, unstructured by temporal relations. Such findings in the mode of the natural sciences have their uses, according to Mannheim, but they can only comprehend surface dimensions and provide instrumental help to deeper levels of explanation. To understand the deeper meanings of social phenomena and the social dimensions of culture, it is necessary to apprehend the ways in which location in an appropriate historical sequence enters into the inner structure of the materials studied. That something is 'later' than something else is integral to its meaning. Dynamic sociology (and dynamic sociology of culture), according to Mannheim, represents a systematization of the common experience of assigning meanings on the basis of an understanding of relevant antecedents. A different formulation of this experience can be found in the philosophies of history, including theories of progress, but these are in error because they link the valid insight to valuations and because they impute the conditions for understanding to historical time in some metaphysical way. Dynamic sociology recovers the insight without these excrescences.

The hallmark of dynamic sociology is periodization, the typological recognition of irreversible sequences constrained within the kind of 'historical space' that Mannheim describes as 'the bodily shape of history'. Rejecting the positivist 'law of three stages', he contends that 'the most general types of sociological concept (such as family, urban economy, capitalism, etc.) gain pregnant meaning only when they are classified by reference to that unique structure in which each originated' (p. 115). The time of dynamic sociology is 'hierarchical' rather than simply chronological, in that relations between past and present are mediated by structures of meaning that cluster and accumulate events and that differ in rates of change. Unlike historiography in the narrow sense, dynamic sociology proceeds at a distance from individual events, except insofar as the typological characterization of periods must be constantly tested and refined by applications to representative examples. If the movement discerned by historiography, properly so called, is continuous, dynamic sociology sees change with an eye to the disruptive transitions bounding a period, a feature that may be called dialectical, but only in a non-metaphysical sense.

All cultural sociology, according to Mannheim, begins with some conception of cultural objects as a 'function' of some experiential contexture. In the abstract, a cultural sociological reading can be illustrated by the interpretation of a 'scream' as a 'cry'. Actual historical cultures must be approached in two steps. First, the cultural products to be examined must be interrelated with the help of a construct of 'style', or 'tendency'. Such units can be said to be studied historically if they are applied to 'epochs' in the distinct lines of development of different cultural media, but such studies are not of primary interest to Mannheim, except insofar as reflections on such specialized histories have refined the concept of world-view introduced into cultural history by Dilthey. World-view identifies a cross-sectional 'sense of life' that is common to epochs in distinct cultural fields. Mannheim calls this the 'structural analysis' of cultural phenomena. Second, then, the respective world-views are correlated to a characteristic period in social development. It is this last step, the social interpretation of the experiential contexture manifested in the world-view, that constitutes cultural sociology as such. Mannheim recognizes both 'pure' and 'general' sociologies of culture (with Simmel's study of 'money' as model of the former and Max Weber's study of the Protestant ethic as model of the latter), but his own interest is centred on dynamic sociology of culture and the interrelations among styles, world-views, and experiential situations variously located in the 'historical body' of some period in social development.

Mannheim's work on conservatism attempts to make good the claims of this somewhat sketchy prospectus. The choice of an 'ideology' rather than a 'style' or 'philosophical tendency' as the cultural 'type' to be examined brings to the fore an issue that Mannheim had already identified at the conclusion of his first preliminary study, that it is a questionable simplification to suppose that there is only one consistent world-view manifested in a given historical period. Societies of the modern era are split into plural sites of experience and competing designs upon the world. Proceeding in the manner of dynamic sociology rather than particularistic historiography, Mannheim refers to typical social locations rather than individual biographies, although the 'locations' are themselves undergoing change. Most familiar in connection with Mannheim's sociology of knowledge is his adaptation of Marxist class categories – aristocrat, bourgeois, and proletarian – but when he focuses on social stratification he also introduces two categories that are controversial in the Marxist literature of his time, the bureaucracy and the intelligentsia (Mannheim, 1929/1968). In addition, two other social classifications figure importantly in his teaching, the distinction between men and women (Kettler and Meja, 1993), and the differences among generations (Mannheim, 1952), but only the second of these is the subject of a separate study.

