

THE SCOPE OF UNDERSTANDING IN SOCIOLOGY

Towards a more radical reorientation in the
social and humanistic sciences

Werner Pelz

ROUTLEDGE LIBRARY EDITIONS:
SOCIAL THEORY



ROUTLEDGE LIBRARY EDITIONS:
SOCIAL THEORY

Volume 62

THE SCOPE OF UNDERSTANDING
IN SOCIOLOGY

This page intentionally left blank

THE SCOPE OF UNDERSTANDING IN SOCIOLOGY

Towards a more radical reorientation in the
social and humanistic sciences

WERNER PELZ

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published in 1974

This edition first published in 2015

by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 1974 Werner Pelz

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-0-415-72731-0 (Set)

eISBN: 978-1-315-76997-4 (Set)

ISBN: 978-1-138-79186-2 (Volume 62)

eISBN: 978-1-315-76248-7 (Volume 62)

Publisher's Note

The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original copies may be apparent.

Disclaimer

The publisher has made every effort to trace copyright holders and would welcome correspondence from those they have been unable to trace.

The scope of understanding in sociology

Towards a more radical reorientation in the
social and humanistic sciences

Werner Pelz

Routledge & Kegan Paul

London and Boston

*First published in 1974
by Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd
Broadway House, 68-74 Carter Lane,
London EC4V 5EL and
9 Park Street,
Boston, Mass. 02108, USA*

*Set in Monotype Times New Roman
and printed in Great Britain by
Unwin Brothers Limited
The Gresham Press
Old Woking, Surrey*

© Werner Pelz 1974

*No part of this book may be reproduced in
any form without permission from the
publisher, except for the quotation of brief
passages in criticism*

ISBN 0 7100 7854 4 (c)

ISBN 0 7100 8009 3 (p)

Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 74-77198

To Mary
for countless substantial contributions
and creative queries

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

Preface	ix
1 The problem poses itself	1
<i>Weber</i>	6
<i>Freud</i>	12
<i>Post-Freudian contributions</i>	39
2 Philosophical background	44
<i>Notes on literature</i>	60
<i>Notes on music</i>	66
3 Diverse approaches to the problem of understanding	69
<i>Prelude: myth, a tentative and provisional definition</i>	69
<i>A Positivism and scientism</i>	71
<i>B The natural versus the social sciences</i>	79
<i>C Value, value-freedom and objectivity</i>	101
<i>D Dialectics and negative dialectics</i>	111
<i>E History, dialectics of the individual and society</i>	122
<i>F Meaning and significance</i>	138
<i>G Subjective, objective</i>	144
<i>H Causality</i>	157
<i>I Sein and Seiendes</i>	163
4 A particular instance of sociological understanding and the snares of causal thinking	178
<i>A change of social consciousness</i>	191
<i>Causes?</i>	199
	vii

Contents

5	Contemplation and manipulation	220
	<i>Instances of contemplative insights</i>	240
	Appendix	259
	Notes	263
	Bibliography	267
	Index	275

Preface

We dare no longer ask with jesting Pilate, 'What is truth?' since we are not sure whether there is such a thing as truth, whether truth is a thing, whether truth *is*. Yet no society or group or person has so far managed to do without an explicit or implicit belief in some kind of truth. At one time the final truth as well as its guarantor was God, at another it was facts. Somewhere man's questioning had to come to rest, if provisionally and temporarily. For the Scholastic it could do so in the 'God is', for the scientist in the 'this is the case'. Today God does not function as guarantor, and in ever widening areas we are beginning to wonder whether we are altogether sure as to what constitutes a fact. In sociology in particular and in the social and humanistic disciplines in general 'facts' are becoming increasingly problematical constructs. Not only is there little agreement on how to establish facts, there is as little on the nature of facts. The question 'What is a sociological, psychological, historical or economic fact?' remains wide open for those who dare ask it at all. The social sciences have so far not answered but evaded it.

So I wish to ask once again: How does truth function in a society which no longer has a generally acknowledged Archimedean point in relation to which anything can be established as true or false? And what is the social truth-function within a society which generates sectional, interested, ideological Archimedean points – as, for example, in economics and industry, in technological science – which in turn need to be questioned? How does truth function when man tries to understand man, i.e. himself, when he begins to ask why society has found particular truth-functions or specific concepts of truth expedient?

I soon discovered not only the enormousness – almost enormity – of such a questioning, but also that it presupposes other questions

of similar dimensions: What constitutes understanding in the social and humanistic sciences, in the *Geisteswissenschaften*? What is it we here wish to understand? When dare we say and how can we show that we have understood?

During the last few centuries the natural sciences evolved a method of understanding, a methodology for arriving at conveniently precise and definite constellations of knowledge, which proved startlingly successful – though by now the success itself is beginning to look problematical. At first economics, then psychology, sociology, historiography and philosophy, were tempted to adopt that methodology and adapt it to their respective purposes. Man wished to apply this purely manipulative, categorical apprehension of inanimate nature, which Kant called ‘pure reason’ and which at each step produces testable, i.e. verifiable or falsifiable, knowledge, to himself, to his own self. He was not sufficiently prepared for the dilemma that was bound to be encountered by the manipulator in his endeavours to manipulate himself.

