

STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY

VII

---



THE ROLE OF VALUE  
IN  
KARL MANNHEIM'S  
SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

*by*

F. WARREN REMPEL



1965

MOUTON & CO.

LONDON · THE HAGUE · PARIS

© 1965 Mouton & Co., Publishers, The Hague, The Netherlands.

*No part of this book may be translated or reproduced in any form, by print, photoprint, microfilm, or any other means, without written permission from the publishers.*

Printed in The Netherlands.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	7
A. The Problem of this Study . . . . .	7
B. Previous Research in the Field . . . . .	10
C. Limitations of this Study . . . . .	11
D. The Method of this Study . . . . .	12
1. Exposition . . . . .	12
2. Analysis . . . . .	12
3. Comparison and Synthesis . . . . .	13
II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF MANNHEIM'S THINKING . . . . .	15
A. Brief Account of Mannheim's Life . . . . .	15
B. Mannheim's General Sociological Orientation . . . . .	16
C. Mannheim's Approach to the Sociology of Knowledge . . . . .	18
1. <i>Wissenssoziologie</i> as Theory Concerning the Re- lationship between Knowledge and Existence . . . . .	19
2. <i>Wissenssoziologie</i> as Historical-Sociological Research . . . . .	23
III. EXPOSITION OF MANNHEIM'S EPISTEMOLOGY . . . . .	26
A. Mannheim's Claims for Epistemological Relevance . . . . .	26
B. The "Positive Role" of <i>Wissenssoziologie</i> in Epis- temological Issues . . . . .	27
1. Inevitability of the "Human Equation" . . . . .	28
2. The Need for a New "Thought Model" . . . . .	29

3. The Activistic Element of Thought . . . . .	29
4. Rejection of "Sphere of Thruth" Notion . . . . .	29
5. Relevance of the Perspectivistic Element . . . . .	30
C. Objectivity Redefined . . . . .	30
D. Perspectival Validity . . . . .	31
1. Criterion of Unanimity . . . . .	32
2. Criterion of Perspectival Synthesis . . . . .	32
3. Criterion of the Best Perspective . . . . .	33
 IV. ANALYSIS OF VALUE COMPONENTS IN MANNHEIM'S WRITINGS . . . . .	 35
Introduction . . . . .	35
A. Value – Intrinsic and Instrumental . . . . .	36
B. Value – Inclusive and Exclusive . . . . .	43
C. Value – Permanence and Change . . . . .	50
D. Value – Causality and Spontaneity . . . . .	58
E. Value – Egoism and Communitarianism . . . . .	64
F. Value and Personality . . . . .	69
G. Value and the Ought . . . . .	74
H. Value and the Meaning of Freedom . . . . .	79
J. Value and Religion . . . . .	84
 V. CRITIQUE OF MANNHEIM'S AXIOLOGICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS . . . . .	 92
A. Fact and Value . . . . .	92
B. The Contextual Character of Value . . . . .	97
C. The Problem of Norms . . . . .	102
D. Mannheim's Axiological Profile . . . . .	108
 VI. CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	 115
A. Three Presuppositional Levels . . . . .	115
B. General Questions Posed . . . . .	117
C. General Conclusions . . . . .	120
 BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	 122

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. THE PROBLEM OF THIS STUDY

The problem of this study is to discover the axiological basis, or value orientation, upon which Karl Mannheim has developed a social philosophy. A crucial issue in such an investigation is the question of the link between Mannheim's sociology of knowledge and his axiological assumptions. This question of the link between sociology and value theory raises a number of questions with respect to the work of Mannheim. Are there axiological implications in the sociology of knowledge? What are the basic epistemological claims which Mannheim makes on behalf of the sociology of knowledge? What is the relation between these epistemological claims and the problems of value theory? Do "facts" and "values", in other words, have a common ontological source, or do they arise from completely different sources? Does Mannheim draw the axiological conclusions which are implied by his sociology of knowledge? What are the axiological presuppositions of his social philosophy? In short, is value theory possible and, if so, under what conditions?

These questions suggest, in a rudimentary way, the procedural outline through which it will be possible to explore the thought of a man who has encompassed within his work the concerns and problems not only of the sociologist, but also of the social philosopher and the philosopher of knowledge.