Although the contrasting readings of the world imputable to different locations within the changing scheme of social stratification are Mannheim's most

characteristic concerns, his set piece article on generations – written for publication in Leopold von Wiese's closely-held sociology journal more in the manner of von Wiese's formal sociology than his own dynamic sociology – connects most exclusively with the movement of social relations, social knowledge and social action in time. This is the context in which Mannheim (1952) draws on the 'stroke of genius' of the art historian, Wilhelm Pinder, to cite the 'non-contemporaneity of the contemporaneous' as much more than a vivid statement of the puzzle confronting art historians when they find themselves dating a work of art as belonging to a style antedating the others produced in the same chronological and art-historical epoch. Mannheim greets Pinder's formula as the epitome of objections to conceptions of history as a succession of unitary 'spirits of the age (*Zeitgeist*)', although he immediately registers his dissent from Pinder's total rejection of any such common context and his composition of Positivist and neo-Romantic elements, as Mannheim sees it, where 'contemporaneity' is understood as a conjunction of mysterious natural rhythms of birth and death and incessantly superseded, creatively willed generational world-views, labeled '*entelechies*'. More generally, Mannheim rejects both the positivist attempts to derive laws of social and cultural development from demographic rhythms of generational succession, all seen as transpiring in a uniform 'natural' chronology, and the neo-Romantic use of the 'generation' concept to articulate their sense of irrational mystery about the starts and stops of human creativity. For Mannheim, the problem of generations is first of all a sociological one, and the disruptive innovations associated with generational succession are constrained by the periodic development of social configurations. 'The "spirit of the age"', he writes, 'is . . . the outcome of the dynamic interaction of actual generations succeeding one another in a continuous series' (p. 341).

The generations in question, however, are not simply the generations of the positivist demographer. Their rise and fall and rates of succession are a function not of the meaningless facts of human biology, but of the patterns of social change – social differentiation, rates of transformation, conflict and crises. The time measured by the succession of generations is thus dramatically variable, ranging from the epochs tolled by Old Testament genealogies to the latterday dizzying pace of succession, where siblings seem to live in different times. To bridge the gap between the statistical phenomena of age groups and the sense of generation relevant to social and cultural understanding, Mannheim distinguishes three concepts, subdividing socio-historical space. 'Generational location' divides the biological cohort into specific cultural regions. Chinese and Germans born in the same year do not share a generational location. Generational location, in turn, is decisively qualified by 'generational association', which Mannheim defines as participation in a common fate or sensibility, especially the perception of change. Peasant youth, whose world is largely

routinized according to seemingly timeless tradition, are less able to perceive change and thus belong to a different context than urban youth, who are more 'exposed to the social and intellectual symptoms of a process of dynamic destabilization' (p. 307). No less important, the experiences of the pre-war youth movements, the wartime front-line, the coming of age in the hyperinflation, all may constitute their own respective generational associations. This is what Mannheim calls an 'actual generation', conjoined by a common sense of problems, and possessing to that extent some elements of a distinctive and unique '*entelechy*', to use Pinder's term, now given social grounding. But actual generations need not respond in a common way to these shared problems. Mannheim sees a diversity of 'generational units' variously linked to the other fault lines within the composite 'spirit of the age' corresponding to the social-cultural location, notably those exemplified by political parties in conflict and articulated in competing ideologies. Like the social mechanism of competition (as mediated by sociologically informed *Realdialektik*) and the transformative impulses comprehended by the utopian dimensions of social thought, the cross-cutting identities defined by memberships in an actual generation are one of factors that renders the ideological field both dynamic and capable of the provisional negotiated settlements, which Mannheim, in the fashionable language of the time, called syntheses.[4]

If Mannheim's treatment of the 'sociological problem of generations' in relation to the constitution of the 'spirit of the age' (*Zeitgeist*) focuses most directly on the contest between 'objective' and 'subjective' renderings of time, contrasting conceptions of historical time are no less central to his understanding of ideologies or utopias.[5] In both cases, the critical point is that Mannheim (1929/1968) uses the conventional terms to refer not simply to complexes of political ideas but to divergent 'modes of thought', distinguished by their respective 'categorical structures' (p. 73), or forms of thought, including distinctive conceptions of time and space, as well as other constituent elements of knowing. He distinguishes between recognizing these structural elements in the modes of experiencing that underlie the various ideologies and tracing them in their various philosophical explications, which are a function in turn of the historical changes to which ideologies are subject, while remaining grounded in their foundational mode of experience.