So this essay investigates the character and function of knowledge and of understanding in the *Geisteswissenschaften*, especially in sociology and social philosophy, and with special reference to German sociological scholars who were more agitated by epistemological problems than their non-German colleagues. What do we understand by understanding in this area? When do we know we know? And what is knowledge here where the knower is both subject and object, where the knower and the known, the one who strives to understand and that which is to be understood, are inter-penetrating? Has the distinction the German tongue makes between *Kennen* and *Wissen* as between two disparate forms of knowing something to teach us?

I continue to ask whether the too uncritical acceptance of certain basic ‘scientific’ assumptions has not constrained and crippled the social sciences as much as it has undoubtedly established them as respectable; whether sociology – or psychology – can be or should wish to be exclusively a science, a science in the contemporary exclusive sense. I am pleading for more fully experiential and experimental uses and forms of understanding. I suggest that the *Geisteswissenschaften* have not only much to learn from each other, but from poets, prophets and artists, and from the wisdom of the more ordinary children of the world. I wonder whether and to what an extent scientific-manipulative conceptualizations have to be complemented by a kind of thinking I call, if only for the sake of convenience, contemplative. Finally I try to show that the constitutive insights of the ‘founding fathers’ of sociology – as of psychology and philosophy – have often been distorted and cramped by the scientific preconceptions they accepted and reactivated, and why.

This essay expresses my belief that the social and humanistic sciences at large, and sociology in as far as it could become their clearing-house, are in need of radical reorientation. This would involve a reappraisal of many scientific or positivistic assumptions and presumptions, a questioning of much we take for axiomatic and self-evident. Such sociological reorientation may call for a more thorough acknowledgment of our subjectivity and inter-subjectivity as our actuality which constitutes objectivity as merely one of its many objectives. Hence it may suggest conversation rather than argument, dialogue rather than debate, mutual empathy and complementation rather than conjectures and refutations, as the appropriate intercourse between fellow searchers in quest of no-one yet quite knows what, between researchers who each and all are totally implicated in their research.

Of their very nature my reflections are inimical to strict logical presentation, since among much else they reflect on the scope of strict logic. However, I hope that the presentation cannot be shown to be illogical either. It is cumulative, intended to be suggestive rather than demonstrative, illustrative rather than argumentative. It is bound to appear and to be arbitrary in its selectiveness, since exhaustive treatment would have been impossible. The presentation is conversational in the sense that it is intended to involve the reader in a human intercourse rather than in a logical debate, is meant to hint at new possibilities of understanding rather than to fix, prove or demonstrate any particular method.

My bibliography, among other uses, represents my acknowledgment of and my gratitude to those who have helped me on my way. Yet only I may be held responsible for my deductions from their arguments, though I believe to have continued in the direction of their – sometimes merely implicit – intentions.

This essay is the result of four and more years of concentrated research and labour. It would have remained unwritten except for the most patient and generous help given to me by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.

Note 1 Wherever the reference to quotations in the text is to a book or article in German, the translation is my own.

Note 2 Throughout I shall avail myself of a distinction – introduced by some phenomenologists – between intention(ality) and intension(ality). I shall employ the former term as in conventional usage. The latter is to denote a purposeful directedness of which the underlying motives are mainly unconscious and which is therefore often misinterpreted by the ‘intensioner’.

This page intentionally left blank

1 The problem poses itself

The problems implicit in any attempt to arrive at an understanding of that peculiar confluence of the individual and the social which, for our purposes here, we shall denote as 'social consciousness' are most complex and intricate. They also seem impermeable. In Marcel's usage they are 'mysteries' (Spiegelberg, 1964, p. 426). The observer is inevitably a part of them, is right inside them. Most of all at the moment when his attention is fixed on these problems, he finds himself at their very centre. For that reason the intellect can never quite get at them, cannot clearly comprehend or firmly grasp them, since it is part of that which it is trying to grasp. A kind of prestidigitation seems to be called for by the situation. The intellect must behave as if it were separable from the position and conditions of the observer, as if consciousness were detachable from the man whose *humanitas* it constitutes.

Such sleight of hand the Western mind has practised from its early beginnings. The primal division of labour, separating brain from brawn, shaped its peculiar character and encouraged it, for its own justification, to develop metaphysics and ontologies which ostensibly emancipated the mind from the body, also from the body politic and economic. Since then the intellect has pretended to the freedom of an enlightened tyrant unaware of its libidinal involvement in that over which it rules. Positivism or scientism is merely the latest feat of a prestidigitation which began with Plato or even with Thales. It creates the impression of a perfect extradition of the observing self from all its problems. There is no more mystery. The observation stands in splendid isolation – now of sovereignty, now of proud submission to the facts – over against the observed, even when the observed is a self or the observer's own self.

The juggling has proved most successful. It managed to edify and entertain the audience from the start, for both audience and per-

formers were, with few exceptions, on the tricksters' side. They were taken in because they wished and needed to be taken in. The habit of looking at one's embodied self, of trying to comprehend the community-carried self, my self, as if this could be done from outside any self, became inveterate. The growing individualism of the emerging bourgeois society far from breaking the habit entrenched it. The perfected abstractions of science radicalized metaphysical intentions to the point where the observer is not content with anything short of perfect control(ability) to be extended rigorously over the controlling self as well. This movement towards scientific autonomy and automation computerized knowledge long before computers were invented. It produced the vast superstructures of our civilization which are managed, by selves, as if the self mattered merely as a control unit. The machine is run by all for none (Weber, 1964, vol. 2, p. 900).