There is here, as is the case with most problems, a problem-behind-the-problem, the awareness of which may serve to point up more clearly the significance of some of the issues involved. The

problem-behind-the-problem in this case is posed in an article by Alfred Stern.<sup>1</sup> After discussing at some length the value systems of Nicolai Hartmann and Friedrich Nietzsche, Stern observes that Nietzsche's extreme axiological relativism and subjectivism insist that *everything* depends upon the individual, whereas in Hartmann's extreme axiological absolutism almost *nothing* any longer depends upon the individual. Consequently, it becomes clear that an absolutistic theory of values may be as dangerous as a relativistic one. Values which are presented as transcendent, as absolute and independent of the individual, are also independent of the individual's protest. Values which are seen as relative only lack any unitary principle, and the result is a chaos of values. Stern concludes:

If we saw before that integral axiological absolutism leads to totalitarianism, we see now that integral axiological relativism leads to anarchy. This is, in my opinion, the critical issue in contemporary philosophy of values. It is also the critical issue of our whole civilization.<sup>2</sup>

The question must here be faced as to whether there is a constructive alternative to the above alternatives. The dominant mood today would seem to favor very strongly the tendency toward axiological relativism. This may be seen to a large extent in the utilitarian and instrumentalist emphases as well as in the ethical skepticism which is implicit in some existentialist positions. The mood of axiological relativism is due in large measure to the development of ideological analysis, psychoanalysis, sociology of knowledge, and the extreme functionalist orientation which has characterized much of contemporary anthropology and sociology, from whose ranks have emerged what Robert K. Merton calls "the professional debunkers". All of this historical and intellectual development has undercut the stabilizing bases of civilization, including the axiological bases, and has led to an emphasis upon relativism in the area of value.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Alfred Stern, "The Current Crisis in the Realm of Values", *The Personalist*, 31 (1950), 245-253.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.

<sup>3</sup> Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (Glencoe, Illinois, The Free Press, 1949), p. 219.



However, there is another side to this, another sociological and anthropological approach which has played and can continue to play a constructive role, or at any rate not a nihilistic role, in the area of epistemology and axiology. Such men as David Bidney in anthropology, Karl Mannheim in sociology, and Gordon Allport in psychology, have made attempts to deal with some of the philosophical implications of their respective disciplines, and to deal systematically with the problem of the presuppositions of their own disciplines.

This study is expressly interested in the figure of Karl Mannheim because he has done an extensive job of attempting to relate his own field of specialization, *Wissenssoziologie* (the sociology of knowledge), to other disciplines, especially philosophy and the philosophy of knowledge. Mannheim's main thrust in this area has been to point up especially what he considered to be the epistemological implications of *Wissenssoziologie*. In short, Mannheim claims, the facts which the sociology of knowledge turns up require new epistemological foundations. This leads logically to the problem of the dissertation as formulated in the opening paragraph. Implicit in the claims of Mannheim's supporters is the claim that he has proposed a line of thought, a sociological approach, which is a way through the axiological dilemma posed by Alfred Stern. The problem of this dissertation is to discover whether this is so.

The intent of this study is to examine the role of value in Mannheim's whole system. Such an inquiry inescapably involves epistemological issues as well as the presuppositions of sociological theory. However, beyond this presuppositional level, this study will not attempt to deal with the wide range of detailed questions of sociological theory, nor with secondary epistemological problems. Both the epistemological issues and the questions of theoretical sociology have received extended attention by many of Mannheim's critics. Mannheim's sociological theory and his epistemological conclusions are the *given*, the starting point of this inquiry into the problem of value, and its role in Mannheim's system of thought.

Even in the field of value theory, this study claims to be examining but a small portion of the many complex and important issues

that pervade this field. It does anticipate, however, that some of these issues may be seen more clearly through an intensive study of a figure such as Karl Mannheim and the problem which his thought poses. It is in this sense a sort of "microscopic" rather than a "macroscopic" approach.

The study will thus involve an intensive analysis of Mannheim's own writings, subject to the limitations declared below. Secondary sources will also be used, primarily for clarification of the problem, and for clarifying the present status of certain issues that have evolved in the historical development of *Wissenssoziologie*.

#### B. PREVIOUS RESEARCH IN THE FIELD

Almost all of the previous research on Karl Mannheim's *Wissenssoziologie* has been undertaken from the perspectives of either sociological or epistemological concerns. The main attention given to Mannheim has been that of his fellow sociologists, raising theoretical problems concerning Mannheim's *historicism*, or the scientific relevance of *imputation*, or other kindred issues.<sup>4</sup>

Considerable attention has also been given to the epistemological problems raised by Mannheim. Jacques J. Maquet has examined the epistemological significance of Mannheim, and has described a series of "metaphysical presuppositions" which he claims give coherence to Mannheim's whole system. These metaphysical presuppositions include: a dialectical conception of reality; dialectical historicism; the world comprehended as a complex of processes constantly in flux; man's rationality emerging from an interaction between man as organism and the exterior world.<sup>5</sup>

Others such as Arthur Child, Virgil G. Hinshaw, and E. Williams, have criticized Mannheim's epistemological conclusions.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Merton, *op. cit.*, for a summary of the sociological issues involved in *Wissenssoziologie*, Chs. 12 and 13.

<sup>5</sup> Jacques J. Maquet, *The Sociology of Knowledge*, trans. John F. Locke (Boston, The Beacon Press, 1951), p. 87 f.