Mannheim's study of conservatism represents his most elaborate attempt at 'structural analysis' of an ideology, conjoined with both historical tracking and social interpretation of its development. In this context, he begins with a contrast in the 'experience of time' between conservatives and 'progressives' (including both liberals and socialists in the latter category): 'The progressive always experiences the present as the beginning of the future, while the conservative regards it simply as the latest stage reached by the past' (Mannheim, 1925/1986: 97). Without denying the conservatives' deep interest in the past, he

nevertheless refines his conception of their sense of time in the light of their insistence that the past is within the present. He concludes that their 'picture of historical time takes on something of the quality of an imaginary space', an 'inclination . . . toward . . . a resolution of every temporal succession in to a spatial contiguity or inclosure' (p. 97). Transitory events and individuals appear as mere accidents of the 'compacted, spatial substratum' of land and soil. Mannheim cites Adam Müller's Romantic celebration of the conservative *Raumgenossen* as against the progressive concept of *Zeitgenossen* – a fellowship in space rather than time. Interestingly, he finds a certain similarity in the structure of proletarian and socialist thinking. Here too, there is a certain aggrandizement of 'spatial, corporate units', relatively 'unconfined by time', although the relations and classes which are the focus of this thought lack the organicism of the conservative entities, and, as will shortly appear, they are read from a radically different direction. The democratic-liberal mode of bourgeois thought 'does experience movement', but 'it is only able to master this dynamicism by segmenting the movements into *discrete instants*' (p. 99), just as it understands society only as an assemblage of atomized individuals. Mannheim (1925/1986) concludes:

> In short, while conservative thought is oriented towards the past surviving in the present, and bourgeois thought, because it the carrier of the present, nourishes itself on new developments, as they transpire from moment to moment, proletarian thought attempts to consider and to further the future within the present, by putting into the foreground those present factors which herald the future structural forms of life. (p. 99)

None of these ideologies has an understanding of time adequate to the complex sense of history required by dynamic sociology.

When Mannheim (1929/1968) returns to the comparison three years later, he nevertheless finds promise in the interrelations among these mutually incompatible views, because he is contrasting them with fascism, which he takes to be indifferent to history, except as an arbitrary construction used to manipulate passive masses. After a summary statement of the fascist dismissal of situational orientation or constraints, Mannheim writes:

> The [fascist] conception of history . . . is not comparable either to the conservative, the liberal-democratic, or the socialistic conceptions. All these theories, otherwise so antagonistic, share the assumption that there is a definite and ascertainable structure in history within which, so to speak, each event has its proper position. Not everything is possible in every situation. This framework which is constantly changing and revolving must be capable of comprehension. (p. 120)

Such projects of rational understanding presuppose the applicability of basic categories of time, space, and explanation, in some structural design. This does not of course mean that they share an identical conception of rationality:

> While the liberals and socialists continued to believe that the historical structure was completely capable of rationalization the former insisting that its development was progressively unilateral, and the latter viewing it as a dialectical movement, the conservatives sought to understand the structure of the totality of historical development intuitively by a morphological approach. Different as these points of view were in method and content, they all understood political activity as proceeding on an historical background, and they all agreed that in our own epoch, it becomes necessary to orient oneself to the total situation in which one happens to be placed, if political aims are to be realized. (p. 121)