The questions are: How can we arrive at an understanding of this situation and of the chances and necessities which constituted it? Is it possible to reach an understanding not totally conditioned by the situation it tries to comprehend? Dare we hope for a kind of understanding which is not merely able more or less correctly or satisfactorily to register what is the case, but to transform the 'given' – though possibly in ways that cannot be predicted? Would not just such transforming understanding be merely another instance of that self-less, manipulating intellect of a detached observer? Or is there a form of knowing – *Kennen* – distinct from that which today claims sole, certainly sole effective, authority? (See below, ch. 3, B.) Which brings us to the question whether the *Geisteswissenschaften*, including sociology, have as yet begun to ask seriously what constitutes knowledge and understanding in their universe of discourse. Having taken over too uncritically the intentions and methods of the natural sciences, they neglected with too little justification, other kinds of understanding which philosophical, scientific and practical thinking has relegated to the sphere of the private.

Such questions, though severely disregarded by science, were kept alive by cranks, poets, idiosyncratic thinkers like Montaigne, Pascal, Kierkegaard; but also, if surreptitiously, by the never wholly exorcizable spirited and embodied self of even the most scientific observer. For reasons too complex to analyse here, German philosophers, social philosophers and sociologists, though as much impressed by scientific assumptions as any, have continued to be agitated, beyond their Anglo-Saxon and French colleagues, by the problems of *Verstehen* implicit in any attempt at understanding which involves other understanding beings, persons, and therefore self-understanding.

Dilthey was among the first to raise the question of *Verstehen* self-consciously and in a vaguely sociological context. By nature a poet, he could not help seeing the individual, his experience, feeling, understanding, as constituting the basic human reality. To come to know the individual in his complexity and roundedness, within the intricate web of social inter-dependencies, was the task of *Verstehen*. It would inevitably include elements of sympathy, empathy, the endeavour to re-experience and reconstitute the life under scrutiny.¹ Dilthey was at his best when he permitted himself to approach his subjects in such a 'poetic' manner (Dilthey, 1919). But his philosophical and scientific assumptions gave him a bad conscience. He strove to justify his understanding before them and thus could not avoid submitting it to an alien, possibly a contradictory, discipline. Throughout his life he wrestled with the problem of how to reconcile the particular with the general. How could he refine the conceptual tools to the point where they would make the particular reveal its significance, its symbolic, i.e. general and transcendent, content in such a way that it became accessible to some process of verification? He believed that it was the sign of a poet's greatness, when he succeeded in penetrating an individual existence, until it revealed itself in itself as a universal symbol or signification. The poet fulfils his task by permitting life to interpret life without conceptualization. He permits the living context to reveal itself in its complex unity, its immanent significance (Dilthey, 1914, vol. 7, pp. 105-7). Yet for reasons explicable only within the context of contemporary scientific assumptions, Dilthey wanted to go beyond that. He wished to square the circle, to conceptualize the particular, to fit the irreducible into a generally acceptable system of scientifically established co-ordinates. Though at times he protested to the contrary, in practice he believed, if not as unambiguously as, for example, Durkheim, that science was or did more than poetry, was a more adequate pursuit of the human quest.

So psychology and not biography presented itself to Dilthey as the foundation of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, i.e. his concern for the individual merely made him choose psychology rather than sociology as the basic approach. Yet in either case the individual is, by definition, subsumed under the general. He is reduced to an instance or example, a case, to a datum yielding significant generalizations. The power and persuasiveness of conceptualization which a radical interest in the individual could have relativized is re-established (Dilthey, 1914, vols 1, 7, I/II). The pristine intention of metaphysics: to save man from the precariousness of his individual existence by subordinating it to unacknowledged societal interests parading as 'truth', this intention is reconstituted at the very heart of the *Geisteswissenschaften* by the man who believed his life's work to

have been a struggle against metaphysics (Dilthey, 1914, vol. 2).

A closer reading of Marx might have modified Dilthey's ideologically distorted individualism and helped him to see the problematics involved in his psychological approach (as his altogether pre-Marxian approach over and again weakens his argument and blurs his insights). Unfortunately Marx himself was a victim of scientific presumptions, his economism and sociology as uncritical as Dilthey's psychology. And his early work, where man, as this man, this woman, emerges for a moment most poignantly as the *telos* of history in all his vulnerability, only to be swamped again by inexorable intellectualizations, was not known to Dilthey.

Yet in spite of the many qualifications, Dilthey's work raised and kept alive the problem of social and individual consciousness within a sociologically relevant setting, though the mood, the *Stimmung*, of the age made him neglect its implications.