<sup>6</sup> Arthur Child, "The Problem of Truth in the Sociology of Knowledge", *Ethics*, 58 (1947), 18-34. — Virgil G. Hinshaw, "The Epistemological Relevance of Mannheim's Sociology of Knowledge", *Journal of Philosophy*, 40

Werner Stark, in an introductory text on the subject of *Wissenssoziologie*, deals with the problem mainly as a historian of ideas. Stark's concern with the analysis of presuppositions is again primarily in terms of the historical relativity of truth.<sup>7</sup> His preoccupation is mainly with "facts" and "ideas", not with "values". Values are treated only incidentally, in terms of their ideological character. This is, in fact, true of practically all of the work in the field, namely, that values are considered only as incidental to a particular ideology or socio-cultural pattern.

Almost the only attention Mannheim's work has received from philosophers has been negatively-critical, in the form of response to his proposals for epistemological reconstruction. No one to date has approached his work in terms of the problems of value theory, and an analysis of his axiological presuppositions. Hence, the reason for the present study.

### C. LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

The sources of information for this study include those writings of Mannheim which are available in this country, both in German and in English. Through the efforts of some of Mannheim's former students and colleagues, three collections of essays have been published, thus making available in English virtually all of Mannheim's *theoretical* studies in sociology, social psychology, and the sociology of knowledge. After 1933, the year of his emigration to England, his works were published in English. Only a few of Mannheim's published articles and manuscripts are not available in this country and are not included in this study.

Articles not available for this study include the following: "Beiträge zur Theorie der Weltanschauungs-interpretation" (1922), "Die Bedeutung der Konkurrenz im Gebiete des Geisti-

---

(1943), 57-72. - E. Williams, "Sociologists and Knowledge", *Philosophy of Science*, 14 (1947), 224-30.

<sup>7</sup> Werner Stark, *The Sociology of Knowledge* (Glencoe, Illinois, The Free Press, 1958). See especially Chapter 4 on the "Consequences of the Sociology of Knowledge".

gen" (1929), "Zur Problematik der Soziologie in Deutschland" (1929), "The Place of Sociology in the Social Sciences" (1936), "Adult Education and the Social Sciences" (1938), "Mass Education and Group Analysis" (1939), "The Function of the Refugee" (1940), "Democratic Planning and the New Science of Society" (1944), "The Meaning of Popularization in a Mass Society" (1945).

The primary sources utilized in this study include the three collections of Mannheim's essays, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, *Essays on the Sociology of Culture*, *Essays on Sociology and Social Psychology*, and the following works of Mannheim: *Systematic Sociology*, *Ideology and Utopia*, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction*, *Diagnosis of Our Time*, and *Freedom, Power, and Democratic Planning*. Additional articles consulted, both in German and in English, are listed in the Bibliography.

#### D. THE METHOD OF THIS STUDY

The method of the study will be as follows:

##### 1. *Exposition*

Chapters II and III will be primarily expository, setting forth the main outlines of Mannheim's approach to the sociology of knowledge and the epistemological conclusions he has drawn. An attempt will be made to discover from Mannheim's own writings the answers to the questions formulated in the foregoing problem of the dissertation.

##### 2. *Analysis*

Chapter IV will be primarily analytic. The problem of determining the value components of Mannheim's sociological system is basically a complex problem in content analysis. This content analysis will be undertaken through a series of categorial analyses. The categories of analysis have been derived in part from

a comparative study of contemporary value theory, and in part from Mannheim's own writings. Contemporary literature in the field of value theory reveals certain perennially recurring problems and pervasive issues. These same issues are reflected in the language and structure of Mannheim's sociology and social philosophy. It is a constellation of such issues that is suggested as the basis of this analysis. The categories here proposed reflect certain of these basic issues in contemporary value theory. It is supposed that the kinds of answers supplied to these categorial problems by Mannheim's writings will yield the value components that are implicit and explicit in those writings. There is no inherent hierarchical priority so far as these categories are concerned. It is readily evident also that there are certain immanent relations between various categories that make for apparent "overlapping", and obvious difficulty in finding absolutely discrete and exclusive categories. Nevertheless, in the process of analysis, an attempt will be made to set forth (in the context of Mannheim's own discussion) the distinguishing emphases of each category, and their relation to the basic problem of the dissertation.

These categories of analysis are:

1. Value – Intrinsic and Instrumental
2. Value – Inclusive and Exclusive
3. Value – Permanence and Change
4. Value – Causality and Spontaneity
5. Value – Egoism and Communitarianism
6. Value and Personality
7. Value and the Ought
8. Value and the Meaning of Freedom
9. Value and Religion

### *3. Comparison and Synthesis*

Chapter V will involve mainly critical comparison and synthesis. The results of the categorial analysis will be subjected to critical and comparative study, for the purpose of inquiring into the