It is noteworthy, first, that the qualities that Mannheim sees common to the three ideologies correspond to his basic design of dynamic sociology. It is to be understood as a reflexive mode of the situation of thought in the contemporary period. Second, then, it is remarkable that the spatial dimension that Mannheim had associated with both conservative and socialist ideology plays a vital part in his comparative exposition of the ideologies. Rationalization entails an important measure of spatialization. One has to see oneself as located somewhere in a situation in which one is placed. An adequate understanding of historical time requires first an appreciation of these spatial configurations and diversities, and it comprises a platform informed by the incompatible points of departure and an understanding of their limited perspectives, without attempting to homogenize them. In an article for a professional handbook published in 1931, Mannheim (1929/1968) plays with analogies from popular representations of current scientific reflections to strengthen his case. He cites Heisenberg's indeterminacy principle and even Einstein's theory of relativity to underline the point that there is nothing outlandish or contrary to the most serious thought to recognize that variable standpoints and instruments of measurement enter properly in the explanation of relations between movements through time and locations in space (p. 275). In a loose sense, without in any way imputing to him the aspiration to unequivocal mathematical solutions of the problem that in fact defined the projects of both Heisenberg and Einstein, we can say that he identified his reading of the problem of historical time with the potent metaphor of the time-space continuum.

In a reformulation of his argument in 1930 for students in his first class as Professor of Sociology in Frankfurt, Mannheim (2001) used the spatial dichotomy of 'limitation' and 'expansion' to distinguish the sociological attitude from other ways of approaching the world. Limitation means that 'we try to grasp the whole of life through paradigms – models – appropriate to a specific narrow sphere of life' (p. 4). Traditional primitive societies governed by religious attitudes have unambiguous meanings. Such unambiguity 'binds' their members so that they are not able to achieve any separation from those meanings, to expand themselves beyond the limitations of the closed community.

Mannheim writes that as communities become socially differentiated, the

'unambiguous alignment of meaning' is shattered, providing that the differentiation results in mutually antithetical life spheres. When one begins to entertain the notion that 'I' am also an 'it', self-reflexivity begins. One regards oneself ironically as something that could be something else. One becomes open to the idea of one's own transformation.

One sees that one's intellectual points of departure (*Denkansatz*) all originate in a point that is particular. At the moment when volitions meet, when localities and regions – not to speak of classes and status groups – that had separately formed certain views for themselves converge in a common stream, the opportunity presents itself of seeing that each locality, each status group, each class lived in only a corner of the world, that each was particularly oriented towards a distinctive axiomatic set, and that none of them was absolute. The basic structural logic of every human being is to see his particularity as absolute. The new insight may mark the first stage of a cosmopolitan situation. Certain ways of thinking take form in certain stages of life, and this moment may present the stage at which it is possible to confront diverse developments (p. 64).

This pressing beyond the limits of one's particularity is what Mannheim means by 'expansion', and the possibility of a 'cosmopolitan situation' stands in for the enlightenment ideals, which he never abandoned.

Yet his fascination with 'utopia' suggests a measure of dissatisfaction with this complex rationalization. Taking the chiliastic immediacy of Anabaptist life in perfection as paradigm of the utopian mentality, he interrogates liberalism, conservatism, and socialism about their utopian dimensions, the elements in their thought that possess the capacity to disrupt the orderly course of things, to arrive at a place that does not appear as a place at all on the maps of everyday. The utopian moment is timeless for the chiliastic utopian; it is always here if it is chosen. In this context, he traces a decline of the utopian element through the historical succession of liberal humanism, conservative idealism and the communist-socialist utopia, ever more attuned to the 'here and now' and thus, it seems, ever less driven by a will to transformation, culminating in a matter-of-factness that threatens 'a static state of affairs in which man himself becomes no more than a thing', a total pacification, we might say, of the time wars. 'Thus, after a long, tortuous, but heroic development, just at the highest state of awareness, when history is ceasing to be blind fate . . . with the relinquishment of utopias, man would lose his will to shape history and thereby his ability to control it' (Mannheim, 1929/1968: 236).