Meinecke, perhaps the most eminent Dilthey disciple, exemplifies some of the dangers of conceptualization met by the scholar who wishes to think or understand the individual. Conceptualization enables him, in his *Idee der Staatsräson*, to treat as individuals those very power complexes with their intensions, intentions and necessities, which inhibit or distort, often radically, most personal, i.e. individual, interests. He can exalt the necessities of power politics which override all personal desires, even those of the rulers, as *Staatsräson*, *raison d'état*, mainly because philosophers and scientists usually equated reason with necessity. Like the other German historicists, Meinecke, in his battle against the Enlightenment understanding of reason and of history, merely substitutes a more complex conceptualization for a more simple one, not yet the individual for that which has been abstracted from him (Meinecke, 1963). So he does not become aware of the real contradictions between his understanding of the individual in *Die Idee der Staatsräson* and in *Die Entstehung des Historismus*.

In the latter he lets the poet speak, the *Dichter und Denker* (see below, ch. 3, B). For him indeed *individuum est ineffabile*, and Goethe speaks for all *Dichter und Denker* when he adds that 'from this I deduce a world'. So when the poet turns to the writing of history he naturally wishes 'to grasp the world as from the centre of man's soul'. For 'each condition, yes, each moment, is of infinite value, for it is the representative of all eternity'. 'What matters in life is life, not a result which life achieves.' Even when he adds, as counterbalance, 'only mankind as a whole is the true man, the individual is gay and happy when he has the courage to experience himself within that whole', the poet knows that what matters is the gaiety and happiness of the individual. Therefore Herder, as most poets,

'rebels against the royal highway of power. He gets wearied by the historical phenomenon of the state.' He rejects the 'frigid history' of *raison d'état* (Meinecke, 1959, pp. 390-527).

Meinecke does not seem to realize how radically the poet problematizes what the scholar is accustomed to accept as history. And he cannot realize this because by virtue of the scholar's habit he has already subordinated the poet to his thesis or argument. The poet's voice is used to illustrate an unpoetic intention. Yet, like Dilthey's, even in its distortions, Meinecke's work, sometimes against its author's convictions, illustrates the dilemma of the historian, the sociologist, the *Geisteswissenschaftler* in general, as we shall try to show.

Both Dilthey and Meinecke remained essentially historians of ideas. Franz Borkenau investigates the same changes in European thought patterns very much from the sociologist's point of view. In a brilliant and undeservedly neglected book, *Der Übergang vom feudalen zum bürgerlichen Weltbild*, he demonstrates how deeply the ideas of even the most original thinkers are conditioned by the contemporary societal reality – or by that which society takes for reality. By tracing philosophical development from the late Middle Ages and concentrating especially on the thoughts of Descartes and Pascal, he shows to what an extent even those ideas and systems of philosophy which seem far removed from the exigencies of the day and the immediate concerns of contemporary society, reflect and often merely formulate the generally accepted assumptions of the age.

Descartes's philosophical rationalism justifies and reinforces inexorable economic rationalization processes, and also serves them by encouraging the individual to adjust to them. Pascal's thoughts reflect, without as yet reflecting on, the actual split between societal rationalizations and compulsions on the one hand and the individual's aspirations on the other. He tries to escape from intolerable contradictions by means of a faith which, in turn, is infected by and mirrors the irrationality of societal rationalizations. Beyond this, so Borkenau suggests, Pascal experienced the contradictions as sickness or neurosis, as dis-ease. He thus came very close to raising the problem of social consciousness, of the individual in society, of the individual's awareness of society. His book ends where our questions begin. Perhaps it had to be so, because his approach, still exclusively intellectual and academic, precludes forms of understanding which may prove essential in this area.

For scholars like Tönnies or Durkheim the individual never became problematical. Both, however dissimilar in approach, had a nostalgic-utopian apprehension of society: once it had functioned as an organic whole within which the individual had his predestined

place and thereby his explanation. Durkheim explicitly, Tönnies by implication, look forward to a possible reintegration of society, a rejuvenation of its creative, cohesive powers – on a level of greater complexity – where the individual would once again become unproblematical. He would find his fulfilment in and be defined by his function in, for, and by the grace of, the whole which in turn would be the justification of his labours and his being. In the meantime the problematics of the individual merely reflect the societal confusion (cf. Durkheim, 1952. Also Durkheim, 1966, pp. 13, 35, 42, 45).

According to Durkheim, societal aspirations, pressures and necessities constitute and reconstitute our individuality as well as our capacities for apprehending it and society. Sociology, therefore, not merely complements epistemology, but supersedes it. For society, with its inherent possible and necessary differentiations, shapes the very categories of human understanding, of pure as well as practical reason (Durkheim, 1968, pp. 223, 264, 271; also 'Conclusion'). Durkheim does not ask what gives such shaping power to society, nor how society actually works, seeing that every experience, including that of society and its workings, is personal, individual. Thus he raises the problem of social consciousness, as of individual awareness, by and not in his work. For why does he work at all, if his understanding of society is totally constituted by society? Or does he understand society as a complex cybernetic mechanism in which the individual functions as automatic self-correction? This would simply by-pass the question why – or the fact that – human as against animal society took the enormous detour over individual awareness.

It is clear that Durkheim's sociology – as Tönnies's – was born of a passionate moral longing for the renewal of society, its awe-inspiring self-authentication. It seems hardly less clear that this concern influenced and encouraged contemporaries and successors at least as much as the not always equally obvious methods and collections of evidence. (Just as the power of Marx's influence may have had its source in the 'communistic mood' that inspired his work rather than in the detailed and at times disconcerting argumentation which was a result of that inspiration.) Is such a moral passion no more than the epiphenomenal twitch or signal of a social automatism? Or has it, at least in its turn, constitutive power? Durkheim, against the force of his own arguments, believed it had (Durkheim, 1966, 'Prefaces'; Durkheim, 1969, 'Preface to the First Edition'; Durkheim, 1952, 'Anomic Suicide').

Weber

Weber is better known in the West than his sociological compatriots.

He comes closest to its rationalistic, positivistic and empirical attitude. He ceaselessly elaborated more precise definitions, classifications, systematization, methods for the testing of objectivity. He moved mountains to isolate causes. He believed in the possibility, almost in the inevitability, of a methodology by means of which sociology would mature into a fully-fledged, value-free, objective science. Here we do not intend to analyse his ideas once again, we merely wish to ask whether and how he raised the problem of the individual *vis-à-vis* society: 1 By his overtly individualistic and voluntaristic approach. 2 By his understanding of objectivity, the separation of value-free science from value-soaked political and moral commitment. 3 By his titanism. 4 By his personality.

1 In contrast to Durkheim, Weber's starting point is the purposefully acting individual, though purpose is defined by the expectations and chances determined and allowed for by the close-knit interactions of persons and groups. His voluntaristic approach is not intended to prejudice any issue of primogeniture between person and group. Yet in emphatically anti-Hegelian fashion, Weber treats state, nation, society, church, etc., as abstractions and certainly not as things. In *Über einige Kategorien der verstehenden Soziologie* he outlines the process by which society is constituted through the interacting expectations of individuals, and in turn constitutes objectives and aspirations for the individual. Therefore sociology is not a dependency of psychology but an autonomous science. However, its relations to psychology are manifold and many-layered. For *Verstehen* is an operation which involves insights into the fluid motivations of individuals, ranging from the most purposeful, i.e. society-oriented, to the most irrational, i.e. private, instinctive, a-social. Therefore psychology and sociology start from opposite poles (Weber, 1968, esp. 102–7). Yet Weber also believes that it is beyond the competence of science to determine the rationality of ends. Science can merely establish the rationality of means used to attain a given end. Hence rationalization can and does proceed to absurd lengths in the service of possibly quite irrational ends, because these are societal objectives. There he stops and leaves wide open the question thus raised concerning the function and meaning of rationality and rationalization. Freud will tackle it having 'started from the opposite pole'.

2 In *Die 'Objektivität' sozialwissenschaftlicher Erkenntnis* Weber (1968) again by-passes the problem of epistemology, the question 'what can we know?', by reducing it to a question of value-freedom; as if the individual gained at least potential infallibility, if only he concentrated on value-uncontaminated analyses, using reason *sans* emotion. Such a belief pre-judges Dilthey's attempt to distinguish between the natural and the social sciences; or perhaps

it merely demonstrates that Dilthey's distinction was not a basic one. Weber knew what he was doing. Hence his enormous labours to show how *Verstehen* and causal understanding could be reconciled. Yet once more he merely raises the problem of how the individual can hope to understand society and his own position in and over against it, in order to shelve it. This is the bureaucratic way of dealing with problems. It is also the scientific and technological method. The progress of science depends on the elimination and not on the solution of problems, it proceeds via deproblematization. In the sphere of manipulative knowledge, of know-how, in technology, industry, administration, it is a most effective method. Weber's contribution to sociology would be unproblematical, if it were not for the doubt whether the social sciences are of the kind whose virtue consists in their effectiveness, remembering that effectiveness or efficiency is equivalent to manipulability. There is no doubt in physics, chemistry or biology, as to who is to do the manipulating. In sociology this problem is immediate and unshelvable. It is also self-perpetuating. It refuses to be eliminated. It subterraneously vitiates any research that does not face up to it by either turning it into an adjunct of one administration or another, or into insignificance. It blinds the researcher to the fact that in sociology, as in the *Geisteswissenschaften* in general, neutrality is cloaked ideology, implicit bias in favour of the *status quo*.

Moreover, the attempted elimination of the value problem, i.e. of the problem of social consciousness, of the individual *vis-à-vis* society, avenges itself in another way: to disconnect evaluation, emotive valuing, from scientific enquiry means to be compelled to manage without the exercise of judgment, of Kant's *Urteilkraft*. Now in the natural sciences mathematics and logic function as a kind of quasi-judgment. They formalize all arguments into tautology, into equations. Yet in both the natural sciences and in the *Geisteswissenschaften* the absence of judgment has led inevitably to illimitable proliferation. In the former, however, and because of their manipulative nature, even specialization has remained 'vectored' and, within an ever more narrowly chosen field, meaningful, purposeful. In the latter the proliferation has proved merely fissile. It is reducing sociology *inter alia* to meaninglessness in the sense of letting it become purely analytical, i.e. tautological, i.e. bureaucratic.

This development can be seen in Weber's own work, not to mention that of his successors. It takes, as usual, two different directions. First, in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, especially in the first two chapters, we find an overwhelming proliferation of definitions. Each could, and often does, delimit an independent field of research. The cross-references between any two or more of such fields may in turn constitute independent disciplines (Weber, 1964).