There is a curious and risky similarity between this conception and the indifference to time that he finds in fascism, but when Mannheim explores his own affinity to utopianism, he associates chiliasm in his own time rather with the widely admired anarchist martyr, Gustav Landauer, assassinated by rightist gunmen. And in his return to the topic in his 1930 classroom lectures, when he is urgently troubled by the tendency of the proto-fascist sociologist, Hans

Freyer, to equate a conception of utopia congruent with Mannheim's own with the 'revolution from the right', Mannheim integrated the utopian element within the processes of expansion, as merely a preliminary phase of distantiation from the world of settled meanings (Mannheim, 2001: 22–3). The utopian will to transform is only the beginning: It cannot complete this process into true self-reflexivity. Utopians strive to establish an absolute, or rather a counter-absolute to the existing one. When they try to implement their vision in the real world they must adopt an empirical attitude to the ambiguous realities of social life. They must become self-reflexive to some degree or fail. And this self-reflexivity moves them beyond utopian faith, eventually to the sociological attitude.

While Mannheim's sociology of knowledge is correctly seen as inspired by the Marxist theory of ideology, this is only part of the story. Notwithstanding the complexities introduced by his theory of generations and *Realdialektik*, we can summarize our understanding of Mannheim's dynamic resolution of the 'time wars' by juxtaposing the main themes in the primary *Ideology and Utopia* essays (Mannheim, 1929/1968), understood as complementary rather than systematically integrated. Ideology provides the spatial component by limiting world-views to distinct social spaces; utopia provides the temporal element, the will to transform, to drive history forward. By itself, each is inadequate. Together they comprise what we may call the time-space continuum that forms the essence of the sociological attitude. This is why he classifies both of the elements in isolation – the orthodox Marxist class theory, which has become dogmatic, inflexible and, hence, static, and the pure will of fascism, which divorces its decisionism, its commitment to the deed, from a complex spatial perspective – as forms of 'reprimitivization'.

In 1930, Mannheim (2001) was more concerned with fascist reprimitivization and its two primary academic sponsors, Carl Schmitt and Hans Freyer. Fascism represented a conscious denial of the pluralism of modernity, a 'decision' to regress to the unambiguous meaning of an unproblematic and unified culture on command, to become 'primitive' in the face of the modern world (p. 39). But orthodox Marxism also embraced limitation and resisted expansion through distantiation. By the 'acceptance of a given stage as absolute' (p. 53), orthodoxy in effect also stops time.

In contrast to these two extremes, the sociological person 'feels his way through the intermeshing weave of the actual situation' (p. 48), using sociology as the instrument for a new 'reformation of life' (p. 35). In Mannheim's terms, the sociological attitude should combine decision and expansion, so that they exist in a dialectical relationship to one another. Expansion without political engagement leads to a sterile fatalism. Decision without sociological clarification assumes the form of pure utopian volition. Together they situate individuals in the time-space continuum and drive that continuum onward. Even his later

theory of planning is best understood as an emergency-driven utopian adaptation of this vision. Planning was the sociological attitude put into practice in a time when subtle ambiguities seemed to be a dangerous luxury. In his first major work in exile in England, which was where his ideal for planning was introduced and which was the subject of the critiques mentioned earlier by Popper, Hayek and Heimann, he disambiguated his complex thought in *Ideology and Utopia* and the inaugural Frankfurt lectures:

> [Man] has taken a new step forward, when he can live his own history in the spirit of experiment and create out of the emergent forces of the social process the knowledge and will to shape history itself. (Mannheim, 1935/1940: 147)

Mannheim's friend, Siegfried Kracauer (1969), in contrast, wrote a number of years later that 'the antinomy at the core of time is insoluble', and he suggested poetically that perhaps Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew, could be 'the only reliable informant on these matters . . . for he alone in all history has had the unsought opportunity to experience the process of becoming and decaying itself'. 'How unspeakably terrible he must look!' Kracauer adds (p. 157). Reason enough, we suppose, for Mannheim's flight to the front.