In his late *Vom inneren Beruf zur Wissenschaft*, science not just as a profession but a vocation, Weber surrenders to the impetus of an autonomous process in an act of a-religious self-immolation. Unless we are the prophet, which we are not, let us obey the summons of the day, *der Forderung des Tages*, which is that of an atomized science, technology, bureaucracy, self-perpetuating, self-authenticating, value-free. This we are told in tone of command. But can I accept a summons from something to which I have not first granted an ultimate authority, i.e. value? Second, in his *Religionssoziologie* the proliferation lies in the direction of an illimitable amassing of adequate and sufficient evidence to justify and validate the isolation of one particular cause in a manner in which such an isolation had to be established according to Weber's own arguments. Not only the fact that this enormous undertaking has remained a fragment suggests its inconcludability (see below, ch. 5).

Weber's dual asceticism, demanding acceptance of and committal to moral values in practical life as passionately as obedience to the demands of value-freedom in research, leaves the individual in double isolation: purely mechanically related to his fellow-researchers, he must give the best of his life to labours without passion – except the passion to be passionless. Utterly atomized in practical affairs, he must proclaim his moral and political convictions to other atoms, and on the market place where everything is priced according to the law of supply and demand; a truly heroic ideal which gives more than a touch of pathos or even tragedy to his two essays on 'Vocation'. This is schizophrenia as *telos*: the individual detached from society, detached in and from his thinking, committed to action which, though not unthinking, remains unthinkable. Weber seems to epitomize the final state of that bourgeois capitalism which he so unthinkably deplores: its splitting of the inexorable market mechanisms from any personal aspiration which that same mechanism reduces to private, merely tolerated, affairs. And here, of course, lies Weber's greatness: that his intensely personal, intellectual, devaluating objectifying struggle reflects the actualities of his age.

3 Obviously related to the above and its direct consequence is Weber's titanism. Like Nietzsche he is most German even in his efforts to break away from German predilections. He cannot escape the lure of Hegel – Fichte, Schelling, Marx – or should one rather say: he could not deny the fairly universal human longing for some kind of totalization to which Germans merely gave most intense and perverse expression. In one way or another each individual carries the world as a totality within himself. Whenever 'the world' is being spoken of, or anything as happening in or affecting the course of 'the world', this infinitely varied and shaded amalgam of subjective

conceptualizations, apprehensions, experiences and expectations, is both intimated and concealed by the word 'world' (cf. Husserl, 1950, vol. 1, pp. 57 ff; also Winch, 1958, pp. 15–18). The social world is structured by the interplay of all those subjective totalities which in turn are structured by this conglomerate. This is a Marcellian mystery.

Now the more conscious and consciously individuated a person becomes, the more he will experience his intellectual and instinctive endeavours at totalization as problematical, and will do so to the extent to which he will continue to strive for such a totalization. But once aware of the paradox, he cannot escape from it. He can resign himself to a kind of schizophrenia, as does the burgher to the split between public and private, the 'worker' to that between work and leisure, the scientist to that between research and life. Or he must try to do what Weber tried so desperately: *To hold together in a gigantic intellectual effort that which all the time the same intellect increasingly fragments*. This explains the grandeur and pathos of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, the anguish of its breathless argumentation; but also the ending of the essays on 'Vocation' which are beyond pessimism and despair. They are titanic in their demand that man hold together what tears him apart, moral action and a-moral science, because the Messiah may come and must not find the faithful idle, though their incessant labours can neither hasten nor hinder his coming. Like Hegel and Marx, Weber is Atlas, but beyond them in endurance, for he has experienced the fragmentation which is our fate more deeply. And the fissure is located in the human heart and mind where what I value, love, appreciate, and what I can know must for ever stay apart (cf. Scheler, 1960, pp. 431ff).

4 In the light of subsequent developments and discoveries it seems of more than psychological interest to raise the question: 'Was Weber's thinking or, rather, was the quality or character of his thinking the result of his neurosis or psychosis which manifested itself in a long mental breakdown? Or was that breakdown the reaction of his being, of his emotive, embodied, hyper-sensitive nature, to his ruthless thinking?' (Cf. Horkheimer-Adorno, 1969, ch. 1, on rationality and tyranny; also Adorno, 1970, pp. 265–75.) It must be stressed emphatically that referring to this illness casts no more doubt or aspersions on his work and thinking as such, on its 'validity', than would a reference to pneumonia or a broken limb. Admittedly, the connection between thought and mental disorder seems closer than that between thought and physical illness. Which means that the question must be raised, and without prejudice.

We remember that one of the psychotic symptoms was an incapacity to read and write. Now we could immediately neutralize

the question, deflect its impetus and evacuate it of meaning – value-judgment – on Weber's own prescription, by turning it into a question of causality on the one hand and of possible cure on the other. Thus we should have extricated ourselves from a whole complex of questions whose very function or *raison d'être* might have been to implicate us. We should have pre-judged the issue, as Weber would have wanted us to.

May we instead permit the question concerning this illness to question us? To let it involve rather than detach us? That this is no longer sociology can be asserted only by those who have pre-judged the issue raised by the question. It cannot be a question of causality, for causality only matters in the universe of discourse we have just stepped out of: the universe of – possible – manipulation. For example, for Weber's doctor, though perhaps even for him only because contemporary medicine reflects contemporary prejudices, the illness could have raised the question of causality. What we have to realize here is that questions of the kind we are asking or trying to ask now, remain questions. They also contain something that functions as in other contexts answers are designed to function, as long as they remain questions. So we ask: Is there a connection, an inter-dependence or interaction, between certain illnesses and certain kinds of and approaches to work and thought? Is there a relationship, and if so, of what character, between the temper, mood, *Stimmung*, of a peculiar physical and mental organization, and the *Stimmung* of and created by the work and thinking, bearing in mind that the originating temper or distemper may have been already the result of the person's encounter with the 'world' or society which his work is intended to reflect and to reflect on? Is it likely that there is no 'relevant' connection here? And what would we have to learn from such disconcerting disconnection? But if there were a connection, what light would the work throw on the illness, what darkness, if any, the illness over the work? What do illness and work together state about the person in whom they meet and who remains distinct from them although he is expressed through them? Maybe the interaction between illness and work is a reflection or expression or symptom, of the interaction of the individual and society. It may somehow mirror the tensions inherent in social consciousness which is the ever-precarious balance of tensions between individual and societal demands and aspirations. If our work reflects our state of health or disease, our putative health is in question, if Weber's work, undoubtedly of supreme importance and integrity, is an expression of dis-ease. What, anyway, is denoted by sickness and health, in how far dare we and must we apply such terms, if analogically, to society? (In this light cf. Durkheim, 1966, ch. 3.) And if Weber's life and work, like that of,

for example, Pascal, could be said to reflect a societal malaise (Borkenau, 1934, on Pascal), is it a malaise of capitalism, of Western society in general, of contemporary Western society in particular, or a more universal social affliction? Again, these are questions to which there are no answers; except for those who come to know in the very process of such questioning something closer to what is usually experienced as 'answer' than what is commonly denoted by the word.

It would be interesting to trace the connections between Weber's psychosis and his puritanism of the intellect which enabled him to write the history of puritanical assumptions with such a deep understanding – and left him with a belief in predestination without belief in a God. It could prove illuminating to search for connections between both illness and work and his early upbringing. All this not to prove a Freudian point, but to test what might be discovered concerning the way in which individuals – mother and father, the positively most significant others – mediate the 'world', society with its achievements, compulsions and tensions, to their child. To see how the father's and the mother's worlds complement and distort each other, and shape and mis-shape the child in the process. Through such a focusing on a significant individual one might, as Sartre believed and practised, discover more about an age, in this case ours, than in any other way. Through such focusing, as, for example, Erikson, Laing, Oscar Lewis demonstrated, we might come to understand history and the structure and functioning of society in a way in which even the reading of the works of so great an historian and sociologist as Weber himself cannot make us understand. Once more we have come back to the problems concerning the individual in society and recognize that even Weber posed it by his life rather than by his writings (Erikson, 1965, 1972; Laing, 1964b, 1965, 1969; Lewis, 1964, 1968, 1970). Until now, only the poet, dramatist, novelist, has immersed himself in this problem. It can even be said about him that his staying power, possibly his quality as poet, is in direct proportion to his success in conveying the depth and breadth of the conflicts inherent in the human situation as constituted by the symbiosis of and the tensions between the self and society. (See below, ch. 2, Notes on literature. Cf. Mitzman (1970), especially pp. 148–80, 253–96. I only discovered this book after I had written mine.)

Freud

Freud's insights, so I believe, were and are epoch-making in the full sense of that word. There is as decisive a watershed between pre- and post-Freudian thinking, as there is one between pre- and

post-Marxian thought (Habermas, 1969, pp. 341ff). The full extent and impact of Freud's insights have not yet been appreciated by either the psychological, sociological or philosophical disciplines. Nor has there as yet been a serious exploration – except by isolated individuals – as to what an extent they have opened these three disciplines to each other, point to their complementariness rather than clear-cut isolation. Freudian insights have been neglected even where apparently they have been given adequate airing. For, as we shall try to show presently, they raise their questions not on the psychological level, but on that of epistemology, ethics, politics, even religion, i.e. they raise them on the level of sociology. Moreover these insights pose their questions in the way in which e.g. Weber's illness rather than his arguments poses them. For that reason, much of the sporadic academic and more general intellectual acceptance of Freud's theories has often been a form of immunization against his insights. It has deflected rather than faced the questions by channelling them into academic argumentation. Unfortunately Freud himself set the precedent (Habermas, 1969, pp. 303–9).

Just because we assign extraordinary importance to Freud's works, especially in regard to sociology and the problem of understanding in sociology, of social consciousness, we must look at some peculiar difficulties they raise: 1 Freud as his own interpreter. 2 The character of Freud's originality. 3 Freud as an initiator.