Notes

1. The authors have benefited throughout from the pre-publication text of an outstanding dissertation of Reinhard Laube (2004). Laube displays great scholarly acumen, depth, and versatility in situating Mannheim's thought in the context of contemporary approaches to the problems, both in Mannheim's time and in the recent past. In the nature of the case, the present work cannot be a detailed encounter with this valuable work.
2. Karl Mannheim became the target of Karl Popper's criticism in a 1944 publication, *The Poverty of Historicism* (Popper, 1964), above all because of Mannheim's post-1933 'diagnosis of our time' as an 'age of reconstruction', an interpretation that he used to justify his contentions, first, that there was no alternative to a regime of 'total' planning in the current state of modern societies, as well as his programme of 'planning for freedom', by which the state would indeed steer society, but without dictatorship or uniform control by command. Popper mainly disputed the underlying concept of sociology as a study of successive ages or stages of historical formation, each with their own distinctive ways of knowing, inner logics, and practical imperatives. He spoke of Mannheim as representative of a profoundly anti-scientific and dangerously utopian conception, which held, first, that social science is called upon to uncover comprehensive qualitative differences in historical situations, past, present and future, and, second, that such social knowledge of difference can provide authoritative normative guides to human action. Friedrich Hayek (1994) launched a similar attack at the time. Hayek classed Mannheim's type of thought under the head of a counter-revolutionary 'science' epitomized by August Comte. Both men include Mannheim among those who risked putting humankind, in Hayek's language, on 'the

road to serfdom'. Hayek says of Mannheim that 'his use of the word "freedom" is as misleading as it is in the mouth of totalitarian politicians' (p. 158). The conception attacked by Hayek and Popper is only the last of Mannheim's efforts, and it is very much conditioned by the sense of emergency in the Hitler era, a determination to short-circuit theoretical subtlety for the sake of a practical discursive strategy. Its didactic 'utopianism' is bred of fear rather than hope. In his British writings, from the very outset, Mannheim is almost always on war time (Loader, 1985; Kettler and Meja, 1995). In *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Popper (1963) devotes a chapter to 'Sociology of Knowledge', mostly on Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia,* with the emphasis on Mannheim's concept of a self-therapeutic 'socioanalysis' as the way to 'objectivity'. The chapter is remarkable for Popper's self-conscious coquetting with sociology of knowledge as a way of undermining Mannheim as apologist for 'intellectuals' and for his oblique acknowledgment that his own treatment of the 'closed society' resembles Mannheim's methods to some extent.

3. The present-day bearing of the historicism disputes of that time is almost self-evident, especially now that the bloom is off the rose of the post-modernist rediscovery of flux and situatedness. Martin Jay (2002) recently noted the parallels, correctly emphasizing that the earlier generation lacked the more recent relish in the display of difference and indeterminacy (pp. 32–3). Writing in the bravura style appropriate to the venue, Jay relies on a textbook caricature to dismiss one of Mannheim's quite subtle experiments as a 'non-starter'. Yet Jay's easy familiarity with a wide range of social theory makes his recollection of earlier parallels to current dilemmas and strategies a useful starting point.
4. Not a few of Mannheim's terms, taken from the social discourse of the time, are also co-opted into the vocabulary of the more ambitious National Socialist publicists, notably Josef Goebbels. 'Generation', 'synthesis', and 'world-view' are especially burdened in this way. Karl Kraus (1952) argued in 1933 that the fashion for these terms among the journalistic (and Jewish) intelligentsia was a critical part of the destruction of culture and thought that made Nazism possible. Mannheim was not wholly impervious to the danger that his way of speaking and thinking might bring him close to precursors of a German fascism, but he insisted that his project of constituting a historical reading, however complex, made the decisive difference (Loader and Kettler, 2002).
5. For present purposes, we will focus on Mannheim's *Conservatism* (1925/1986), and two of the essays contained in *Ideology and Utopia* (1929/1968), 'The Prospects of Scientific Politics' and 'The Utopian Mentality'. The essay 'Ideology and Utopia', written a year or two later than the others, attempts a temporary bridge between their admittedly different approaches. In the English version of the book, Mannheim included essays from two additional occasions. On the questions of interest here, there are no substantial differences in this compilation of interlinked essays, but the consideration that 'each of these essays has its own intellectual objective', and exhibit an 'essayistic-experimental attitude', as Mannheim noted (p. 47), cautions against overgeneralizing (or systematizing) the elements of his work.

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