1 Freud, not unlike some of the greater creative writers, was at times a most inadequate interpreter of his own insights. This was almost inevitable. His discoveries were not just another widening of our *geisteswissenschaftliche* perspective, but the beginning of a new way of looking at man and the human situation. Such seeing – *theorein*, theorizing before having theories – was bound to get into conflict with and strain beyond their resilience the old conceptual tools and machinery which, at one and the same time, it had to use and to put in question. The resulting tension existed first and foremost in the mind of Freud who, it must not be forgotten, was Weber's senior by eight years. That mind had been formed by the sophisticated rationalism of Vienna and Paris, by scientific, i.e. in those days almost mechanistic, assumptions and presumptions. The insights which were to question the very constitution of man's rationality more profoundly than ever before erupted in a mind complacently committed to Latin-Anglo-Saxon Enlightenment reasonableness. To the end Freud tried to contain his insights within and to confine them to that framework of rationality, by hook and by crook, at least in his published works. He had and expressed serious doubts concerning man's ability and desire to act reasonably. He never seriously doubted that peculiar rationality

which in the West has always been taken for reason *per se*. It remained the lodestar of all human endeavour. Freud's work throughout is haunted by the paradoxicality of this belief (for example, cf. Wollheim, 1971, with Rieff, 1960; Jones, 1964, with Habermas, 1969).

2 Originality, no matter how great, does not mean the discovery of something totally new. It consists in the confluence of previously disparate visions, interests, myths, areas of information, surmises. We have noted how Freud's rationalistic training made him constrain his insights. It may even be of sociological interest to ask whether, but for their rationalistic strait-jacketing, his discoveries would have turned him into a poet or prophet, i.e. into a completely uninfluential thinker. (A further question could be, whether such a constraint is still necessary today, or whether by now it has become lethal.) In the meantime other shaping influences enabled Freud to conceive and give birth to his insights. There is literature for which he retained a life-long, human, catholic interest. Not accidentally his basic 'complex' was called after a great literary hero. He loved Hamlet, Dostoevsky, Don Quixote. He was well acquainted with classic and romantic German literature. The strain of German romantic philosophy which, stirred by Kant and Fichte as well as by Rousseau, culminated in the will-philosophies of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, was another influence.

Freud was obviously fascinated by religion. The conflicts this fascination set up in his rationalistic mind seem to have been furious. They made him lose his olympian detachment. Remembering his calm impartiality *vis-à-vis* the terrors of fascism, the acidity of his attacks on religion and the fact that he could not help returning to it in his last 'popular' essay prove its fascination. In the last analysis his discoveries raise religious questions or, rather, questions which up till now have been raised only by religion. And one of their more immediate sources can be detected in that Judaic, Talmudic, Hasidic tradition from which Freud never altogether dissociated himself (see Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim*, 2 vols, Schocken, New York, 1968-9, especially the 'Introduction'). This tradition represents man's most intense attempt at casuistry in the best sense of this term: that there is no universal ideal, theory or law, which has not to be tested in and modified by the everyday life of the everyday person, by the individual, any individual, his background, circumstances, character, by all his contingencies. Just as vice versa there is no individual which is not related, however complexly, to the universal, the 'law of God'. For over two thousand years powerful and refined intellects had gone into the elaboration of the connection between the universal and the particular, idea and reality, individual and society, man and God. A thousand years of

ghetto psychology which was also philosophy and religion burst into flower in psycho-analysis. (Sociology might profit from a comparison between Catholic spirituality, as it developed into modern scientific, manipulative psychology, generalizing in its intentions; and the Talmudic pariah tradition which always moved towards an understanding of the individual's predicament over against the general, an alien society.)

3 For me, and this must be stressed above all else, Freud's insights mark a beginning, not an end. They are seminal. We have not yet seen their flowering or fruition. Freud answers few questions. He proves nothing. His theories are questionable in both senses of the German *fragwürdig*: they have to be questioned; they are worth questioning, they might yield clues. They are mythological (see below, ch. 3, Prelude). On the other hand, his questions question our rationality – as, of course, his and their own. If he proves nothing, it is partly because his theories, or, rather, the insights underlying the theories, put in question the function and nature of proof. His theories are *fragwürdig* in that they make all theorizing *fragwürdig*, for better, for worse. And if they, like the theories of Marx, may be called mythological, it is because in them the power of all theorizing, as against its validity, is revealed as mythological. Naturally this raises problems beyond the stretching of academic arguments, because these are the expression of an alternative myth. The very tensions between Freud's insights and theories question, if not the validity, certainly the extent of the validity of academic argumentation. They suggest that our deference to the academic rationale may not be rational, that it may be the result of patriarchal, one-sided, tyrannous authority. Is it possible that the proof which concludes an argument beyond further contradiction functions as such to the extent to which it is the reflection and introjection of age-old patriarchal, regal, bureaucratic authority (Horkheimer-Adorno, 1969, pp. 20, 29, 92; Mitscherlich, 1969, pp. 81ff, 238ff)?

Not surprisingly, therefore, Freud's influence can be felt in art and literature, in common pursuits like the bringing up of children and the managing of one's personal, especially sexual, affairs, in advertising and propaganda, rather than in the departments of universities. Again for better and worse, the influence extends into areas where acceptance is not based on argument. But it also reaches into academic disciplines like anthropology, sociology, philosophy, mainly in as far as it is not dependent on and acknowledged by argumentation. Here we are not interested in the Freud of the psychology departments, if he exists at all, or of the psycho-analysts, but in his insights at work in people like Malinowski, Marcuse, Sartre, the Frankfurt School, Erikson, Laing, Rieff; and in writers like Mann, Musil, Joyce, Proust, Svevo, Bellow; in the